

## **An update from your Students' Association regarding the collective agreement negotiations**

Hello students,

I am writing to you on behalf of your Saint Mary's University Students' Association (SMUSA) to provide a second update on the progress of the collective agreement negotiations between Saint Mary's University (SMU) and the Saint Mary's University Faculty Union (SMUFU).

As you may have seen in recent news stories or on social media, **SMU and SMUFU have failed to reach an agreement after two days of conciliation.**

### **What is conciliation?**

- It is when a neutral 3rd party conciliator, assigned by the provincial government's Department of Labor and Advanced Education, steps in and acts as a moderator for negotiations, in hopes of reaching an agreement.
- The conciliator has no authority in decision making, but is highly knowledgeable in effective negotiation procedures.
- The conciliator first meets with both parties to gain an understanding of all outstanding issues. They then work with each individual party to obtain more detailed information, and to find ways for both parties to find common ground and reach an agreement.

### **How does conciliation end?**

- Conciliation ends when the conciliator files a legal report. This report will indicate either that an agreement has been reached, or that the conciliator has declared that both parties are at an impasse, meaning that an agreement will not be reached.
- The conciliator will only file an impasse report if they feel as though all avenues within the conciliation process have been exhausted. This type of report explains that the conciliator cannot help the two parties reach an agreement.
- Reports are filed to the Minister of Labor and Advanced Education.

### **What happens if both parties cannot reach an agreement during conciliation?**

- Once the conciliator files a report, a two week 'cooling off' period is in effect, during which no labour action can occur (including a strike).
- At the end of the cooling off period, SMUFU can file for labour action.
- If labour action is called, there is a 48-hour period before a strike or a lockout can begin.

### **What has happened so far, and what is next?**

- Negotiations began in June for the new collective agreement.
- Since then, several meetings have been held between SMU and SMUFU in order to negotiate the terms of the new agreement.
- The two parties could not come to an agreement, which led to SMUFU holding a meeting on October 10th to discuss their next steps.

- A strike vote was conducted between October 10th and 18th, resulting in 80% of SMUFU voting in favour of a strike (meaning that the SMUFU membership gave their bargaining team the ability to strike, if they see fit).
- SMUFU filed for conciliation with the Department of Labour and Advanced Education.
- SMU and SMUFU have since had two meetings with the conciliator.
- A tentative agreement has not been reached at this time.
- The conciliator's report to the Minister of Labour and Advanced Education has not yet been filed. However, we have been informally told that the conciliator will likely **file a report in early January**.
- The conciliator dictates when the report will be filed, and will let both parties know when this does occur.
- **Collective bargaining meetings can still continue to occur during this entire process.**

### What is SMUSA doing?

- As students ourselves, we understand that not only can this process be confusing, but it can also be worrisome. That is why we are committed **to informing and educating all students about the collective agreement negotiation process, with regular updates.**
- At this time, it is difficult to predict if there will be any labour disruptions. However, **we are in constant communication with both parties, and are doing everything in our power to ensure that the student voice is heard.**
- We remain optimistic that students will not be negatively impacted by these negotiations, since at no time in the history of Saint Mary's University have students ever lost a semester due to failed collective bargaining. However, we are preparing for all possibilities.
- **We will be sending out another email in early January to update you on the process, and will let you know as soon as the conciliator files a report.**
- We will continue to answer any questions or concerns you may have, and bring them to the attention of both parties.

If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to reach out to me at [president.smusa@smu.ca](mailto:president.smusa@smu.ca).

Enjoy your break, and rest assured that we have your best interests in mind.

Happy Holidays!



**Ossama Nasrallah**

President,  
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