

President's Report
RATIFICATION VOTE MEETING
March 24, 2007

Today's meeting:

Includes a report from the negotiators, the ratification vote, and then, while the vote is being counted, I will ask for an election of delegates to the FPSE AGM (May 15-18 in Cranbrook). This is being done before our local AGM this year because of the lack of flight options to get to Cranbrook – the FA needs to make bookings as soon as possible.

I would like to open the meeting with my report to you on negotiations before I turn things over to Sheldon and George.

So -Here we are at a ratification vote on the tentative common and local agreements, and not to be anti-climatic, but the Executive will be bringing forward a recommendation to approve the agreements; yet, the process leading us here today has not been without bumps. So I want to begin with a **SNAPSHOT RETROSPECTIVE on the goings on since we came to you to ask for a strike vote to support negotiations in February.**

First, I would like to thank those of you who supported our provincial negotiators and your local bargaining team through our strike vote. FACNC produced a strong vote at 82.% in favour. The strike votes, as they started to emerge across the province (NVIT at 100% , Malaspina at 90% , and College of the Rockies at 77% were the first ones out) sent a clear message to the employers and by February 16th we had concrete evidence that the strike votes were working their magic. The provincial negotiators were able to come to the bargainers and then to the FPSE Bargaining Council with a tentative agreement.

We voted here at CNC on February 12 & 13 and while we awaited the results, the provincial scene changed dramatically, resulting in an FPSE Bargaining Council meeting being called in Vancouver on Saturday Feb 17. The day before, the negotiators, George and Jeff McKeil for FPSE, came back to our bargainers with a tentative agreement. The concessions were gone and they had managed to break the mandate we

had been handed in regard to the labour adjustment money. I will leave further details to George and Sheldon, but for my part, I wanted you to know that I would have not voted in favour of the tentative agreement on February 17th had there not been assurances from the negotiators as well as FPSE President, Cindy Oliver, that government representatives were saying that the concessions would come off the local tables as well.

My understanding was that faculty at CNC were most concerned about protecting ourselves against the loss of our rights and threats to job security, in otherwords, the money was a less significant concern. Hearing about Government assurances in regard to the local tables over the removal of concessionary proposals determined my vote at the Bargaining Council. I understood that the agreement did not address a lot of the longstanding issues we wanted to address at both the provincial and local level, I am aware that years ago bargainers could hold out for better return given strike votes, but I filtered this through what I am most clearly aware of, the fact that there is no longer free collective bargaining going on in this province. As a union, we have very limited options in BC, given the history since 2001 (i.e. unions being legislated back to work if they strike, strikes ruled illegal when unions actually carried out with a strike, the Government going in after the fact and unceremoniously ‘ripping up agreements’). These things have all happened since 2001. In otherwords, given the current climate in BC, I believe that our negotiators, George and Jeff got the best deal possible.

Nonetheless, the Bargaining Council vote was divided 8 in favour 4 opposed (one local not present), and certainly, the employers knew that their proposal would divide us. (for instance, 2.1% for everyone, and the “recruitment” money at the top of the scale at closer to 2.9%) – I refer you to the table on Green for an overview of increases across the Steps on the full time scale, however, those not at step 1 currently will gain step increases that those at the top cannot, – and the 2.1% increase will also flow through to our part-time scale as well. The dissenting voices in the 8 to 4 vote were linked to concerns over equity across the salary scales, the low level of the compensation (i.e. in relation to the Universities and to other provinces), what would happen with pensions, and outstanding issues at Emily Carr and NVIT. The last two concerns have been answered since. The first concern is linked to specific locals and the second issue only has answers relative to how you ask questions

about what we deserve in relation to university and college faculty across the nation.

Following the February 17, Bargaining Council decision, the bargainers went home to try to get agreements at local tables, some having more difficulty than others, ... some ultimately requiring intervention from Government agents in forcing concessions off local tables. We were fortunate in not requiring direct Government intervention, nor the assistance of one of the FPSE staff reps at our local table, and I believe thanks goes to the strength and knowledge of our team, and in particular the presence at our local table of the provincial negotiations chairperson and FPSE Vice President, George Davison in not having to resort to these alternatives. We were able to solve for the most problematic proposals on distributive learning and admin hiring and we have a discussion set aside on increases to the PD fund. Our local team did an excellent job, although I know that the decision about this is ultimately, yours.

