

BARGAINING UPDATE

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NEGOTIATIONS UNDERWAY

When I agreed to accept the appointment as USFA Chief Negotiator, I was committed to keeping the USFA membership informed about preparations for upcoming negotiations as well as negotiations themselves. This *Bargaining Update* is one of the ways in which I am attempting to keep you informed.

You will likely have seen our recent E-Letter announcing that joining me on the USFA Negotiations Team for this round are Chris Adams (USFA Executive, Library), Doug Chivers (USFA Chair, Biology), Michael MacGregor (USFA Executive, Psychology), Eric Neufeld (USFA Executive, Computer Science), Larry Stewart (History), and Johanne Brassard (USFA Member Services Officer). These people are deserving of our thanks for volunteering to serve the USFA membership in this capacity.

What many of you will not yet know is that in response to a request from the employer, the USFA Executive has authorized the USFA Negotiations Team to immediately proceed with negotiations for a one year contract extension focusing on a financial settlement. There are many positive reasons for both the USFA and the employer to reach an agreement for 2009/2010, and we believe that members would be well served using this approach.

I can assure you that while we would not agree to enter into this process if we did not believe that we could arrive at a settlement, it still must be determined whether a package can be negotiated that provides our members with real financial gains. In the event that an extension agreement is reached, it will be presented to the membership for ratification.

We have met three times with the employer and have a protocol agreement in place. If a one-year salary settlement cannot be agreed upon by both sides by March 5, 2009, then we have agreed to abandon attempts at an immediate contract extension and open the Collective Agreement for full contract negotiations including negotiations about the length of the next Agreement.

There are important issues that we are reluctant to delay for a year, including the consideration of alternative faculty appointments and retirement provisions. The conditions of a successful, one-year extension agreement will stipulate an accelerated negotiation schedule on these important issues as well as arrangements to commence negotiations for the next Collective Agreement (July, 2010 and onward) by October, 2009.

The Negotiations Team is supported by the Negotiations Caucus, a larger body of volunteers who provide advice and research issues in preparation for bargaining. Right now, approximately 40 faculty members are serving as members of the caucus. Other faculty members interested in contributing to bargaining through participation in the caucus may contact me (jim.cheesman@usask.ca).

Jim Cheesman
USFA Chief Negotiator