

Newsletter March 2017

Edited by Lisa Robson, PhD, Department of English and Creative Writing and BUFA Secretary

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President's Report

*Doug Ramsey, PhD,
Rural Development*

Dark Days for Labour

Over the past few months, I have been in contact with local labour organizations to better understand changes taking place at the provincial and federal levels with respect to public sector workers. I begin by summarizing proposed federal legislation.

Bill C-27 being proposed by the current federal government is similar to that

proposed by the previous government. The main point is that it would see a shift from defined benefit (DB) pensions (which we have at BU) to defined contribution (DC) pensions. While this is directed at public sector workers at the federal level, there are fears within the Manitoba labour movement that similar changes are on our horizon--particularly if C-27 is enacted.

I expressed BUFA's concerns about such a change to the Brandon and District Labour Council (BDLC) and the Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL). Related, at the fall BUFA meeting I withdrew a motion to join the BDLC as it came to my attention just prior to that meeting that we would need to first join a national labour organization. I have researched this further and have revised a motion for the Spring 2017 General Meeting. *Please see page 3 for more information and 4 for a notice of motion.*

Your BUFA Executive is also in the process of bringing back the Council of Unions on campus. This council brings the bargaining units on campus together to discuss issues of mutual interest. As we are all in the same pension plan, it seems like an important time to start meeting regularly again.

There are also concerns that public sector workers in Manitoba will face threats to open their collective agreements. In the

media and through labour meetings, it is apparent that this move could be a way to take back salary gains and/or impose unpaid days (such as the Filmon Fridays of the 1990s). BUFA members must be strong in resisting such demands.

Your bargaining team worked very hard in the last round of negotiations to make BU an attractive place to come and stay. We focused on things like reduced teaching loads, tuition for dependants, improvements to PDA, and the health spending account.

We cannot accept the illegal attack on these gains or, to the larger picture, attacks on legally binding agreements that were bargained for, and agreed upon, in good faith by other unions.

While our CA was left untouched in this spring's budget, the legislation itself goes against the notion of bargaining in good faith. At the time of this writing, BUFA was awaiting legal opinion. Members will be notified directly of any BUFA responses through Maureen Barrett.

Member Services Position?

Most faculty associations in Canada have either a member services coordinator or a staff member with legal expertise. Some have both. Of course, we are a smaller organization. However, over the past year, executive members have been mulling over the idea of a member services coordinator (MSC). This in part was to be connected with our office move that gave us a meeting space. That is, if members had questions or concerns they could set up a meeting with the MSC to discuss everything from benefits questions to employment concerns. *Please read the notice of motion on page 4 of this newsletter.*

Banner and Signage

With our new office, we need to consider proper signage so that people know where we are (and who we are!). Related, BUFA would like the membership to consider an expenditure to purchase a banner and signs for public events (e.g. Brandon Pride Week, Labour Day Parade, etc.). *Please read the notice of motion on page 4 of this newsletter.*

Vice- President's Report

*Dion Wiseman, PhD,
Geography*



Spring is nearly upon us and another busy academic year is winding down. Your BUFA Executive has been very busy since the Fall General Meeting last October. As usual, we have responded to a number of inquiries and concerns raised by our members and we hope that in this regard we have served you well. The Joint Administrative and Joint Consultative Committee meetings between BUFA and the Employer have continued as combined “management” meetings and we have found these to be very productive. In this report I would like to focus on three initiatives that you should be aware of.

Right of First Refusal

The language around Right of First Refusal provides external sessionals who have taught a specific course in at least one term for four years in a row “first dibs” on any future external contract for that same

course. (For details see Article 7.13.(b)3.) Unfortunately, on more than one occasion the Employer has advertised positions for which a member has held RFR, and in part we believe this may be due to the fact that no one was tracking who had RFR for specific courses. As a result, we have negotiated an MOA to revise the language so that it is crystal clear that members holding RFR must be contacted before an external contract is advertised, and we have also included language which requires the Employer to track the RFR of members and make that information available to deans and department chairs. This system has already been set up by the Employer and, while not perfect, it does the job and should make it much easier for new chairs and deans to identify who has RFR without relying on the collective memory of the department or of the members themselves. When making workload recommendations, chairs should contact their dean's office for RFR information regarding any courses potentially involving external sessionals.

BUREC

The second issue concerns the Brandon University Research Ethics Committee (BUREC) and specifically the teaching load reduction provided to the chair of this committee. Any of you who have served on this committee, or know someone who has, are aware of how much work is involved. The current CA provides three credit hours of teaching load reduction to the chair of this committee. The number of applications for ethics certificates has increased from an average of approximately 40 per year to about 80. This not only has doubled the workload but also has made it increasingly difficult to find someone to chair this committee. During the last round of

negotiations there was an unsuccessful attempt to increase the teaching load reduction for this position. Ironically, the following year the Employer requested an MOU to increase the reduction from three to six credit hours for that year, and when it looked like another MOU would be required in the following year, we took the opportunity to successfully argue for an MOA that would permanently amend the language. Consequently, the reduction for BUREC Chair is now six credit hours and may be allocated between co-chairs as determined by the committee.