Over this same time period, I took to the College Board on Friday, February 16 the reasons behind our call for a strike vote and I focussed on the mean-spirited nature of the concessions coming from CNC, some of them going back to agreements reached as far back as the early 1980's. I told the Board that faculty were given no choice but to consider this assault on our basic rights and to the essential fabric of the collective agreement except to take a strike vote. I also told them that the FA was aware that they knew that this round of bargaining had a provincial mandate that was based upon some limited monetary improvements in exchange for retaining rights and job security protections.

I have since made another presentation to the Board, Friday, March 16th, and this one followed the tentative agreement reached at the local table. While I congratulated the Board on reaching an agreement, I also provided more details on why the FA was astonished with the depth of concessions that had been contemplated by the College and I also reported on the outcome of the strike vote. The College strategy, I said to them, was very curious given the outstanding fiscal problems, ongoing downsizing of faculty, the emerging faculty recruitment pressures, and the continuing student numbers dilemmas. Why would they want to put further pressure on faculty when the Government was

attempting to provide economic incentives? The last thing CNC would need now is more negative press – and forcing the faculty to strike would certainly do that.

I also want to report to you on what the President's Council has been doing since the Bargaining Council decision February 17 and the last PC on March 5 & 6th. As I mentioned the issues over Emily Carr and NVIT as well as questions regarding efforts around inflation protection to the pension have moved toward resolution. Among other things, coming out of the PC on March 5 and 6 was a commitment to weekly teleconferences until the end of March.

First, however, as of the e-mail at 9:00 am today, there are currently only 2 locals of the 13 involved that have not garnered tentative agreements and both of them report being close to agreement (NVIT, and Northwest, AWU). Some of the tentative agreements required Cindy's intervention in getting Government (PSEA, PSEC and/or Ministry of Finance) officials to direct local employers to remove concessionary proposals. All others have tentative agreements and have either had ratification votes or are awaiting results of ratification votes.

During the March 5 & 6th meetings of PC discussions included what to do about inflation protection for pension since there has been a pension table set out in the tentative agreement, and, since inflation protection for the pension was a direction set out at both our local AGM and the FPSE AGM last spring. Yet, there is no money for pensions in the agreement but a side table, which is the convention, but this time, following an agreement. On March 22 there was a pension partners meeting where Cindy Oliver made a case for the fact that the plan needs money for inflation protection. She took the example of a 4million dollar cash infusion to the fund that would guarantee inflation protection an additional 1% from the 1.5% it can currently afford without a guarantee. Half of this 1% would come from an increase to our premiums and half from Government. Cindy said she was surprised that Government (led by the Deputy Minister of Finance, Vrooaman) did not say no! Thus, the government is considering the request by FPSE. Currently, there is money enough in the plan to guarantee (something we have not had previously) a 1.5% inflation increase to pension benefits. Keep in mind that 40% of the current benefit for pensioners is based on using this inflation adjustment account. Another 1% would get us to a recognizable guestimate on inflation at

2.5%/year. So, more information to follow on pension inflation protection.

Another set of motions have emerged from the Presidents' Council meeting, and the teleconferences following it, around defense fund allocation for locals that are at risk of strike. The first motion designated money from the defence fund to pay the signing bonus money to Emily Carr and NVIT faculty should they go beyond the March 31 deadline. This Thursday, the PC reconsidered the original motion and passed one that would include any local and any kind of support should a local be facing strike. I think this was an excellent illustration of the solidarity within our federation, but likely a mute point given that all locals that were at risk our anticipating agreements. I voted against the original motion.

Finally, I would like to thank George for his efforts in getting the provincial agreement, I know it was not easy and differences coming from his own negotiations committee must have been difficult. I would also like to thank Sheldon Clare, George and the other members of the local negotiations team for all their hard work.