

MAFA NEWSLETTER

Mount Allison Faculty Association

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November 24, 2010

It's been 147 days since the expiration of our two collective agreements...

Reminder of General Meeting

**MAFA General Meeting, Tuesday,
December 7th, 1:30 pm, Avard Dixon
G12. All members are encouraged to
attend!**

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We had a good turnout for the Members' Meeting on November 5th. I think members got a more detailed view of how negotiations are going. At the many meetings between the two negotiating teams, paper containing revised proposals gets passed back and forth, and signals are sent about which parts of the other side's proposals could be acceptable. Several items have been signed off, and we are actually fairly close on many others. But big issues have not really been dealt with, and while there are several smaller items where we are close to agreement, it seems hard to get there. Any MAFA member who is interested can consult the positions that have been passed over – we have a large binder with all the proposals, revised proposals, re-revised proposals, etc., from both sides sitting in the MAFA office for consultation.

The vote of support for the team was very gratifying. Solidarity is important now. I still have hopes that we can reach agreement by Christmas, but, I admit, I actually had thought we would reach a collective agreement by the end of the summer. Hard decisions must be made by both sides. We have to realize that

a collective agreement will never be perfect, and that issues not dealt with this year can be raised in the next negotiations in a couple of years. Yet, as we all know, Mount Allison operates in a national, and international, market, and it would be a mistake for us to accept to fall behind others: this would just create more trouble for the future. In this negotiation period, we are in a time where our university is in very good shape compared to its competitors – with the most enrolments ever, large excesses of revenues over expenses, and, once again, first in Maclean's. Now is the time to move forward.

Rick Hudson
President

CONCILIATION BOARD APPOINTED

As we reported in the last newsletter, on November 3, 2010, the Hon. Martine Coullombe, Minister of Post-secondary Education, Training and Labour, called for the establishment of a "conciliation board" in the case of the labour negotiations at Mount Allison. The two sides had two weeks to name their "sides-persons", who then agreed on a chair.

MAFA named Chris Ferns, an English professor at Mount Saint Vincent University as its sides-person. Dr. Ferns is a former chair of the Collective Bargaining and Economic Benefits committee of the CAUT, and has a long experience in collective bargaining.

The Administration named Eric Durnford, Q.C., a Halifax-based management-side lawyer, experienced in labour relations cases.

The two sides agreed on Jim Oakley of Saint John's, NL, to serve as the chair. We understand the minister has accepted the composition of the Board.

MAFA has consistently opposed the use of conciliation boards in university labour disputes. We have worked closely with the FNBFA in an attempt to convince the new government not to follow the Graham government's new way of handling disputes in the university sector. At least the minister did agree to ask the Board to report by the end of January.

We have many objections about the use of boards. They will necessarily delay the process. Agreement will be reached at the table, but the board will distract the two teams from negotiating with each other, making them spend time answering questions from the Board. Also, boards are composed of outsiders who don't know the contract and whose recommendations may be inappropriate or unworkable. This could mean they will recommend the union get things that our Administration never would have given us, but it could mean the opposite as well. Mostly our objections are that the Boards will be a waste of time and money (the government's and the University's).

Despite our objections, MAFA will extend its full cooperation to the Board.

MAFA WITHDRAWS LABOUR BOARD COMPLAINT

MAFA recently withdrew its complaint to the New Brunswick Labour and Employment Board. The complaint, filed in October, was based on the view that the Employer had begun to implement a number of its proposals made, but not agreed to, in the collective bargaining process. An Employer is not permitted to change the terms and conditions of work during the first year after the expiry of the collective agreement, or until a legal strike or job action.



“We withdrew the complaint because the Employer

did withdraw the actions so we do feel that we achieved what we needed to,” says MAFA President Richard Hudson.

NEGOTIATION UPDATE

Negotiations have been continuing, twice a week. Some progress has been made in the last week, but we should note that some important issues still haven't really been handled yet.

The Administration did agree to revise one of its communications on its “negotiations” website to respond, in part, to our objections about communicating false statements about negotiations. We welcome this change. There is no point in trying to negotiate in public, and, in fact, it is against the *Industrial Relations Act* to do so. By pulling down an objectionable comment, the Administration is sending a good signal, which we want to note here.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS, 2010-11

Please mark these dates on your calendar:

Fall General Meeting, Tuesday, December 7th, 1:30 pm, Avard Dixon G12

Spring Annual General Meeting, Friday, April 8th, 3 pm, Avard Dixon G12

Retiring Members' Party, Friday, April 8th, 4:30 pm University Club

MAFA 2010-2011 EXECUTIVE

Richard Hudson - President (Commerce)

Gina Grandy - Vice-President (Commerce)

Peter Brown - Past President (English)

Robert Rosebrugh - Treasurer (Math and CS)

Jeff Lilburn - Collective Bargaining (Library)

Loralea Michaelis - Grievance (Political Science)

San Patten - Unit 2 (Continuous Learning)

**David Thomas - Membership (Political Science/
International Relations)**