

# University of Northern British Columbia Faculty Association

## *Bargaining Bulletin 2019 #15*

### **Message from the Chief Negotiator:**

Dear Colleagues,

As you all know, we have refrained from commenting on moment-by-moment events at the bargaining table. It is our belief that airing the minutiae of those events is usually detrimental to our primary purpose: reaching a collective agreement. It is particularly unhelpful to make such comments in the media. With that in mind, we crafted a restrained bargaining bulletin yesterday, one in which we avoided trying to embarrass the Employer's team.

However, the Employer's Chief Negotiator has now made it necessary for us to describe the events of the last night of bargaining. Last night, Ms Daigle asserted in the media that our team "were the ones who ended this discussion last night in the wee hours of the morning," adding that "we hung around for a couple of hours just to make sure that we had exhausted every possibility." This afternoon, she shared a summary of the Employer's final proposal and repeated the assertion that "the FA left talks on Thursday morning."

Bargaining on 6 November was intense and often tense, as is to be expected on the very eve of job action. Our detailed bargaining notes show that both parties took lengthy caucuses throughout the day as we grappled with fundamental differences in costing. Toward the end of the day, at about 11 PM, a lengthy commentary by the Employer's chief negotiator convinced us that it was impossible to reach a deal. Our chief negotiator therefore said, "I guess that we are done," to which the Employer's chief replied, "I am sorry." Our chief responded, "We also deeply regret that it has come to such a pass." We retreated to our boardroom and discussed next steps and how we might possibly respond. At 10:58, another member of the Employer's team contacted a member of our team to ask for a sidebar discussion. From 11:18 to 11:51, our member met with the member of the Employer's team. While that discussion was going on, the Employer's team, like our team, did indeed wait in their room. When our team member returned to our boardroom, we again discussed next steps, as we assume the Employer's team did. The Employer's team member contacted us again by text between 12:13 and 12:24 AM, asking whether they should wait and whether there was hope for progress. We texted back at 12:42: "Please hold on a few more minutes." At 12:56 AM we asked the Employer's remaining team members to come to the Senate Chambers. There were some minutes of delay as Security was called to unlock the chambers and as we made our way down from our boardroom. We sat down at the table at 1:30.

Between the return of our team member at 11:51 PM and our return to the table at 1:30 AM, we worked to decide how we could move and consulted with our principals. We received permission to table a new offer that we thought would be a breakthrough. We proposed that offer verbally at 1:34 AM. At 1:42 AM, the Employer's



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remaining team members requested a caucus. At 2:13 AM, we were called back to the Senate Chambers. We were told that our offer would be considered in the morning, but that any further consideration was contingent upon our not commencing job action. When we indicated that that was not possible on the basis of no more than a commitment to discuss, the Employer's Chief Negotiator stated that in such a case "it's all off." At 2:19 AM, only six minutes after we had entered the room, the Employer's Chief Negotiator said that they were "done," indicated that she was texting for a ride, and rose from her chair. Our Chief Negotiator then asked for clarification on whether the Employer's team was saying that they were done. A member of the Employer's team then suggested that we had said we were done, which our Chief Negotiator contested even as the remaining members of the Employer's team made their way to the door. Our team sat in the Senate Chambers as the Employer's team left the room, then debriefed. At 2:36 AM, we rose, took a commemorative selfie of the team, turned off the lights in the Senate Chambers, and returned to our boardroom.

We apologize to our members for the lengthy and perhaps tedious nature of this recounting of events. Though the Employer has attempted to suggest otherwise, we came to the table to get a deal, and were prepared to remain there until morning, and indeed, even as our picket lines went up. This is entirely normal in collective bargaining and is, indeed, the fastest way to end a job action.

We also believe that this anecdote, and particularly its end, as the Employer left the table whilst accusing us of doing the same, illustrates some of the challenges we have faced in this round of bargaining. We nonetheless remain committed, and ready at any time, to return to the table, roll up our sleeves, and conclude a collective agreement.

Ted Binnema, Chief Negotiator, UNBC FA, and the rest of the team: Jacqueline Holler, Umesh Parshotam, Matt Reid, Donna Sindaco, and Stephen Rader (*ex officio*).

