

**Selkirk College Faculty Association  
April 2005  
President's Report**

**Oscar Wilde once said "a cynic knows the price of everything and the value of nothing".**

In what was perhaps the strangest twist in a prolonged term of provincial bargaining, locals who ratified the common agreement were required to choose between two, somewhat flawed, salary options. On April 13th, SCFA members went to the polls to vote on what they valued. About 70% of the members submitted ballots despite a serious glitch in the email ballot process. The result was that members overwhelmingly rejected the stipend salary option, which would have had us put a price on benefits, working conditions, lifestyle, and in some ways, our own colleagues. There was real pressure in the system to take the stipend option, and I'm proud of the membership for holding fast to their principles.

Prior to the salary vote, members voted to ratify both the Common and Collective Agreement. Provincially, we strengthened language related to distance education, international education, and harassment in the workplace. PD funds were also enriched. For whatever reason, the employer absolutely would not consider placing academic freedom within the agreement. Colleges, they said, are not research institutions. If their statement makes you feel, um, cynical, you might go to our website and look up our Selkirk College Geospatial Research Center.

Ratifying the Common Agreement required us to accept a process that would see disputes at the local table go to mediation/arbitration. Not surprisingly, at the local table both sides agreed to a rollover of the Collective Agreement with some changes and improvements that had already been agreed upon. A number of "big" issues—evaluation, private music instruction, workload review committee, and low enrollment classes, for example—will be dealt with at the labour-management table. Next year will be a busy year, all year.

The rollover means not much has changed in our Collective Agreement. One might point out then, that little was gained. But perhaps more importantly, nothing was lost. System-wide there is pressure to restrict regularization language and put salary bars on short-term employees. Nor is Selkirk College the only institution facing low enrollments and we have only just begun to feel pressures to recalculate workloads in response to small class sizes.

With the many cheerful and hopeful enrollment initiatives and vision-type documents in place, the SCFA was caught off-guard with a number of partial layoff notices in the School of University Arts and Sciences. In each of the cases, it was felt that alternatives to the layoff could have been found, had management consulted with the members and/or the Faculty Association prior to issuing the notice. I have to admit that these events,

despite having happened so recently, have coloured my perception of my first year as President. Two weeks ago, I would have written a much different report. The unfortunate fact is that management continues to implement the top-down approach so evident in the restructuring process. It appears the collegial model has gone the way of the dinosaur.

If recent events are to set the tone for the future, members can expect workload calculations, assigned duty periods, and professional development activities to be scrutinized much more closely. I say we are moving into an era of greater surveillance (management would prefer the term accountability).

Clearly, issues related to workloads and bargaining have preoccupied my first year as President. I suspect that what happens at the bargaining table is characteristic of the President's role: one must identify priorities, uphold and enforce the Collective Agreement, juggle various personalities and competing interests, and try always to think of what is best for the collective. Needless to say, I have learned a heck of a lot, and yes, in a weird way, it is fun. Fun in the way new challenges often are.

If I have been successful at all, it is because of the tremendous support I received from SCFA members and from the Executive. I would especially like to thank Bev Onischak, our VP Negotiations who has also filled in as Past President. And I must express extreme indebtedness to Monica Vogler, VP Contract Administration. Monica taught me always to fight for what is right, even when it seems so wrong! Although her office is next to mine, I wish her a fond farewell from her many years as Advocate for the SCFA.

Thank you and I look forward to another year as SCFA President.

Sincerely,

Tracy Punchard