

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
University



Mediator leaves table

Talks break down between Wilfrid Laurier University and the WLU Staff Association

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WATERLOO - After more than a week of almost around-the-clock bargaining, talks between Wilfrid Laurier University and the WLU Staff Association have broken off with the departure of independent mediator Luke Fusco. No further talks have been scheduled and the media blackout has been lifted.

Vice-President: Finance & Administration, Jim Butler expressed his "deep disappointment" that the two parties have not yet been able to reach an agreement. Addressing the issue of contracting out, he clarified that "the university had the right to contract out in the previous collective agreement but the process for doing so was the source of many disputes. The parties were close to a meeting of the minds on this issue," he said, "and yet we still don't have a deal."

"The remaining union proposals, including their monetary and benefit demands, are now a major stumbling block," Butler said.

Butler said the university has tried to eliminate these 'blocks' by making significant movement on its monetary offer, and by improving the offer on various benefits, including vacation entitlement and tuition benefits for part-time members' spouses and children.

A message from President Bob Rosehart to the university community expressed disappointment at the lack of progress. "A serious effort must be made immediately to get negotiations back on track," he wrote, "and the WLUSA bargaining team must share in the responsibility to ensure this happens. The focus must be on the task at hand – reaching a settlement -- rather than on the continuing series of diversionary activities which have detracted from serious bargaining."

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Faculty of Science Dean, Dr. Arthur Szabo, who joined the bargaining team on the weekend, said he's extremely disappointed by what he's seen "across the table because I feel that the university presented an offer that would have brought the staff back to work".

"The university has made proposal after proposal that can only be described as superior," Dr. Szabo continued. "The major issue for the university was the ability to have an unencumbered right to contract out. The parties essentially agreed to this and the university accepted WLUSA's language on employment security for its members. On all other matters, the union made no significant counter-proposals to those the university advanced. Rather, they continued to insist on the demands they'd been representing since I joined the bargaining process on Friday."

The president has requested that both parties agree to have the provincial mediator rejoin the process immediately in an effort to break the stalemate.

"We remain committed to reaching a fair and reasonable settlement in this dispute, and one that is in the best long-term interests of Laurier, and will continue to do everything possible to see that this happens, Butler concluded.