

SIAST Academic Bargaining Unit

January 24, 2007

Strike Vote

Although our information pickets were very well attended, they failed to convince management to come to the table and negotiate a fair collective agreement. We continue to face difficulties in our negotiations and have been unable to resolve many outstanding issues. We have highlighted a number of the problems we face below.

Recruitment and retention

The main issue facing SIAST is recruitment and retention. The provincial government, which is responsible for funding post-secondary training, must ensure that SIAST is able to offer competitive salaries and benefits if they hope to hire and keep the best instructors in Saskatchewan.

SIAST officials have acknowledged that recruitment and retention is the major issue in this round of bargaining. Temporary market supplements for select jobs, for example, is little more than a band-aid solution. Currently SIAST wages fall far behind those paid to instructors in neighbouring provinces and members of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF).

Pension contributions

We currently have one of the **lowest** matched pension contribution rates of all government workers. Members of the new pension plan contribute only 5.25% matched while most public service workers contribute between 6.45 to 9% matched. Our members deserve a decent pension for dedicating their lives to the betterment of Saskatchewan.

Treatment of casual, part-time and end-dated employees

One of the contentious issues at the bargaining table is SIAST's intention to significantly increase the number of casual employees. Casual employees lose many of the rights and benefits that other members receive. We are not prepared to accept the exploitation of this group of vulnerable workers.

In addition, SIAST wants to deprive part-time and end-dated employees access to the bumping process, thereby limiting their ability to retain employment. Management also intends to deny these workers access to severance upon layoff.

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Lack of professional development

Instructors are also frustrated with management's lack of support for professional development. We are committed to providing quality education and skills training and that can only happen if we have the opportunity to expand our knowledge base and enhance our skills.

Cuts in Trades programs

Existing trades programs are being cut in favour of shorter pre-trades training programs. We are worried about de-skilling our future work force, and that is what happens when you replace 32 to 37 week training programs with 20 week courses. Learners no longer receive the comprehensive education they need.

Problems with scope and hiring practices

SIAST wants the unfettered right to move employees in and out of the scope of the collective agreement. SIAST is attempting to eliminate the union's right to attend hiring interviews and represent our members in all aspects of the hiring process. SIAST is also attempting to deny employees access to expedited processes in non-appointment or bumping disputes. Rather, the employer could potentially drag disputes out indefinitely. This would seriously hamper SGEU's ability to represent the interests of its members.

Strike Vote

We continue along the same path as in the last round of bargaining. We hope our actions will serve notice to the provincial government that we are serious about achieving a collective agreement that solves the problems we face. We expect the government to authorize a reasonable wage and benefits package and direct its negotiators at SIAST to address our other outstanding concerns.

Because of the problems we face at the table, we have concluded that our only course of action is to consult with the membership and conduct a strike vote. In accordance with the SGEU Constitution, we are required to provide advance notice for a round of meetings called specifically for a strike vote.

Prior to the strike vote meetings, your Negotiating Committee will hold **informational** membership meetings January 31 at Wascana (noon), January 31 at Palliser (4:00 p.m.), February 1 at Kelsey (noon), and February 2 at Woodland (noon) to bring you up to date on the current situation.

The strike vote will be conducted, after a short presentation, as follows:

Wascana Campus

Auditorium E2654

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

February 8, 2007

Palliser Campus

Macoun Lounge

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

February 9, 2007

Woodland Campus

Room # A240

12:00 noon - 1:00 p.m.

February 12, 2007

Kelsey Campus

Lecture Theatre 104

11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

February 13, 2007

For updates, check out www.sgeu.org or www.acad.sgeu.org