

Association of Nova Scotia University Teachers

ANSUT/APUNE

Association des professeurs des universités de la Nouvelle-Ecosse

March 2012

ANSUT President's Report

By Chris Ferns

Last year's President's Report focussed on what appeared to be the growing gap between the rhetoric of the Dexter government with regard to post-secondary education and the reality of its policies. On the one hand, here was a government launching a campaign to promote Nova Scotia as "Canada's University Capital" and a Premier who lauded Nova Scotia's universities as "one of this province's best assets" — while at the same time engaging a former Vice-President of the Bank of Montreal to produce a report on the university system whose thrust turned out to be diametrically opposed to just about every position the NDP had endorsed while in opposition.

Since then, the gap between rhetoric and reality has only grown wider. The government's professed commitment to preserving, even enhancing "quality" and "excellence" has gone hand-in-hand with funding cuts of 4% last year and 3% this one, with the promise of further cuts to come. Equally, the Premier's "strong message to students across Canada" that "Nova Scotia is the destination for education in this country" has translated into ongoing tuition fee increases of 3% per year, with the distinct possibility that fees for out-of-province students (the ones we are supposedly trying

to attract) may be allowed to rise still higher.

What has also become clear from the recently concluded Memorandum of Understanding between the province and the universities is that many of the recommendations of the almost universally derided O'Neill Report are still under consideration. Despite the funding cuts, a sum of \$25 million has been set aside to fund initiatives designed to yield cost savings, while at the same time encouraging "innovation" and "excellence".

Quite what form these initiatives are supposed to take remains unclear, although the MOU's frequent references to "collaborative" ventures suggest that the O'Neill Report's repeated assertions that such ventures are desirable are still being taken seriously, even though Dr. O'Neill was unable to provide any evidence they actually save money. As the same time, it appears that at least one university is contemplating seeking a share of the \$25 million to finance buy-outs for senior faculty — an approach which, while it might well save money in the short-term, could hardly be described as "innovative", let alone conducive to excellence.

Despite the rhetoric then, it would seem that so far as post-secondary education is concerned, the government's priority is cost-cutting, pure and simple. Which makes it all the more ironic that they have consistently disregarded ANSUT's advice on the one area where genuine cost savings might be possible

ANSUT has commissioned a study investigating the amount spent on senior administration at Nova Scotia's universities over a ten year period, and while the full findings will not be available until later in March, the preliminary results are alarming, to say the least. What is becoming clear is that over this period the number of senior administrative appointments has been on the rise, while at the same time increases in compensation for senior administrators has been well in excess of that provided to faculty and support staff — a trend that has continued even in the face of last year's cutbacks in funding.

Nevertheless, while ANSUT has proposed mechanisms for monitoring administrative expenditures, and ensuring that an appropriate proportion of university operating budgets is devoted to the core functions of teaching and research, the government has so far turned a deaf ear. Instead, while the MOU contains some rather ill-defined proposals for structural change and improved transparency in accounting procedures, the task of coming up with reforms has been left to a task force consisting exclusively of bureaucrats and university presidents. And one thing we may be sure of is that any proposal that would place limits on administrative expenditures is something that the university presidents will resist tooth and nail.

This being so, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that under the present government the future bodes ill for post-secondary education. Yet on top of the long-term damage government cutbacks are likely to inflict on the system as a whole, there is also an immediate crisis currently affecting one of our members — NSCAD — where the institution's very survival is in jeopardy.

Following the release of a report by government-appointed former Deputy

Minister, Howard Windsor, NSCAD now faces a deadline of March 31 to submit what is in effect a survival plan which will address the ongoing annual deficits arising from the costs associated with the construction of its new Port campus. Given that the total debt on the Port campus — arising from a former administration's committing to its construction without securing the necessary funding to cover it — is estimated at \$9 million, it is difficult to see how any cost-cutting measure NSCAD can come up with in the face of so tight a time-line will be able to address the problem. Indeed, it would appear that NSCAD has already put in place practically every cost-cutting measure that is feasible.

That being so, and in view of the government's stated refusal to contemplate providing any additional funding, one wonders whether the government-imposed time-line might not be a recipe for assisted suicide, rather than an incentive to move forward.

