



Canadian Association of University Teachers
Association canadienne des professeures et professeurs d'université

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December 3, 2009

Prof. Cathy Christie
President
Queen's University Faculty Association
9 St. Lawrence Avenue
Kingston, ON K7L 3N6

Dear Cathy:

As you might imagine, university administrations across Canada are doing as your administration is doing – taking inappropriate advantage of an international economic crisis to press for changes in their universities.

Evidently, they are all fans of Milton Friedman who, in his *Capitalism and Freedom* observed:

...only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable.

For most administrations, the present moment is ideal: there is a widespread sense of crisis so claims of the university's dire straits, whether justified or not, have a patent credibility.

But, almost universally, university administrations have declined requests by faculty associations for universities to provide full access to the institution's books to experts chosen by the faculty association to determine (1) if there really is a crisis at the institution; and (2) if so, are the administration's proposed remedies appropriate.

In the absence of such transparency, it is hard to take administration claims seriously.

In those cases where there is really a problem, it is usually a result of bad decisions by the administration or bad investments by the group responsible for the university's asset management. We would be pleased to provide you numerous specific examples. In almost none of those cases, would a roll-back of faculty salaries be more than a band-aid solution that would harm the university in the long run more than help. After all, how can a top university attract and retain academic staff if its salaries and working conditions are not competitive.

In that regard, please allow us to bring you up to date on recent bargaining across Canada. In the past year, employers have been aggressive at the bargaining table, seeking concessions on

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governance, offering very low salary increases and seeking increased member contributions to pension plans.

Academic staff associations successfully resisted these attempts to roll back their salaries and working conditions. A number of associations had to take their employers to the brink of a strike before a reasonable settlement was possible.

Reasonable settlements were reached in all of these very difficult negotiations. In the past year, 14 of the 16 settlements reported to CAUT Council had annual salary increases of more than 3.0%. The other two settlements were at 2.5% and 2.9% a year.

CAUT has encountered very few instances where employers request concessions outside of collective bargaining. This is because the collective agreement is a contract signed in good faith. It results from compromises by the association and the employer. An attempt to reopen the agreement on just one item undermines the very foundation of collective bargaining.

When the employer at Laurentian asked for days off without pay, LUFA refused. At Lakehead the employer decided to unilaterally impose four days off without pay (December 21-24, 2009) despite the union's objection. The association, with CAUT's support, has taken the matter to arbitration where we expect to win a repayment for the days lost. Academic staff associations across the country are rallying to the association's defence, and sending delegates to Thunder Bay for protest events on December 21 and 22.

In periods when our members agree to modest salary settlements we realize that the opportunity for improvement will be during the subsequent round of collective bargaining. Imagine how an employer would respond if one of our member associations tried to reopen a collective agreement for a higher salary increase because the institution's finances had improved.

Allowing the employer at Queen's to get a 2% salary reduction would set a dangerous precedent for your members and for colleagues across the country. It would make a mockery of collective bargaining. We urge you to stand fast and keep your current collective agreement intact.

Yours sincerely,



Penni Stewart
President



James L. Turk
Executive Director

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P.S.: Please feel free to share this letter with your colleagues in QUFA.