



Bellerose, R. (2000). Summary of current negotiations between lecturers and UQTR. *Workplace*, 6, 86-87.

ROBERT BELLEROSE

SUMMARY OF CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN LECTURERS AND UQTR

Negotiations began in March, 1999 and intensified in November, 1999 shortly after the release of a Statistics Quebec (*Institut de la statistique du Quebec* [ISQ]) report on Lecturers at University of Quebec at Trois-Rivieres (UQTR). The report found that Lecturers were not well integrated into the institutional life of the university, and that they were underpaid for the work they do. ISQ assessed the salary gap between Lecturers and regular Faculty in 1998-99, determining that Faculty were paid on average \$8,236 to teach a three credit course, whereas Lecturers were paid \$4,803. The report specifies that the gap is not the result of differences in the duties performed nor in the qualifications required of the employees.

The main issues in dispute concern the way academic work is organized (the need to stabilize the employment of the Lecturers, who are teaching as much or more than regular Faculty); the lack of office space, voice mail and other services necessary to the support of students; the role of Lecturers in the University; and salary. The Lecturers have been without a contract since June 1, 1999.

STRIKE TIMELINE

End of November, 1999: UQTR tables an offer corresponding to the provincial pattern settlement for the public sector. The Union proposes that they and the University jointly petition the Minister of Education. The University declines.

January 15, 2000: The Lecturers vote 95.24% in favour of a strike. The strike commences February 21, but is suspended just a few days later on February 28.

March 7: In a meeting with the Union, who had been threatening to resume the strike, the Minister of Education, Francois Legault, asks that job action be suspended.

March 15, a.m.: In response to the Minister's request, the Union announces that there will be no further job action during the Winter Session, or during the upcoming Summer Session.

March 15, p.m.: UQTR management threatens to cancel part of the Summer Session offerings if there is no agreement with the Lecturers before the end of March.

March 21: UQTR requests a conciliator from the Department of Labour, and renews the threat to cancel part of Summer Session offerings if no agreement is reached before March 31.

March 24: The unions that represent Lecturers in Quebec meet at Trois-Rivieres, establish an Interunion Coalition, and renew their support of colleagues in Trois-Rivieres who are in negotiations and threatened with a lock-out.

March 31: There is no agreement between the Lecturers and UQTR. True to its word, management announces the cancellation of 138 of the 189 scheduled Summer Session courses. The Union condemns the attitude of the university administration, given that job action has been suspended.

April 7: The Minister of Education and the Minister of Commerce and Industry intervene personally with the Rector of UQTR, Claire de la Durantaye, asking that Summer Session courses be reinstated, given that the Union has suspended job action.

April, May, June and August: Negotiations do continue but Conciliator Thomas Hayden has difficulty bringing the two sides closer together. In spite of the partial lock-out affecting its members, the Union does not undertake any job action during Summer Session. In August, responding to the Union's proposals of May 25, management tables the public sector settlement in addition to a renewed agreement on computers for Lecturers, but indicates that this is not a final offer.

August 23: Disappointed by the Union's counteroffer, management representatives decide not to respond and leave the bargaining table. The conciliator finds that the parties are at an impasse, and adjourns negotiations *sine die*.

November 8: After suspending job action for eight months, Lecturers resume strike. The strike affects 573 courses at UQTR, about half of all courses offered this semester.

November 16: Lecturers at UQAR (University of Quebec at Rimouski) vote 100% in favour of strike.

Robert Bellerose, University of Quebec at Trois-Rivieres