As part of the Nova Scotia Coalition for Post-Secondary Education (whose other members are the Canadian Federation of Students and the Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union) ANSUT met with the NDP Caucus on 22 February to convey our concerns with the thrust of government policy. Unfortunately, the meeting proved to be less productive than we hoped. Indeed, the first response we received to our presentation, and our accompanying brief, was a lengthy diatribe from Justice Minister Ross Landry, in which he expressed his outrage at our daring to question the government's commitment to post-secondary education. He also accused the universities of only being interested in protecting their territory, and being unwilling to contemplate the reforms required to make the system

sustainable, and concluded by telling us we needed to “look in the mirror”.

That kind of knee-jerk defensiveness is of course by no means unprecedented: when faculty lobbied the Savage Liberals in the 1990s — which is the last time a Nova Scotia government pursued such retrograde policies on post-secondary education — that was a fairly standard response. In fact listening to Minister Landry provided a certain sense of *déjà vu*, although it has to be said that it is usually not until a second, or subsequent term of office that one finds Cabinet members exhibiting such contempt for anyone presuming to criticize the government.

On the evidence of our meeting, there thus appears to be a significant faction within the caucus that actually believes the “too many universities in Nova Scotia” line, and is actually sympathetic to the sterile recommendations of the O’Neill report, which in fact seem largely designed to precipitate the kind of crisis against which it warned. Our struggle against the government’s simplistic cost-cutting agenda promises to be a long one.

On other fronts, with regard to the administrative costs project mentioned above, I am pleased to report that despite prolonged foot-dragging on the part of certain institutions, we have now received all the data on senior administrative salaries over a ten year period for which we submitted FOIPOP requests. Kaley Kennedy, who we engaged to undertake this research, is now in the process of analyzing the data, and it is hoped that we will be in a position to release her findings by the end of March.

As well, several of our member associations will be going into bargaining this year: APPBUSA, MSVUFA, SMUFU, and StFXAUT. ANSUT will be convening a meeting in April of Chief Negotiators, bargaining

team members, and other interested parties, with a view to establishing some common bargaining goals and discussing the best strategies for attaining them. Such discussions have proved effective in the past, most notably in 2003-04, where for the first time our member associations adopted a “pattern bargaining” approach, with the Saint Mary’s union setting a benchmark which resulted in significant gains for the unions following in their wake.

Certainly, the economic climate today is considerably less rosy than it was then, and with ongoing cuts in government funding the bargaining climate this year is likely to prove especially challenging. However, given that preliminary examination of the FOIPOP data on administrative expenditures indicates that compensation for senior administrators has been increasing at a rate considerably in excess of that for faculty and support staff, it may well be that the familiar Employer claims of poorhouse will fall on sceptical ears.

To end on a positive note, I should report that, by some strange serendipity, the very same day that we met with the NDP Caucus saw the release of an OpEd article by the Minister of Advanced Education. In it, she proclaimed that “Universities are essential to the future success of our province”, that “Nova Scotia’s universities provide the highest quality education and lifelong advantage for students”, and that she remained “committed to working with these institutions to ensure the future success of our world-class university system.”

It is gratifying to learn that in whatever parallel universe it is that the Minister inhabits, at least there the future of post-secondary education remains rosy.

SMUFU

By Judy Haiven, President

Saint Mary's University Faculty Union has been active on a number of fronts. For example, a group of faculty members joined the Students' Day of Protest against tuition hikes. This group included some new faculty members. We have been trying to liaise more with the student union, SMUSA, and look forward to building a relationship. SMUFU also took part in the Labour Day parade and events in early fall – we had a record number of faculty turn out from Saint Mary's.

SMUFU also bought a table at the annual fundraising dinner for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Nova Scotia office. The CCPA, a national social justice research organization, publishes articles online about public policy on a national and provincial level. The CCPA commissions studies and welcomes academics to join its Research Advisory Committee.

Our Negotiating Committee is starting preliminary research and work to ready itself for negotiations which begin in the spring. SMUFU's collective agreement expires on 31 Aug. 2012.