Respectful Environment Policy

The last issue is related to the Respectful Environment Policy (REP) review that has been underway for quite some time now. There is no doubt that the existing policy has been problematic; however, as you are no doubt aware the policy is required under provincial Workplace Safety and Health legislation. BUFA has three representatives on the REP Policy Review Committee and we are definitely making sure that the Employer is aware of our concerns with the old and new policy as the revision process continues. The most significant overall change in the policy has been the elimination of the informal complaint process. If the revised policy is approved, any complaint will have to be in writing and will follow a formal process from beginning to end. Another issue related to the revised policy is the retention of records related to complaints. In this regard we have informed the Employer that the policy must not conflict with Article 19 of the CA, which contains very specific language related to personnel files, and we are in the process of consulting with our legal counsel to ensure that the revised policy is in line with this language and that

we have the best protection possible in terms of what files and information the Employer is able to retain.

In closing, I would just like to say that it has once again been a very busy and rewarding year as Vice-President, and I'm very proud of the work that this BUFA Executive and committee members have achieved over the last year.

Membership in the Labour Movement

By Doug Ramsey

I believe that it is important for BUFA to be a member of the broader labour community in Brandon and the surrounding region. The best way for this to happen is for BUFA to join the Brandon and District Labour Council (BDLC). Efforts to do so have failed in the past with members of BUFA wishing to maintain their autonomy. In the past, Errol Black and Bill Paton had been "honorary members" of the BDLC.

To borrow phrasing from the labour movement, my view is that we are stronger together, particularly given some of the constraints that public sector unions are facing.

In order to join the BDLC, BUFA must also be a member of an umbrella organization. For us this is NUCAUT—the National Union of the Canadian Association of University Teachers. NUCAUT is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and was created for this express purpose.

Membership costs for NUCAUT are \$10.74 per member per year. The approximate cost for BUFA would be about \$2500 per year.

Membership costs for the BDLC are \$3.60 per member per year. The approximate cost for BUFA would be about \$900 per year. Given our size, we would be granted six voting members to the BDLC.

The total cost to BUFA, therefore, would be approximately \$3400 per year. Please see below for the notice of motion.

Notices of Motion for Spring GM

1. NUCAUT and BDLC Membership

That the BUFA membership supports joining NUCAUT and the BDLC at an approximate cost to BUFA of \$3400 per year.

2. Member Services Coordinator

That the membership supports the BUFA Executive forming a selection committee to hire a new BUFA employee position of Member Services Coordinator.

3. Banners and Signage

That the membership supports the expenditure (maximum \$1,000) to purchase signage for the new BUFA Office and a banner and signs for use at public events.

Notice of Spring General Meeting

This meeting will be held on Thursday April 27, 2017 at 4:30 p.m. in Brodie Building Theatre B. Details to follow from Maureen Barrett.

Benefits of Note

Our Collective Agreement (2015-2019) can be accessed at www.bufa.org. In this newsletter and for your information, we will continue to list some points and links to access gains we made in the last round of bargaining.

Health Spending Account

In addition to Blue Cross coverage, each year members have access to a health spending account: \$400 for full-time employees and \$200 for part-time employees. Details can be found at <https://www.brandonu.ca/hr/files/Health-Spending-Account1.pdf>

Please note that you can carry forward health spending account funds for one year but that receipts cannot be carried over from a previous year. As an example, if you need new glasses, you can carry forward \$400 from 2016 and add it to your \$400 for 2017. However, if you have a chiropractor receipt from August 2016, this must be claimed under the HSA by the end of February 2017.

Tuition for Dependants

Members now receive a waiver for tuition for their dependants taking courses at Brandon University (less other fees). This is a taxable benefit. Details can be found at <https://www.brandonu.ca/hr/files/Tuition-Waiver-for-Employees-and-Dependants.pdf>

Fees for Dependants

Prior to gaining tuition for dependants in the current CA, BUFA had a fund that members could apply to that would cover a portion of their dependants' tuition. The membership voted to rename and redirect this fund to cover fees not covered by the provision above. Please contact Maureen Barrett at the number below for details on how to access this fund.

BUFA OFFICE

If you have any questions, please contact an executive member (see www.bufa.org for contact information) or Maureen Barrett, our Administrative Assistant:

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204-727-7347
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CAUT

The Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) is the national voice for academic staff in Canada. They have a wealth of resources that can be accessed at www.caut.ca.