The CMCFA bargaining team met with the employer's team for a third round of bargaining on Tuesday February 10 and continued for the following two days, concluding on Thursday February 12.

Collective bargaining is a difficult and at times draining process—for both the union and management teams. This was especially the case during this past round. Although we signed off on legacy language related to elimination of severance from our last round of bargaining, we have not as yet agreed to any substantive proposals from either side. This is particularly alarming because the bulk of the proposals forwarded by our team—focusing on clarity, transparency, good governance, and best practices—has *no* financial implications for the employer. We are looking to entrench and safeguard practices that further reflect our good standing as a university and a degree-granting institution.

Please note we have reiterated to the employer *many* times that none of our proposals are particularly novel; they reflect our current practices and the common practice at other universities. In response to Treasury Board's ongoing refrain that they require standardization across collective agreements, we repeatedly remind them that we are unique in the federal public service—we are the only federal university and we are the only occupational group with academic freedom—and therefore agreeing to non-monetary language reflecting our unique status in no way sets a precedent for other collective agreements in the public service.

Most of our discussion and arguments were focused on a proposed article on workload that has been revised and exchanged several times. Our proposed language seeks to ensure fairness, equity and transparency in the distribution of workload (including course relief), while theirs (in our opinion) seeks to decrease it.

Moreover, the management team has yet to respond to the union on many of our substantive and important proposals, for example on enshrining sections of the Career Progression Management Framework in the collective agreement or on intellectual property. We know these are issues that are very important to our membership and management's response has been "radio silence."

Furthermore, we have come to the conclusion that the complete lack of labour relations experience on the management side, exempting the Treasury Board staff, is unnecessarily slowing down the process. The consistent response from management is "just trust us to do what you're proposing" rather than agreeing to language that would enshrine a practice that they supposedly support (since they're asking us to "trust them" to do it). Even requests for letters of understanding that would reside outside of the collective agreement have been met with the same "trust us" response.

There's an old adage that, in any institution, you get the labour relations climate you deserve: it's certainly fair to say that since we signed our last collective agreement in 2011, trust levels among the membership have been eroded to the point that such entreaties do not inspire our confidence. We know this anecdotally, but also because of the results of the bargaining survey conducted last year.

Once again, we requested data on the use of sessional contracts and explained why such information was necessary for us for bargaining. We are not convinced that the contracting methods to hire sessional faculty is in keeping with the government's own guidelines about workforce adjustment, which requires that the work disappear along with the position that was eliminated, or with Treasury Board's own policies on such contracts. We are concerned not only because a number of sessional faculty are currently our members, but also because those who aren't may have been illegally excluded from membership. Sessional faculty comprises the most vulnerable, precarious and lowest paid individuals contracted to perform UT work. And though this is the third time we have requested the data, and though management is legally obligated to provide it, they have yet to do so.

Finally, the employer presented no further "improvements" to their draconian proposals for the elimination of sick leave and its replacement with a contracted-out short-term disability benefit. However, they did provide us with the Conference Board of Canada study the employer is relying upon for their assessment of "industry" comparison. In short, the "social science" evidence offered is both deficient and irrelevant. 1,669 senior human resource practitioners were surveyed from "…medium sized and large Canadian organizations operating in a variety of regions and sectors."[1] Leaving aside the observation that only managers and not employee organizations or unions were surveyed, the data set reveals that only 7 "Education and health" organizations were included, and there is no indication if any of these organizations were universities. Moreover, Treasury Board was not able to tell us whether or not the Government of Canada specifically commissioned this report. Finally, the conclusions of the report *do not*

[1] Lisa Hughes, *Beyond Benefits II: Disability Plans and Absence Management in Canadian Workplaces* (Ottawa: Conference Board of Canada, 2010), p. 4.

support the government's own one-size-fits-all punitive elimination of sick leave. Indeed, the report strongly recommends identifying the root causes of absenteeism and suggests creating "…a cooperative and harmonious relationship among management, unions, and employees." Treasury Board's approach, obviously politically mandated by the current government, appears designed to do precisely the opposite.

We currently have no further scheduled dates, but will be proposing dates to the management team shortly.

This is a very difficult process, particularly so because no course relief was granted for bargaining, so we are juggling full teaching and research schedules of the members of our team, who not only work at RMC but also CMR and CFC. Right now one member of our team is participating although he is on sabbatical; the same situation will be replicated in the upcoming academic year unless significant progress is made.