

UMFA Sets Bargaining Deadline

Strike at U of M would begin November 16, 6am

--For Immediate Release--

November 5, 2020

Winnipeg – The University of Manitoba Faculty Association today announced a bargaining deadline of 11:59pm, Saturday, November 14 because of the university administration’s refusal to engage in binding interest arbitration as a way to settle negotiations. This means a strike would begin Monday, November 16.

The Association has agreed to have a mediator join negotiations to help resolve the dispute, but set a firm deadline for resolution to avoid protracted, unproductive mediation.

"We’re working significantly longer hours during this pandemic. We are struggling to care for dependents, care for our own mental health, while teaching more students than ever," said UMFA President Michael Shaw.

The Association is bargaining for a more equitable salary grid, a modest increase to wages this year (2020-2021), and extra supports during the pandemic for those caring for children and other dependents. The Association is also asking that the wage offer that was taken off the table in 2016 be restored, and the wages that were denied be paid to UMFA workers. This June, the Court of Queen’s Bench declared that the legislation that prevented those wage increases from being paid was unconstitutional.

The University has responded to the Association’s proposals by saying that it wants the *status quo*, in line with a government mandated 0% salary increase for UMFA workers.

The administration has also suggested that the government will not allow salary increases because increases will set a precedent for negotiations throughout the public sector. Similar statements preceded a strike in 2016 that lasted 21 days.

"We’re anxious. Students are anxious. President Benarroch can bring all this to a close in an instant by agreeing to binding interest arbitration," Shaw said.

Course enrolments at the university have increased: almost 11% summer and over 3% this fall. This translates into a 9% increase in tuition revenues. The University has also recently announced that the first phase of its development of the former Southwood Golf and Country Club property will bring in \$20 Million.

Full-time academics at the University of Manitoba are paid some of the lowest salaries in the country when compared to similar institutions. As a consequence, recruiting and retaining talented academics will become increasingly difficult, impacting students and the university community.

The University of Manitoba Students’ Union, representing 23,000 undergraduate students, and the UM Graduate Students’ Association have both endorsed UMFA’s call for binding arbitration.

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