Here is a brief summary of issues that have arisen:

- Management has placed a number of our members on a 3:3 teaching load. The normal teaching load is 3:2. SMUFU feels that increasing the load to 3:3 is demeaning and arbitrary as there was no 'hearing' to review the reasons for the increase in course load.
- Recently SMUFU has noticed that advertisements for academic positions at the Assistant Professor level have included some new language. Several ads specified that applicants should be an "early level" in their academic careers. This has the effect of departments being forced to restrict hiring to applicants only at the lowest pay levels, and denying opportunities to applicants with more teaching /academic experience.
- We have also noticed that Management sometimes does not give appropriate credit for teaching to incoming Assistant Professors. Many of these people are hiring at Assistant 1 or 2, yet some have had more than 5 years of teaching experience before coming to SMU. Starting at the wrong step in rank has very negative financial implications for faculty members over a 20 or 30 year university career.
- Though the Collective Agreement language allows faculty members "Leaves without Pay" for professional or other reasons, the university administration has become increasingly selective in how they apply this clause. The union is following these cases very closely.
- After a hiatus of more than 30 years, SMUFU has initiated meetings of the Employer-Union Committee to discuss common concerns. We had one meeting and are planning another for later in the spring.
- SMUFU is also training union observers for the University Review Committee (which oversees tenure and promotion) and for the Appointments Committee.
- On an optimistic note, some of our newer faculty plan to stand for election to our executive. Others participate as departmental liaisons – these are members from many departments who meet to discuss common concerns, solutions and liaise with SMUFU.

APPBUSA
(Association des professeures, professeurs
et bibliothécaires de l'Université
Sainte-Anne)

By Professor Susan Knutson

The Faculty Union at Université Sainte-Anne (APPBUSA) voted unanimously to support the students' action on February 1, and professors were well represented at the rally. Union president Jean Wilson read a news release expressing the view that students are working to acquire the knowledge and the skills that they will need to construct tomorrow's world. Why must they pay to carry out tasks which will benefit everyone, and soon enough? Otherwise for the moment things are quiet here. The administrative team headed up by Recteur Allister Surette has worked with the faculty union to build a more civil and respectful institutional culture – a very nice change from the previous administration. On the other hand, like all universities, we face cutbacks: more and more we are hearing about our “bleak financial future.” Negotiations are coming up in the spring. For now, we will savour the last few weeks of a much-needed breather after ten years of hostile misrule.

Did You Know?

That St. Francis Xavier had the most administrators of ANSUT universities in 2011, with 32 (including the president, vice-presidents, director, and deans), up from 26 in 2004. Acadia came in a close second with 29 (down from 33 in 2004-2005).

Nova Scotia College of Art and Design

By Alvin Comiter, President

As a result of government cutbacks, a seriously flawed funding formula, a hostile Department of Advanced Education, and a series of bad decisions on the part of our previous administration and Board, both NSCAD and FUNSCAD have spent the year on the defensive, fighting for our programs and our independence. The government has given the University until the end of March to respond to the "Windsor Report" with a plan that will ensure NSCAD's long term financial sustainability. Facing both an unreasonable deadline and an impossible financial target, the future is in doubt, and the Windsor Report's threats of merger or legislative action are still on the table. To add to the uncertainty, 3 of our 4 Senior Administrators have announced their retirements/resignations. Only the VP Finance will remain in office.

Faculty, staff, students, alumni, the "Friends of NSCAD", the local and national arts communities, and faculty across Canada have all been active in the fight to protect our unique and important institution. It's not too late to express your support. If you haven't already done so, please go to www.change.org and search for the NSCAD petition.

FUNSCAD has two bargaining units, and both units have 18 month contracts that expire on December 31, 2012. As a direct result of the Windsor Report, the Union has been asked to make financial concessions that go well beyond the expiry dates of our Collective Agreement. On very short notice, the Union is in the process of preparing a counter-proposal which could lead to three year contracts for both units that would take us through the end of 2015.

To be continued . . .

CBUFA
By Robert Scott Stewart,
VP and Senior Grievance Officer

Things have been generally uneventful at Cape Breton University the past year. Despite the concerns raised in the O'Neill report about CBU possibly having to consider closing some of its degree programs, we are doing relatively well financially, and our student enrollments have remained stable because we have been successful in recruiting greater numbers of international students. We are in the middle of a collective agreement that we have found acceptable by and large, and do not go back to the bargaining table until 2013.

