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# Professors support walkout

UPEI teaching staff solidly back **strike** action by vote of 62 per cent as negotiators will now try to hammer out a contract.

*NIGEL ARMSTRONG*

The University of Prince Edward Island **Faculty Association** received a 62 per cent vote in favour of **strike** action Monday.

The association said that 280 of its 375 members turned out to vote. Of those 280 who turned out, 84 per cent voted in support of a **strike**, said Wayne Peters, president of the association.

"The next step is for us to be at the bargaining table and we have negotiations scheduled for (today) and Thursday," said Peters. "We are really just going to see what happens in those discussions over the next couple of days. Our executive is meeting later this week to really assess the progress of those discussions."

At issue was parity with other Atlantic universities, both in salaries and teaching load.

"Salaries for academic staff at UPEI are now as much as 10 per cent behind the average salaries at other regional universities," said Peters.

He said both the **faculty association** and the administration agreed early in the process on the group of Atlantic universities that would be included for the purposes of comparison.

The other significant stumbling block is class load.

"UPEI is one of only five universities in the country at which the standard teaching load is six courses over two academic terms," said Peters. "The normal teaching load at most other Canadian universities is five or even four courses."

Other issues at the table include job security for part-time sessional instructors and the elimination of mandatory retirement, says the association's website. Also of concern is a desire to impose a code of conduct that demands that teaching staff "act in a manner that will contribute positively to the overall vision, mission and reputation."

Faculty critics say that is so vague it could be used to stifle a profession devoted to questioning and critiquing.

There are still three more weeks of classes left before exams.

"If no substantial movement is seen from the university administration over the next few days here I think that job action could take place as early as next week," said Peters.

"Our membership turned out (Monday) night and today on this vote and delivered what is unmistakably a strong, clear mandate for the association to take that action if it is necessary. At this point it is not a foregone conclusion. Our membership had given our negotiating team a huge bit of leverage to go to the negotiating table now and say our members are serious."