



DFA President's Message

By Dave Westwood

After a lengthy hiatus we are finally returning to formal negotiations at the table. The DFA's Bargaining Team will resume conciliation with the Board's Team Monday at 9:00 am, supported by our very capable conciliation officer Rick Rose. Conciliation will take place at the Future Inn on Fairfax Drive, just outside of the Bayer's Lake commercial park. I will be present with our team, and I have blocked my calendar until midnight.

I reached out to our Bargaining Team for some comments and perspectives as they head back to the table. Here is what they wanted to share with everyone:

A Message from the DFA Bargaining Team

David Wallbridge, Patti Doyle-Bedwell, Iona Green, Tim Juckes, Tom Koo, Joanne Mills, Julia M. Wright, Jack Brown, and Lynn Purves

Some of you will have seen one or more of us at various pickets in Halifax and Truro over the last few weeks. It's been great to walk and talk with all of you, but, well, we'd rather have been at the bargaining table working to get you a full and fair deal—and Monday we finally get to get back to that.

We know the headlines over the last few weeks have thrown us a few curve balls. In the context of our bargaining protocols, that September 2nd letter was like getting a limerick from a student when you asked for a research paper. But the people who have been doing that kind of thing aren't on the Board's bargaining team.

The two teams agreed to protocols at the beginning of this process and we were all following them at the table. Sure there were some abrupt moves, like asking for conciliation when we hadn't even finished going through proposals. But we did make progress because we were talking and using the protocols, and our team is 100% ready to do that again on Monday.

Of course it's been a difficult few weeks. The lockout was unprecedented. The uncertainty has affected everyone in the DFA, our students, and even colleagues and communities beyond Dalhousie because of research and other collaborations. Huge thanks to the Job Action Committee, the DFA Executive, DFA staff, and every one of you for sharing your experiences and building solidarity: we hear you, and your resolve strengthens ours. Support from other unions has been amazing. And the province's Conciliation Services has

been tackling an unusual situation with impeccable professionalism to get everyone back to the table.

Monday is not about looking back, but building a better future with an improved collective agreement. With the conciliator's help, your bargaining team is ready to discuss both sides' proposals, think creatively about solutions, and arrive at a negotiated deal so that we can all get back to where we really want to be—with our students and our colleagues on campus doing the jobs we love at the university we care about so much

Like you, I hope that considerable progress can be made at Monday's meeting but it might yet take some time to negotiate a satisfactory deal. We do not want the lockout to continue unnecessarily, but we are also committed to making sure that we bring back a deal that DFA Members will find acceptable. It is important that we all maintain our passion and commitment on the picket lines and in our online activities; our Bargaining Team needs your support now as ever.

Please keep a close eye on our official communications as we might need to call a full membership meeting with relatively short notice. We will coordinate with the Job Action Committee to facilitate maximal participation in any membership meetings. The Executive Committee will also be on standby so that we can be as nimble as possible with our decision-making processes.

I hope you were able to join us on Friday past for what was a tremendous rally, featuring strong and unequivocal support from various student groups and leaders in addition to many inspiring remarks from DFA Members who have experienced – and continue to experience – precarity in their academic careers. We heard strong messages of support from our colleagues from CAUT and the CAUT Defence Fund, in addition to an invigorating performance by El Jones calling attention to the obvious but also subtle ways that powerful actors shape and influence public life and reminding us that there are times when people must stand together and fight for the things that matter.

At the conclusion of the rally we posted the list of 500+ signatories for the “Limited-Term Appointments” letter on the outer doors of the Henry Hicks Building – I was unable to get inside the building because the doors had been locked, and a message had been sent to those working inside the building to leave in anticipation of what might happen as a consequence of our rally. Judging by the mood and energy at the rally, I am confident that we are correct to be fighting to win improved job security for our precariously employed DFA colleagues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'DW', with a horizontal line underneath.

David Westwood

DFA President

2025-2026