



Dalhousie Faculty Association

MEDIA RELEASE

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Dalhousie Faculty Association alarmed by bargaining tactics

HALIFAX -- Dalhousie Faculty Association President Anthony Stewart says he can't understand why the bargaining team representing the University's Board of Governors is ignoring the DFA's pension proposal after asking to talk about pensions for more than a year.

"The first day of conciliation, Feb 1, we offered the Administration's negotiation team a package that included an offer to talk about the structure of the pension plan in order to qualify for an exemption from special pension solvency payments," Dr. Stewart told a press conference today. "We were shocked to hear that they didn't have a mandate to negotiate monetary issues."

"How can you come to conciliation and not have the mandate to actually conclude a deal?"

In the second day of conciliation, held Feb 7, the board's team responded to a few non-monetary items, refused to talk about monetary and pension issues and sent the conciliator away mid-afternoon.

Dr. Stewart says he has no idea why the Board has not given the negotiators a mandate to bargain.

The President of Dalhousie University has been warning that the \$270 million solvency deficit will come out of the University's operating budget, starting next March and could mean cutting programs and faculty. Without a drop in solvency requirements, the amount is estimated at about \$50 million a year over seven years.

"Our members are with students in the classrooms and laboratories, the libraries and the counselling centre. We know how devastating a cut that size would be to education and student services," says Dr. Stewart. "We know we have to pay more for our pensions and we are willing to discuss that. And what we get back is silence."

Dr. Stewart says the DFA has been trying to get a deal for the past 10 months. The Board had been refusing to talk about monetary issues until it had a deal on pension reform. But the DFA was unable to make any responsible decision about pension reform until the provincial

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government proclaimed amendments to the Pension Benefits Act and revealed draft regulations last December. The conciliator has been unable to advance the process to date.

Dr. Stewart says it appears the Board of Governors wants to test the resolve of the association's 870 members by pushing the DFA into a strike vote.

"We do not want to do this. That is why we have not taken a strike vote before now. We do not want to add to the stress students are feeling," says Dr. Stewart. "We are hoping a strong strike mandate will motivate the Board of Governors' to give its team the authority to bargain."

The strike vote will take place February 13, 14, 15 and 16. The only remaining conciliation date is Feb 15.

The Dalhousie Faculty Association represents faculty, professional librarians and psychologists/counsellors.

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