

# BARGAINING ALERT!

## University Rejects Dispute Resolution Mechanism on the Eve of Bargaining



At the start of bargaining, the University administration rejected QUFA's proposal that we continue to follow

the Dispute Resolution Mechanism that has been in place for the past 11 years.

A Dispute Resolution Mechanism (DRM) plays an important role in collective bargaining in that it sets out what will happen should the negotiating parties fail to reach an agreement by a certain deadline. For the past 11 years, a DRM has been in place providing that if the parties failed to agree on a new Collective Agreement by 1 April, they would submit the scale increase to binding arbitration and continue with the other provisions of the Collective Agreement, with any agreed amendments, for another year.

The DRM that has been in place was designed to encourage bargaining in a timely way and to avoid strikes or lockouts. It has been a fundamental aspect of the relationship between QUFA and the University

administration since the Faculty was first unionized. In fact, the desire for a peaceful way to settle disputes (and to avoid the unilateral imposition of salary settlements by the administration) was one of the main reasons for the drive to establish the Faculty Association as a certified union.

The issue of a DRM was one that QUFA raised last Spring during discussions over the amalgamation of the two Bargaining Units. This September, as we readied for the current round of collective bargaining, QUFA formally proposed to follow the DRM that had been in place. We had not heard back from the University's administration until 29 November, the eve of the first bargaining session, when the University sent QUFA a letter rejecting this proposal. The University bargaining team explained that the timing of the rejection served the "University's purpose."

As a result of the University administration's rejection of QUFA's proposal for a DRM, the parties have neither an agreed-upon deadline for the conclusion of negotiations nor an agreed-upon mechanism for avoiding a strike or lockout if negotiations for a new Collective Agreement fail.

An even more serious concern to QUFA than the timing of the University administration's rejection is the apparent lack of attention paid to the issue of a DRM by the senior academic administration, an issue that is fundamental to our collective bargaining. The University bargaining team explained that the decision was

not based on any strategic decision made by the senior academic administration. Instead, the decision to reject QUFA's proposed DRM apparently was made solely by the University's bargaining team without serious consideration of QUFA's views or the possible consequences of such actions.

QUFA is dismayed that such a fundamental change in the relationship between QUFA and the University administration has occurred without any advanced warning or discussion.



*QUFA encourages you to print out a copy of this Bargaining Alert and post it in a visible space in your department or unit. Thank you!*

*Past issues of Bargaining Alerts are archived on the QUFA Web site ([www.qufa.ca](http://www.qufa.ca)).*