

November 2, 2020

Dear University of Manitoba students,

As you may know, the University of Manitoba Faculty Association and UM Administration have been engaged in bargaining since August. Talks reached a standstill in mid-October, and the Administration refused UMFA's suggestion of binding arbitration. This past weekend, members of UMFA voted 80% in favour of authorizing strike action if necessary.

Does this mean that there will be a strike? Not necessarily. If UM Administration agrees to give both sides' proposals to a neutral third party for binding arbitration, there will be no strike. Having a neutral party judge the merit of each proposal and craft a binding settlement is the fairest way forward. We're willing to have someone neutral evaluate what we're asking for to ensure stability at the university for students and for UMFA members. They were [open to it in 2013](#) -- Why isn't the Administration open to it now?

You may be asking, why bargaining is happening now rather than next year. Since 2016, UMFA salaries have been restricted to 0%, 0%, .75% and 1% salary increases due to Administration's adherence to the provincial government's illegal Public Services Sustainability Act. **In June, the PSSA was declared unconstitutional.**

Because of an Appendix in our Collective Agreement, this is the only time that UMFA can seek restitution from the PSSA, which has now been declared unconstitutional. **This is our only chance to try to undo some of the damage caused by the PSSA, and we are the first union affected by the PSSA to be able to try and fight for restitution from our employer. We need to make the employer correct their wrongdoing.**

As we all know, we're in the middle of a pandemic. Many people want to know if the university could even afford to pay faculty more. Undergraduate course enrolments were up by almost 11% this summer, and over 3% this fall. According to all figures, UM is in a very good financial position. Yet, the Administration still refuses to offer us a fair deal. In his open letter of October 30, President Benarroch admitted that UMFA salaries are not competitive. In the group of U15 universities, which is the group of Canadian medical-doctoral universities against which UM measures itself, UMFA salaries rank 13th, nearly last in all categories. **President Benarroch says that UM will "ultimately" pay UMFA members fairly. What are they waiting for?**

We know you don't want us to go on strike. We don't want to go on strike either, which is why we offered binding interest based arbitration over two weeks ago. **If the Administration agrees to binding arbitration, there will be no strike. It's up to them.**

There are approximately 30,000 students at the University of Manitoba. We know, because we teach you. We mentor you, advise you, write reference letters for you, find resources for you, counsel you, meet with you, suggest new directions to you, and learn from you. Some of you will become our colleagues, or teach our children, or provide us with health care, or create the music, art, and theatre that is so important right now. **We are highly invested in you. It's time the Administration invested in us.**

Contact Dr. Michael Benarroch at president@umanitoba.ca and ask him to agree to binding arbitration to avert a strike.

Sincerely,

Michael Shaw
President, UMFA
Senior Instructor
Department of Biological Sciences

Do you have questions about what exactly a strike means? Access UMFA's FAQs for students here: http://www.umfa.ca/images/pdfs/UMFA_STRIKE_VOTE_FAQ_-_STUDENTS_2020_FINAL.pdf

For a quick video presentation about bargaining, click here:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9_oKyzO0sq0&feature=youtu.be

To access mental health supports, click here: <https://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/counselling-resources-students>