MUNASA

McGill University
Non-Academic
Staff Association

L'Association du personnel
non enseignant
de l'université McGill

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SAY NO TO MORE AND LONGER DAYS OF WORK

The McGill Administration dropped a bomb at the first negotiating meeting for a new collective agreement with the MUNACA bargaining unit on September 9, 2003 when it proposed increased work for no increase in compensation. The Administration has proposed administrative and support staff work four more days per year and that clerical and nursing staff also work longer hours. The elimination of four paid days off (the two floating holidays and two of the Summer Fridays provided in the Hours of Work Policy) represents a reduction in compensation of 1.6%. The reduction of the lunch break for clerical and nursing staff from 75 to 60 minutes represents a loss in salary of 3.7%.

Although the University has not made a formal proposal to MUNASA, it has alluded to such a position in informal discussions.

The MUNASA Executive Committee is firmly opposed to any such attempts to increase work load and the accompanying stress that administrative and support staff may bear. At a time when the real problem is clearly and unequivocally one of over-work, high job stress, unrealistic workload demands and burnout, the Administration is demonstrating a fundamental misunderstanding of the problem.

McGill Administration not addressing the real issue-workload

This is particularly distressing at a time when sister universities in Quebec are awakening to the problem of stress and burnout in the workplace and are beginning to take consequential measures to address the issues.

Notably, Laval University has introduced formal policies to deal with these matters, including the creation of a position of Associate Director Human Resources for Health and Safety. This after a comprehensive survey and analysis of the university community at Laval demonstrated enormous problems related to stress and overwork, on a scale second only to the hospital sector in Quebec. The Laval analysis showed that the second most stressful place to work in Quebec (public and private sectors combined) in the last ten years has been the university sector (with hospitals taking first place). This situation developed as a result of the massive budget cuts and reductions of work force during a period of increased volume and complexity of work throughout the 1990s. (This was the key lesson learned at the Third Annual CACPUQ Symposium held at Laval in May 2003.)

We take particular note that the staff at Laval were instrumental in getting the Laval Administration to recognize the problem and to deal with it. It is an example of what staff associations can accomplish.

What is more, it has long been known that McGill has the most cost-effective and productive administration in Quebec, and probably in the country, as measured by the percentage of the operating budget devoted to administration. Yet the McGill Administration persists in failing to recognize this reality and seems to want to exacerbate the workload problem by increasing our hours of work.

Sign up New MUNASA Members

An important response to this misguided initiative, is to keep MUNASA strong by signing up new members. Each of you should lobby your colleagues (especially people hired in the last 5 – 8 years) and encourage them to join if they are not now members.

We must show the University that McGill managers stand firm and united in our willingness to defend and improve our working conditions. People who say that they won't join MUNASA because they get the same benefits anyway without being members, do not understand that by not having a strong body to speak on their behalf and defend their interests, they are undermining the working conditions and rights of us all.

Performance Dialogue 2003 - a step in the right direction

On June 18 MUNASA members unanimously endorsed the MUNASA *Principles of Performance Planning and Management*. This document was presented to Human Resources in June. In September, Human Resources started a series of training sessions to implement Performance Dialogue 2003. The Performance Dialog programme conforms to, although does not completely address, the principles established by the MUNASA membership as a critical component of the New Compensation System.

As of September 23, approximately 300 administrators had participated in at least one of the information and training sessions. Human Resources intends to reach upwards of 600 administrators by the end of October. Although many feel the training is not as in-depth as they anticipated, there is a clear attempt to reach the academic administrators who supervise non-unionized non-academic staff. This has been a clear requirement of MUNASA since planning for the New Compensation System began over five years ago.

Performance Dialogue is a step in the right direction in the creation of a comprehensive Performance Management and Performance Planning Policy in the University. It is still only a small piece of the puzzle. MUNASA continues to negotiate for the creation of a fully developed policy. (see "Principles of Performance Planning" at www.MUNASA.com, the Performance Management and Planning document dated May 15, 2003.)

