

November 1, 2016

Strike day 1: Message from UMFA President Mark Hudson

Dear UMFA Members,

I know we all would rather be in our classrooms, labs or libraries than walking the picket lines, but some things are worth fighting for – and the integrity of our university is worth it. We are standing up for a university that values teaching and research.

I would like to provide you with more details of how we got to this point. As you know, we have been negotiating for months on the issues that you, our members, have told us matter most. These include:

- Protection against arbitrary workload increases. Last year Arts Instructors had their workload increased by 30% overnight. Science instructors have been told they are the next target. Without protections in the Collective Agreement, it could happen to all of us.
- Fair assessment. We are bargaining for protection against the mandatory use of performance indicators in processes of tenure, promotion, performance evaluation, hiring, and discipline. These performance indicators have been rolled out at many other universities with disastrous results: they are easy to “game”, have perverse incentives, discriminate against many equity seeking groups, disadvantage many disciplines, and increase the homogenization of research.
- Get off the salary floor. UMFA members earn less on average than our colleagues at every equivalent Canadian university. While we are thirteenth in the U13, President Barnard’s salary ranks third.
- Job security for all UMFA members.

We entered mediation with administration last Thursday. On the first day, we were informed of the provincial government’s edict that our collective agreement should be extended for a year with zero increase in salaries.

We see this as an assault on our collective bargaining rights and an outrageous intrusion into our constitutionally protected negotiation process. We have since learned that the administration knew about this mandate three full weeks earlier. I cannot explain why an administration intent on reaching a negotiated settlement would not reveal this information for three weeks, until mediation had started.

We immediately began to explore our legal options and have since initiated legal action on an unfair bargaining complaint against the employer. However, we opted to move forward with mediation on non-salary issues.

After three full days of mediation, we had reached agreement on procedures for tenure and promotion. Apart from that, there was no significant movement on any of our main non-monetary issues. On Sunday night we sent a final package to the employer that contained proposals on these key issues with a deadline of noon on Monday. We were disappointed that they refused our proposal. The employer presented us with a package on Monday at 11:15 AM, which offered nothing substantially new on our key issues.

We will now enter into conciliation on Wednesday. We will continue to bargain for our main priorities.

Finally, I would like to remind you:

- If you are an UMFA member, you will NOT under any circumstances be disciplined for going on strike. We are on legal strike and the law protects you fully. Please contact me immediately if you are told otherwise by administration.
- If you have not yet joined the strike action, it is not too late. Even if you have told the employer you would continue to work, you may still join the strike and we encourage you to do so! If you do, you will be still be eligible for all protections and strike benefits from the date you join the strike. Please contact our Vice President, Janet Morrill: morrilljanet@gmail.com.
- Students are also protected. They do NOT have to cross picket lines. Students must be offered reasonable accommodation if they choose not to cross a legal picket line.

At this point, the best thing for you to do to support our bargaining team is join your colleagues on the picket lines. (And remember, a two-hour shift every weekday entitles you to strike benefits of \$140 per calendar day.) You may go directly to your picket location and sign in with the picket captain there.

The response so far has been extraordinarily positive. We are receiving tremendous support from students.

In solidarity,

Mark Hudson
UMFA President