Notwithstanding all of this, there are a couple of areas of concern for CBUFA.

The Employer appears to have adopted the position that they will reject every grievance CBUFA files thus forcing us either to drop them or to take them to arbitration, with all the time, expense, and effort that entails. In addition, we are increasingly concerned about complaints being made against our Members under our truly horrid Discrimination and Harassment Policy. Although we have been successful in defending our Members against these complaints, they produce a great deal of stress and anxiety, and we have decided that we must attempt once again to radically revise our Policy. Amongst the many problems with it is its very broad definition of harassment, which includes any "behaviour which undermines another's self-respect and/or which exhibits an air of superiority." If any ANSUT associations have a discrimination and harassment policy that they are happy with, we would love to hear from you.

Our University President has recently announced that he will leave office later this year ending what has been an era of relatively peaceful coexistence, especially in comparison to some previous eras.

Given how much damage a bad President can do in a relatively short amount of time -- including everything from loss of morale, strained labour relations, a loss in institutional reputation, and the depletion of finances -- we are of course concerned that CBU makes a good hiring decision. Confidence that such a good decision will be made, however, has been decreased as we received word of the makeup of the Committee. While we were happy to see that our Association President, Chester Pyne, has been asked to sit on the Committee, we are concerned that he will be the only representative from our Association. A teaching union at CBU representing about 1/5 of CBUFA's membership also gets one representative and students get twice as many. The rest of the members of the Committee are from the Board, and none of them, to our knowledge, has any understanding or experience of the day to day operations of a university. Once again, we would love to hear from other institutions about the composition of their last Presidential Search Committee and whether any Association has been successful in having the composition of a Presidential Search Committee altered.

Did You Know?

That Administrator costs at NSCAD increased by 62 percent from 2004/5 to 2010/11.

**Acadia University Faculty Association
By Wendy Bedingfield, President**

The second of four years under the thirteenth collective agreement has been challenging for the Acadia University Faculty Association (AUFA). The Agreement provides early retirement incentives for full-time faculty members and suspends the complement clause for the life of the Agreement. Twelve retirements without replacement has taken its toll on our complement of 182 tenure track members. Together with resignations, we find ourselves with 166 tenure track members as of this writing and anticipate this number becoming 160 by July 1, 2012. The additional work undertaken by AUFA members in an effort to provide for Acadia's increased enrolment has resulted in grievance filings regarding workload issues and will likely continue in this vein.

AUFA has focused as well on providing "relief" from the burden in small ways. In celebration of Fair Employment week and continuing throughout the year we have given a small gift and a sincere thank you to our part-time members in appreciation for their efforts to our programs. During first term examinations, we provided a lunch and chat for our members and had about one third of our members enjoy lively discussions over soup and sandwiches.

Our monthly AUFA meetings have been well attended and provide a "light" moment when prizes are offered for such "accomplishments" as "teaching the largest class". We have just begun a monthly coffee hour which we will move from building to building to accommodate all of our members. These efforts cannot possibly make up for the difficult working conditions facing Acadia's faculty but they have helped keep us connected during a time when "busy" does not begin to describe the days our members are experiencing.

AUFA's many working committees, most of them joint committees mandated by our Collective Agreement and with Board of Governor's representatives continue to address important issues for our Association. This has been a particularly important year for our Pay Equity Committee and for our Employment Equity Committee. Pay equity salary adjustments will soon be awarded to some of our members. An employment equity systems review is underway. Additionally, we have refined the content of our equity workshops and have now trained the majority of faculty members. Our Collective Agreement requires that anyone serving on a selection committee or on a renewal, tenure, promotion committee attend an equity workshop. Our AUFA Women's Committee continues to do excellent work both in monitoring and addressing issues and in supporting our women faculty members.

A year from now we will be preparing to go to the bargaining table as we have a re-opener on the financial clauses in the 13th Collective Agreement. We have begun preparations for this negotiation and will name our team in April of this year. Working harder to make up for a reduced workforce feels to us right now like enough of a contribution to Acadia's difficult financial situation. We were horrified to see the funding cut to universities imposed by what we thought was a government with an appreciation for the social good contributed by universities. AUFA was proud to join Acadia's students in a well-attended march and rally on the National student day of action. It shouldn't have to be.

