

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



SEPTEMBER 2015

Unless you're locked in your lab, you've probably heard that the UM Board of Governors passed a budget last May that's \$14 million skinnier than the previous one. Over \$8 million of that is being sliced straight from your faculties, colleges, and libraries, despite robust and creative resistance to the cuts last spring from students, faculty, and staff through the Stop the Cuts Coalition. UMFA's look at the books suggests that cuts this deep are simply unnecessary, and can't help but hurt the quality of post-secondary education in Manitoba. It's going to be a tough year ahead as the cuts hit home, and President Barnard's signalling of a further 4% cut this year isn't doing anything to soothe the anxiety. Buckle up, UMFA members. It's in this context that I watch with some pleasure and a lot of unease as my name goes on the UMFA President's door.

As I step in, enormous thanks are due to our outgoing President, Tommy Kucera, for his tireless work in what was a relentlessly busy past year. He has served UMFA with amazing dedication, and has our gratitude for continuing to do so as Past President. In the midst of a hundred fires during 2014-15, Tommy managed to find the time and energy to begin the building process for the next round of bargaining.

Yes, you read that correctly. We're back at the bargaining table shortly, as our current Collective Agreement runs through until the end of March 2016. Most of us think about bargaining as something that begins when our negotiating team sits down at the table across from the University administration. But the work that goes into bargaining starts long before that, and our "bargaining team" is not just the group of people sitting at the table. It's all of us. Gains in bargaining come not only from negotiating skill, but from the sense across the table that when our representatives speak, they speak with the voice of all 1250 UMFA members who make this University what it is.

We have work to do to on this front. We need you to help do it in the upcoming year. The bargaining survey recently went out to get your input on bargaining priorities. Please fill it out and send it back. There will be meetings called to hear from you and your colleagues on what matters most to you. Please prioritize attending those meetings. Your conditions of work, your compensation, and the shape of university governance depend crucially on these small things.

Remember finally that UMFA is not "the" union. It is *your* union. Get involved. If your unit doesn't have somebody on the Board of Representatives (there's a list on the UMFA website), nominate somebody (you, maybe). If you do have a Rep, talk to them about your priorities. Let them know what you think is working and not working in the Association. The Board members are the eyes and ears of the

Association. Lastly, if you're unsure of how to get involved, or if you have something on your mind, please get in touch with me at the UMFA office. I really do want to listen to what you have to say, and if you call me or drop by it'll spare me from ambushing you in the hallway after your lecture!