



Dalhousie Faculty Association

Open letter to Dalhousie Students and Parents
from the President of the Dalhousie Faculty Association

Feb 10, 2012

After 10 months of contract negotiations, the Dalhousie Faculty Association bargaining team sat down the first day of conciliation February 1, and tabled a complete package of proposals on non-monetary and monetary items and, more importantly, a pension proposal.

We made a proposal to talk about pension structure, including an acknowledgement that Faculty Association would have to pay more for the pension plan, in an effort to help the Administration having to pay \$50 million a year toward a pension solvency deficit.

The team was shocked when Dalhousie's Board of Governor's bargaining team told us it did not have a mandate to discuss monetary issues.

This is all alarming because in that pension proposal, we have given what they have been requesting for nearly a year. They have been telling anyone who attended the 25 town hall meetings they held in the past year: "We need to talk."

With this proposal, the DFA has agreed to talk. We know we will have to pay more. We know what a \$50 million cut in the operating budget would do to education and research at Dalhousie.

And what do we get back? Nothing. No acknowledgement. No response. Just: "We don't have a mandate from the Board of Governors to talk about monetary issues."

You can imagine our negotiation team's reaction. And this scenario was repeated again Feb 7.

We are eager to move them past this position. That's why we called for the help of a conciliator in the first place.

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So we are taking a strike vote to impress upon the Administration that they should start bargaining in earnest. We came to the table eager to bargain. Apparently, the Administration did not.

The Members of the DFA do not want to strike. Students do not want a strike. The parents of students do not want a strike. Yet, the position from the University's Board of Governor's means the DFA has no choice but to take a strike vote to show them that we want to talk.

We do not want to be in this position. This is why we haven't taken a strike vote up to now. We are still hopeful we could work out a deal at the table. Especially after the Nova Scotia government clarified the rules around pension structure and made it possible for us to protect important principles of our Members' pensions and save the University \$50 million a year.

The Board's refusal to talk is causing unnecessary alarm and concern among the 870 faculty, counsellors and librarians we represent. We are the ones with students in the classrooms, in the laboratories, in the libraries, and in the counselling centre. Not the Administrators. We know the sacrifice students and their parents make to excel at Dalhousie University. We understand how much a strike would cost them. It would cost us, too. The only party that ever comes out of a strike unscathed in this case are Administrators and the Board of Governors.

We have called for a strike vote for Feb 13, 14, 15 & 16. We're taking this extraordinary step of going public with this, hoping this pressure will persuade the Board to give its Negotiating Team the mandate to negotiate.

We hope the Board's team comes back to us with a counter-proposal on our monetary package and our pension proposal so we can move forward constructively. We want the Board to stop playing with the future of every one of the 17,000 students at Dalhousie and of the University itself.

Please feel free to email us your thoughts at dfa@dal.ca; but also consider contacting the Board of Governors via the secretary Susan Brousseau, at: Phone: (902) 494-1598, Fax: (902) 494-6668, Email: susan.brousseau@dal.ca ; and the Dalhousie University President, Tom Traves, Phone: (902) 494 2511, Fax: (902) 494-1658, Email: Tom.Traves@dal.ca

Sincerely,

Anthony Stewart, President