AUFA's 2012-2013 Executive will take office on May 1st. They too will have a busy year.

**St. Francis Xavier University
Association of University Teachers
(StFXAUT)**

By Peter S. McInnis, StFXAUT President

The StFXAUT is preparing for the next round of collective bargaining this spring as our current agreement expires in June 2012. A new website was developed, www.StFXAUT.ca, using the Halifax developer ConcreteOrange. This site provides a number of new features including regular blogs from the Executive, links to ANSUT and CAUT documents, as well as the ability to survey our members on specific issues. Improved communications is also supported by a series of department-level consultation committees with a mandate to solicit contract negotiating priorities. The AUT will also explore online surveys as an option for member feedback.

Following a thread on the CAUT listserv, there has been consideration of online voting for some initiatives, but the national consensus appears to support paper ballots for critical decisions such as a strike vote, as this traditional approach provides a forum supporting greater transparency and thorough discussions of the issues at hand. The AUT earlier established a Financial Oversight Committee charged with the task of assembling detailed financial records of the University and longitudinal analysis of budget trends for StFX. We are continuing this practice and also will FOIPOP any financial information withheld by the administrations.

The Grievance Committee has been active in following numerous cases, some of which have ended in arbitration hearings. The AUT will make every effort to defend the terms of the Collective Agreement from such breaches.

Concerns over academic freedom, notably the “custody and control” of our member’s files and dossiers has surfaced as have the University’s intentions with regard to “cloud computing” (notably the out-sourcing of campus email) and copyright agreements. The StFXAUT continues to consult closely with other campus unions, including our NSGEU local, in an effort to support all employees at this institution and foster an equitable and productive working environment.

Did You Know?

That the value of administrator bonuses at Mount Saint Vincent University has more than doubled since 2004. In 2010/11, the university paid administrators bonuses ranging from \$2700 to \$16,800. The total cost of bonuses was over \$110,000 this year. This was on top of scale increases in excess of 6%.

**Mount Saint Vincent University
Faculty Association**

by Michelle Forrest, President

Since my taking over as president in July 2011 the MSVUFA, along with other employee groups on campus, has been pushing back on the employer's efforts to fold the fair treatment policy and the policy advisor's role into Human Resources. It has taken continual vigilance to remind senior administration that the point of the policy and how it is administered must be at arm's length from the employee structure of the university. This issue has brought us into solidarity with the representatives of the other labour unions on campus, a definite plus since all of our contracts are coming up for renegotiation this summer.

As my predecessor, Linda Mann, explained in the April 2011 ANSUT newsletter, we reached the final deal on our current contract in January 2011. The employer would not sign for a term longer than two years, citing uncertainty over the MOU with the province. Since we were transitioning our new, lab instructor members into the agreement, a letter of understanding had to be worked out and was not signed off on until March 2011. Here we are barely a year later in the midst of discussions with members leading into bargaining again when our contract ends on June 30th. The short-term contract turns out to be another way in which the employer downloads work onto members as we pull the committees together to do the extensive work involved in going back to the table. Another way in which more bargaining unit work is being created outside of bargaining is through the creation of policies; from the Board, Senate, and Human Resources.

In October 2011 we made a second attempt to get a dedicated seat on Senate for the FA president, citing as rationale that an FA president has an overview of issues related to academic freedom, a concept that ought to be of utmost importance to Senate. Our argument did not win the day. We did however succeed in getting a clause in the Senate policy on policies that no policy shall contravene a collective agreement.

An employee confidentiality agreement was tried in November, though not given to faculty to sign. MSVUFA advised our members, particularly chairs and directors, not to ask staff to sign such a document as it had the potential to infringe on members' academic freedom.

Another initiative we keep pushing is to raise the MSVUFA profile on the website for the university. Having made the argument that this is a good recruiting tool for new faculty because MSVU's mission for social justice is consistent with having a unionized faculty, we received tacit approval from senior administration to give us at least as much visibility and many resource links as they provide on the site for those interested in part-time teaching positions. These changes have yet to materialize.

