

January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005

## QUFACTS UPDATE ON NEGOTIATIONS

Negotiations for a new Collective Agreement between the University Administration and the Queen's University Faculty Association resumed on January 10. Since then, the parties have agreed to minor amendments to several articles of the existing Collective Agreement.

The amended articles will be posted in the near future on the QUFA website. They include Article 3 Dues Check-Off; Article 4 Copies of Agreement; Article 10 Past Practices; Article 12 Strikes by Other Bargaining Units; Article 14 Academic Freedom; Article 18 Conflict of Interest and Commitment; Article 19 Grievance & Arbitration; Article 23 Health, Safety and Security; Article 26 Reduced Responsibility and the portion of Article 37 Workload concerned with Reduction in Teaching. Several minor amendments are outstanding, including amendments to Article 27 on Moving Allowances.

In addition, QUFA has tabled three major proposals:

1. One proposal is to reduce the categories of adjuncts and to improve their job security and working conditions. While the parties have had several discussions about the general principles for the appointment, re-appointment and possibility of continuing status for adjuncts, no agreements have been reached.
2. QUFA has also proposed a review of the Benefits available to Queen's employees. QUFA has hired a benefits consultant to review the benefits at Queen's and compare them with those available at other Ontario universities. The work of these consultants has been delayed because of the unwillingness of the University Administration to provide the kind of information that could be supplied by the insurance carrier and has been made available to other Ontario faculty associations. Nevertheless, the available information indicates that Queen's employees pay a greater share of the total cost of benefits through premium sharing, co-insurance provisions and deductibles than any other Ontario university. In addition some coverages such as dental care for retirees and eye care for all members are not available. Discussions with the University Administration will continue, and once the options for improvements to the benefits plans become clearer, QUFA intends to consult the members about their preferences.
3. QUFA has tabled a proposal for major changes to the Article 29 on Evaluation. There has been widespread concern among members about the way teaching evaluation actually occurs in most units. Often there is exclusive reliance on USAT which is thought to be poorly designed, and the results erroneously interpreted, applied and

communicated. These concerns are supported by a vast body of expert and scientific literature. QUFA's proposal is to specifically provide that evaluation of teaching cannot be based on student opinions alone, to enumerate those aspects of teaching that should be evaluated and the evidence that should be used, and to create a joint Administration - QUFA committee with a broad mandate to consider how to improve and evaluate teaching and learning and also, specifically, to consider how to improve the design, interpretation and application of any survey of student opinions.

In addition to these three proposals, QUFA has also notified the University Administration that it will propose amendments to the non-discrimination article which would abolish mandatory retirement for our members. The Ontario Government has announced plans to prohibit mandatory retirement, although the date when this change will become law is still uncertain. QUFA will propose that the University immediately end mandatory retirement rather than wait until it is forced to do so by the proposed legislative changes.

So far during these negotiations, the University Administration has not proposed major changes to the existing collective agreement. They have proposed numerous minor grammatical and clarifying amendments, but otherwise seem content with the status quo.

Negotiations are scheduled to continue until the end of March and QUFA intends to make several additional major proposals on workload, working conditions, leaves, employment equity and compensation. There will be further updates on these proposals during the negotiations.

Marvin Baer,  
Chief Negotiator