



NEGOTIATION REPORT

December 1st, 2007

General Meeting Update

Over 200 members of the UGFA attended a General Meeting held November 30th at the Ramada Hotel. At the meeting members overwhelmingly voted in support of giving the Association "Executive the authority to hold a strike vote if and when necessary".

"We are pleased that the members have supported us by giving us additional tools and options in our negotiations", said UGFA President Glen Filson. "We now have the ability to work even harder to deliver positive results for our members".

The members support for the proposal was a strong showing for the work that UGFA is doing on their behalf. For over a year the Association has been negotiating with the University's Management to ensure a fair, reasonable contract for members.

"The Faculty and students are the core of this institution and are what makes it the success it is today", said Chief Negotiator Ed Carter. "To maintain our world-class reputation as a leading post-secondary institution we need to attract and retain the best faculty, librarians and veterinarians. That's why we are advocating on behalf of our members for established workload policies and salaries that are competitive and not in the bottom percentile".

Over the coming months UGFA will continue to negotiate for better working conditions for employees and maintains its position that a workable compromise may be attainable with the University's Management in the near future.

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The conciliator has arrived ...

A Provincial Conciliator has been called in to assist with our ongoing negotiations with Management. Myrna Mann began her work on November 29th, and we are hopeful that she will help us to reach an agreement which will directly benefit our members.

This voluntary Conciliation process could cease at any time. For example, the University could simply ask the Conciliator to leave. In that event, the Conciliator would likely issue a so-called "No-board Report", a report to the provincial Minister of Labour indicating that negotiations have broken down. The issuance of a "No-board Report" triggers the start of a 17 day "waiting period". Unless an agreement is reached several things will automatically happen after those 17 days. First, the Association is allowed to call a strike. Second, the University has the right to lock-out the UGFA Members. Third, the so-called "freeze" on terms and conditions of employment that was implemented upon certification of the Association as your bargaining agent ends. The lifting of the freeze has very important consequences. Once it is lifted, the University is freed from its contractual obligations to our Members. It then has the right to impose, unilaterally, any changes to your terms and conditions of employment that it wishes. We are working hard to ensure that the rights and privileges of our members are protected and secured. Hopefully with the assistance of Myrna Mann we will reach a satisfactory agreement.

Truth & Myth about the Strike Vote

A significant development took place recently which has placed UGFA and its members in a stronger negotiating position. At a General Meeting held on November 30th, members voted in overwhelmingly in favour of giving UGFA the ability to hold a strike vote. As a result, the Association now has another tool at its disposal to use in negotiations with the University's Management for fair and reasonable collective agreement.

Q. Does this development mean that the we will be going on strike?

A. Not necessarily. This means that UGFA's 'hands are now untied' and that the Association may conduct a vote on whether or not to have a strike in the future should the current negotiations deteriorate.

Q. Why was this step necessary?

A. Despite UGFA's ongoing efforts to reach a reasonable agreement with the University's Management, a compromise benefiting Association members has not yet been reached. Having a 'right to call a strike vote' option available adds leverage in the ongoing negotiations.

Q. Does the Association want a strike to occur?

A. The position of UGFA has been to secure a fair collective agreement for its members. The Association is not advocating for a strike, but wants to maintain as many options as possible. Both the members and the Association realize that a strike is the last resort.

Q. Is there a process or timeframe for a strike to occur?

A. The vote at the AGM was simply a vote to enable a vote. Now that the membership has voted to allow the 'option for a strike vote', the Association can conduct a vote at such a time it deems fit. There is currently no timeframe for any 'strike vote' or 'strike action' as the Association is still hopeful that Management will alter their static position in order to reach a mutually beneficial compromise.

Q. Has the Association contemplated any repercussions as a result of a strike?

A. UGFA realizes that a strike can have a negative impact on both its members and students. That is exactly why the 'strike action' is viewed as strictly a 'last resort' option. There are also potential consequences of not following a path which results in a strike. Those consequences are an agreement that does not require the university to manage in a fair and reasonable manner, non-competitive salaries for Association members, un-manageable workloads, and potential loss of expert Faculty due to these issues. This could potentially culminate in a significant loss in exceptional University staff as well as a lower quality of education being offered at the University of Guelph.



Photo of a Guelph Faculty member at 2007 Acadia strike.

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