

Negotiations at a Glance

Here we go ... again ... and together

THE TIMELINE

The University of Prince Edward Island Faculty Association (UPEIFA) signed a new collective agreement with the University's Board of Governors on May 9, 2011. That agreement will expire on June 30, 2012.

CONSULTING YOU

The UPEIFA Executive conducted a survey of Bargaining Unit #1's Membership in order to determine your priorities and issues for the forthcoming round of negotiations. That survey was distributed in September 2011.

THE TEAM

The Negotiating Team was appointed. The team consists of Valerie Campbell, Wayne Cutcliffe, Geoffrey Lindsay, Andrew Trivett, and Sharon Myers.

THE POSITIONS

Based upon the results of the Membership survey, the proposed bargaining positions for BU#1 were presented to, and unanimously approved at, a General Meeting of the Membership on October 13, 2011.

WHERE WE ARE NOW

On January 6th, the Employer was notified of the UPEIFA's intent to begin negotiations. The Employer responded with the names of its team members: Jim Randall, Chair, Don Desserud, Alan Hughes, and Peggy Leahey. The teams will meet on February 23rd.

In a speech delivered in Missouri in 1964, Martin Luther King, Jr. offered up to history another of his memorable insights: "We must learn to live together as brothers, or perish together as fools." While his observation was rooted in his particular time and place, I like to think this wisdom reaches into our time and our place.

When I was asked to take on the role of Chief Negotiator for the UPEIFA Bargaining Unit #1 my response was one of caution, if not outright trepidation. I knew the role would be time-consuming and the responsibilities potentially daunting, but I also accepted -- or rationalized? -- that my role would only be an extension of what we all do in our work lives: that of a researcher, thinker, writer, and hopefully persuasive and reasonably articulate communicator. And I recognized that I would be surrounded by a strong and supportive team who would share and lift and carry these responsibilities. I came to settle contentedly on the notion that the most important agent in the collective bargaining project would not be me, nor even our delightful and skilled, creative and hardworking team of which I am honoured to be a part, but you. Us. Our community.

One of the things I value most about being a faculty member at UPEI is a sense that we are in some ways -- sometimes potently visible ones, other times more hazily rendered ones -- a community. What I mean is this: that as colleagues, whether we are faculty, librarians, sessional instructors or clinical nursing instructors, we share important parts of our daily lives in common, confront similar issues, encounter

comparable obstacles and celebrate kindred accomplishments. Those shared experiences alone don't make us a community; rather, I think it's the *acknowledgement* of our commonalities that does. We make an active choice to acknowledge our shared pathways. One of the things I like about this conceptualization of community is that it also allows us the ability to accept that we don't all think exactly the same ways or see things through the same lens. But healthy communities make room for differences while permitting us to pursue the common interests of us all.

I sometimes teach labour history and I've published in that field. If there is a recurring theme amidst the diverse and rich history of Canadians who have worked for a living, I think it's this: that when people who share common interests act as a cohesive community of engaged and active citizens, they are a profoundly powerful lot. I know this of history. I believe this of us. I trust this of our community. And this is our most persuasive tool at the bargaining table -- our collective voice and commitment to our mutual welfare. I think this was what King was chasing when he spoke of living together as brothers (and of course we add sisters too) or perishing as fools. We know that our strength lies in our community, our leverage in our commonalities.

On behalf of the Negotiating Team, we look forward to your vital support in the upcoming round of negotiations and to representing your interests. We will keep you informed as negotiations unfold.

Sharon Myers

Where Are We Now?

On January 6th, the UPEIFA Executive formally notified the Employer of BU#1's intent to negotiate a new collective agreement. Under PEI's *Labour Act*, this notice of intent requires a response from the recipient and a meeting between the two negotiating teams within twenty working days, namely February 6th. We received a response from the Employer on January 23rd in which they requested an extension to the timeline for the required meeting until after February 17th. After due consideration, our Executive agreed to an extension but clarified that the teams would be required to meet during the February study break.

While the notice of intent began our exchange with the Employer, the first act of readying ourselves for negotiations actually took place last spring at a meeting in Cornwall. There, the previous negotiating team met with the UPEIFA Executive and a representative of CAUT to assess the accomplishments and challenges of the last round. Our Executive emerged from the meeting with a timeline to shape the forthcoming round. So far, we are on track.

On July 11th and 12th, members of the Executive gathered with some potential members of the 2012 negotiating team for a two-day Collective Bargaining Workshop, moderated by a representative of CAUT. The workshop offered an overview of the bargaining process and the role of negotiating team members in that process, and allowed participants the opportunity to engage in a series of mock sessions that required the preparation of contract language and the presentation of arguments. Current team members Wayne Cutcliffe, Geoff Lindsay and Sharon Myers attended the workshop and they and Andy Trivett were appointed to the team shortly thereafter. Cheryl Wartman joined the team for a short period until her employment contract away from UPEI was extended. At that point Valerie Campbell joined the team.

With a timeframe and team at hand, the task of our Executive was then to determine the issues that the Association would take to the negotiating table. This process involved an assessment of the current *Collective Agreement*, a review of issues and concerns that individual FA Members or

Communication Representatives brought to the Executive's attention, and finally and of key importance, a survey of the Membership's priorities. Each of these elements played an important role in shaping and defining priorities, but the survey results reflect the collective voice of our Membership and our democratic and participatory engagement in setting the negotiation agenda. The survey results were thus privileged in the process of mapping our bargaining positions. The Membership approved the resultant bargaining positions on October 13th, at a General Meeting of UPEIFA BU #1.

Our negotiating team has met 19 times since September, in meetings averaging two to three hours each. These meetings were used to discuss the bargaining priorities adopted by the Membership and to transform those goals and ideas into tangible contract language. The language that emerged was not a product of great originality and creativity – though there was a wise and judicious application of this. By and large, the language that the team drafted, considered and debated was a product of study: of extant language in other contracts, of normative practice at our comparator universities, and of the tremendously rich and versatile information resources made accessible to bargaining teams by CAUT, similar to those the Employer will have access to through its organization, CAUBO.

The team completed its crafting of proposals in January. Through December and continuing into February the Chief Negotiator presented the proposals to the Executive for consideration and final approval. This process was completed on February 10th. Our negotiating team is ready, and looks forward to representing our collective interests.

On February 6th, the Chair of the Employer's negotiating team wrote to indicate his team would be available to meet after the 17th, and our FA team responded that day with available times and an indication that we wanted to meet on several occasions during the week of study break. The Employer's team has made itself available for a 3:00 meeting on February 23rd. We will stay in touch through regular issues of *Negotiations At a Glance* in the days to come.