A comprehensive Performance Planning Policy must include measures for Career Development, Skill Acquisition, a Management Culture based on transparency and collaboration, prioritisation of resources and workload, and Succession Planning and Organisational Renewal.

Performance Dialogue presents a golden opportunity for staff to articulate the problems faced with respect to job stress, workload, inadequate manpower and resources, and unrealistic expectations; and then to develop realistic objectives towards a feasible and productive work environment as a consequence of the dialogue.

Performance Dialogue will work on a 12 month cycle following the fiscal year, June 1 to May 31. Interim, transition measures are being applied now. The immediate task under Performance Dialogue will be to set performance objectives for the period from November 1, 2003 to May 31, 2004. Then in the late spring and early summer, performance with respect to these objectives will be reviewed and new objectives will be set for the period June 1, 2004 to May 31, 2005.

Therefore Performance Dialogue will not set retroactive objectives for the months prior to November 2003. Performance Dialogue will not be used as a reference for the Merit exercise that will occur this fall. The reference period for Merit will be June 1, 2002 to May 31, 2003.

MUNASA's work does not end with Performance Dialogue. Staff Development, a comprehensive model of competency requirements, an alignment of Staffing Policy and procedures to Staff Development, and Succession Planning are all elements of the New Compensation System still in development.

Demutualization

By now all staff who were employed prior to January 27, 1998 should have received notification from Human Resources as to the proceeds that you will receive from the demutualization of Sun Life Insurance. MUNASA members who have not received such notification and who believe they are eligible should contact the MUNASA Office at 895-6126.

It has been a very long process to reach the actual distribution of funds since Sun Life announced demutualization in 1997. Demutualization is the process by which a mutual life insurance company converts from a policyholder company to a public-traded stockholder company (Canada Life and Mutual Life being other examples). Demutualization requires the total value of the company be distributed to voting policyholders in exchange for their rights and interests in the company. At the time that Sun Life announced demutualization, the value of McGill's Term Life coverage was equated to 247,762 shares. The McGill Administration elected to receive this allocation in cash at the market value on the day of distribution. This resulted in a "windfall" to McGill of $3,097,025.

MUNASA, in conjunction with MUNACA and MAUT, wrote to the Principal on October 12, 2000 stating that since the life insurance was paid for by and on behalf of the employees that the proceeds should in their entirety be distributed to the employees. Principal Shapiro responded on November 22, 2000 that the University reserved all its rights to claim that it had no obligation to distribute the proceeds to its employees, but it was open to "an appropriate way of addressing the issue in a satisfactory way."

Discussions took place through the Staff Benefits Advisory Committee on which, MUNASA, MUNACA, MAUT, and one of the other non-academic unions (appointed on a rotating basis) pursued a fair distribution of the funds. On June 19, 2003 MUNASA signed an agreement with the University on the distribution of the proceeds ($3,097,025):

- 2/3 of the proceeds will be distributed to persons who were members of the McGill Life Insurance Plan on January 27, 1998 and are eligible for coverage by the McGill Life Insurance Plan as of June 1, 2003. A person who, after January 27, 1998, upon, or after their retirement date, declined coverage of the McGill Life Insurance Plan shall also be deemed eligible to the Employee Proceeds.
- 1/3 of the Proceeds will be retained by McGill which undertakes to use the Proceeds for the benefit of the employees.
- All interest accrued on the total Proceeds will be held as a reserve by McGill for a period of three years from the beginning of the distribution date. The interest during this period may be used by McGill for any anomalies that may arise. The amount remaining at the end of this period will be used for the benefit of employees.

Eligible recipients receive the proceeds either as a Supplemental Health Plan contribution holiday, or if not a member of the health plan then as a dividend in accordance with Income Tax regulations.

This distribution is noteworthy in several ways. The contribution holiday provides a tax-free distribution so that recipients obtain maximum benefit. The 2/3 distribution is amongst the highest direct pay-out to employees in Canada. And all that remains is also allocated to the benefit of employees.