As preparation for this bargaining year, we had a three-day CAUT bargaining workshop in the fall, the most beneficial aspect of which was a full day review of our collective agreement article by article. It has set up our negotiating committee and bargaining team very well going forward. In addition, we have given members regular communiqués on the process of collective bargaining, the general climate going into bargaining, the history of MSVUFA bargaining, and the next one, now in production, on workload, which will take the form of a day-in-life of an academic worker.

Atlantic School of Theology

By David Deane

The last year saw the signing of the first collective agreement between ASTFA and Atlantic School of Theology Board of Governors. The agreement, signed on June 15th, 2011 concluded a lengthy process that began in April 2010. Negotiations stalled on such issues as the working conditions of librarians, salary and privacy. On December 6th, 2010 ASTFA filed for conciliation and while this led to initial improvement negotiations soon stalled again. In response ASTFA voted unanimously in favour of a strike mandate on February 4th 2011. On March 16th ASTFA gave notice to the Minister of labour and Workforce Development that the Association would exercise its right to strike if the parties did not reach an agreement by March 21st. A deal was reached shortly before midnight on March 20th, which subsequently 70% of ASTFA members voted in favor of ratifying. The feelings of the membership were summed up by President Alyda Faber, who said, “A first collective agreement is about locking in important basic rights. In this first round the majority of our members voted in favour of those rights, despite the very low salary offer from the employer. ASTFA remains firmly committed to achieving parity with Nova Scotia university sector norms.”

The negotiations were undoubtedly a learning process for the Association. We learned how unified we are as a small union and how fortunate we are to have such committed and able leadership, not least in Rob Fennell our chief negotiator. We learned firsthand how the “power in a union” can practically be realized in solidarity within and amongst larger networks: CAUT and the CAUT Defense Fund, ANSUT, and SMUFU in particular.

In preparation for strike we received immense support from our sister unions in ANSUT and right across the country. This support provided us with resources—financial and other—to stage industrial actions well beyond what a union of our size would traditionally be capable of. Even more importantly, the support from sister unions strengthened our resolve at a key stage. Such support was crucial in empowering us at a time when our commitment and resolve was all that made a just and equitable agreement possible. Grateful thanks to all for your solidarity in our first round of negotiations.

We have been living with the agreement this past academic year and have been participating in the cultural shift at AST due to it. Administrative work practices and habits have needed to be adjusted to the new context in which the collective agreement governs operations between members of the bargaining unit and the administration of AST. To this end a joint committee has been established under the agreement to guide interpretation and application of the agreement in the life of the school. The evolution in culture, learning to adapt to a more formal, negotiated, set of operating principles will take time.

Finally, due to the protracted first round of negotiations, we do not have long to bask in the first agreement but are already preparing our positions and strategies for the next round, which will begin in the next academic year.

Did You Know?

That in 2011, Colin Dodds, was the highest paid President at ANSUT represented universities. While his salary is in the middle of the pack at about \$220,000, he also received over \$30,000 in housing and car allowances, while the university also paid him over \$35,000 for teaching.

**The ANSUT Executive
2011–2012**

President

Chris Ferns
Mount Saint Vincent University
president@ansut.ca

Past-President

Marc Lamoureux
Saint Mary's University
pastpres@ansut.ca

Vice-President

Robert Seale
Acadia University
vp@ansut.ca

Secretary

Scott Stewart
Cape Breton University
secretary@ansut.ca

Treasurer

Alvin Comiter
NSCAD University
treasurer@ansut.ca

Member-at-Large

Jennifer Sullivan
memberatlarge@ansut.ca

Contacting ANSUT

**Our mailing address:
Association of Nova
Scotia University Teachers**

**c/o Mount Saint Vincent
University Faculty Association**

**166 Bedford Hwy
Halifax, NS
B3M 2J6**

info@ansut.ca

**By Phone
Phone: 1.902.457.6265**

**By Fax
Phone: 1.902.457.2118**

Did You Know?

That over the period 2004/5 to 2010/11 Acadia paid \$907,627 in administrative leave pay to Presidents. Over the same period, the university paid \$1,476,882 in salaries to Presidents or acting Presidents at the university.



Founded in 1997, ANSUT currently represents the faculty associations of all but two universities and degree-granting institutions in Nova Scotia.

Its members include more than half the full-time faculty and librarians in the province, as well as contract academic staff at several of our member institutions.