

# THE UPEI CADRE

UPEI'S STUDENT VOICE

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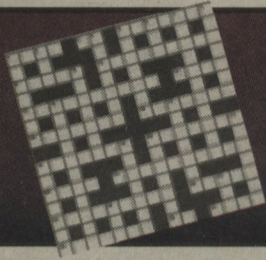
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## Strike Looms Over UPEI's Shoulder

### Faculty Association Calls for Strike Vote

Stacey Murray  
Reporter

The UPEI Faculty Association may be going on strike after contract talks stalled last week, prompting a strike vote on March 14<sup>th</sup>. The call for a vote came after the conciliation process, which involves a government appointed mediator, produced little results on February 24<sup>th</sup>. Although much of this information has only just come to light, this is the most recent set of actions from a process that has been occurring since last July.

The Faculty Association bargaining unit #1, which includes almost 375 faculty members, librarians, sessional instructors and clinical nursing instructors, has been without a contract since July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005. Since then, the Faculty Association and the Administration have met 42 times, and presented two proposals and two counter-proposals for a tentative agreement.

If a majority of Faculty Association members vote in favour of strike action, professors, as well as other members of the bargaining unit would be in a legal strike position March 15<sup>th</sup>.

Although both the Faculty Association and the President's office at first declined interviews with *The Cadre*, both reconsidered late Friday in order to address the concerns of students. Neither discussed the ongoing negotiations, but did talk about the goals of their respective sides and the ongoing concerns of the student body.

Faculty Association President Wayne Peters said the main concern was that of wage parity.

"As a group, salary is lagging significantly behind the regional average," said Peters.

Peters also wanted to clarify a common assumption. "Although we've

scheduled a strike vote, that doesn't mean we're going on strike."

President Wade MacLauchlan was hopeful the issue would be resolved without a strike and that an agreement would be reached that suited both sides.

"I think it's really important that it is a settlement that shows that we value the contributions of faculty members and that it will be a settlement that is fair and competitive," said MacLauchlan.

However, documents recovered by *The Cadre* on the UPEI website show that administration believes a strike may be on its way regardless. The document lists no author and is entitled 'Labour Relations Update #4'. It includes the following text:

"The University expressed a strong interest in going forward with the conciliation process. The Faculty Association, who had requested the services of a conciliator,

indicted to the Conciliation Officer that they could see no purpose in going forward with the conciliation process it had requested. It was abundantly clear that the Association had no intention of trying to use the conciliation process to help achieve a collective agreement, but, rather, was simply going through the motions to bring matters to the brink of a strike within its own time table. Regrettably, this action confirms the misgivings of the University's bargaining team that the Association's strategy all along has been to load up its demands and not move, in order to bring matters to the brink.

The Conciliation Officer will file his report this week with the Minister responsible for the Labour Act. The

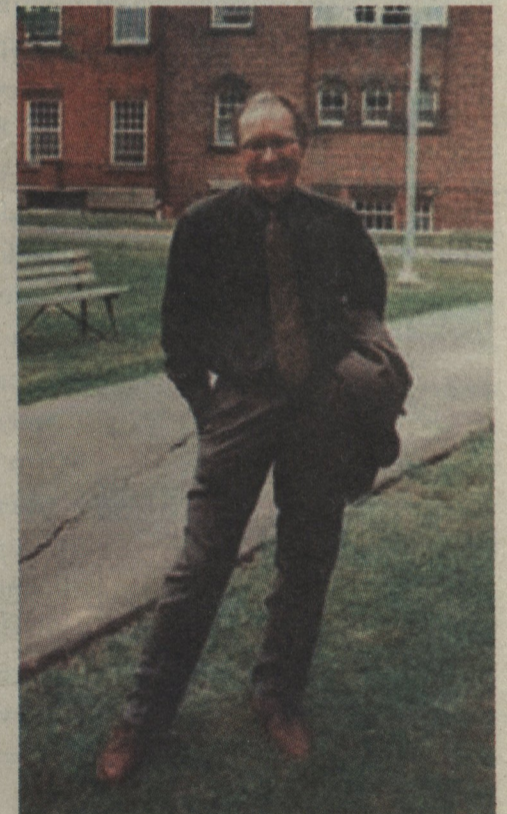
Minister will then determine what the next step will be. If the conclusion is that efforts have completely broken down, the parties could be in a position of strike or lock out as early as mid-March.

The University's negotiating team has indicated that it is willing to make use of the conciliation process, and also that it wants the FA to respond to its last proposal. It is somewhat ironic that the Faculty Association indicates that it wants to return to the bargaining table this Tuesday, but sees no purpose in meeting with a conciliator. In the meantime, the University will be making its contingency plans."

Peters replied by saying the conciliator's job was simply to schedule a date between the two parties to meet, which happened on Feb. 24<sup>th</sup>. He says the officer met with both parties and by the end of the day had decided to write a report to the minister known as a 'no board' report. Once that happens then under the labour act they are in a legal position to take a strike vote.

"It's inaccurate, the Faculty Association has been incredibly patient trying to see negotiations move forward," said Peters. "When we made the decision to go to the conciliator, we did so with a lot of consideration and thought, in what terms were available to exert pressure onto the employer.

"We made a decision to go with the conciliator when we did because negotiations weren't going anywhere. You can't have conciliation unless there's some sort of stalemate at the table if things aren't going anywhere."



UPEI President Wade MacLauchlan

-File Photo

Both sides explained that negotiation processes require patience. "Probably a lot more than people realize or than should be necessary," MacLauchlan commented.

Peters said that he couldn't explain negotiations while they were still going on. "The two parties met at the table Tuesday and Thursday [of last week]." Although he was unsure what would happen for the next scheduled meeting, he said the Faculty Association is planning on being there.

Students across campus have been worried over the possibility of a strike and what it could mean for the last days of their academic year. If a strike is carried out, it could mean a lengthened semester for students, or