

MEDIA RELEASE

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SIAST tries again to restart contract talks

Union rejects three mediators suggested by SIAST

November 26, 2010 – SIAST has gone back to the drawing board and proposed the names of two more mediators in an attempt to restart negotiations with its bargaining units. SIAST also pressed the bargaining units for a timely response to its latest overture.

“We’re concerned about the toll that the current situation is taking on students and employees,” says Gary Earles, SIAST’s associate vice president, human resources. “We need to return to the bargaining table and work towards a collective agreement.”

SIAST once again urged the union to agree to refrain from job action during the mediation planning and implementation process.

Earles said SIAST asked the union for a response by the end of the day next Tuesday to its latest suggestions so that mediation could get under way with the intent of reaching an agreement this calendar year. He expressed concern about the length of time it’s taking to reach agreement on a mediation process, adding that the uncertainty is weighing heavily on the minds of students in particular.

SIAST agreed more than a week ago to voluntary mediation proposed by its Academic and Professional Services bargaining units and suggested the names of three possible mediators. Yesterday, the bargaining units, members of the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees Union (SGEU) rejected all three. In the letter delivered yesterday, the bargaining units advanced the same name they had proposed twice previously, this time mediating in conjunction with the conciliator who was working with the two sides when the union walked away from conciliation.

"We're disappointed they have rejected the three well-respected and experienced labour relations mediators we have proposed without advancing new names," Earles says.

The union had earlier rejected SIAST's proposal to have the Ministry of Labour and Workplace Safety coordinate mediation between the two parties. SIAST made the request in an attempt to restart collective agreement negotiations and in response to a mediation request contained in the union's November 10 strike notice.

"SIAST has been acting in good faith to find a mutually agreeable way back to the bargaining table," Earles says, "but we need both parties committed to finding a solution."

Before ending conciliation efforts earlier this month, SIAST's bargaining units submitted final offers that Earles says SIAST was compelled to turn down. The settlements proposed by the Academic and Professional Services bargaining units would result in increased costs to SIAST of approximately 17% and 15% respectively, over a three-year term. SIAST's initial offer was 4.0% over three years.

SIAST is providing bargaining updates and information about its response to job action on www.campusupdate.ca. SIAST also records updates on its emergency message toll-free number – 1-866-878-8913 (Regina – 798-4500).

SIAST is Saskatchewan's primary public institution for post-secondary technical education and skills training, recognized nationally and internationally for its expertise and innovation. More than 15,000 students were enrolled in SIAST programs in the most recent academic year; additionally, the organization drew almost 25,000 individual course registrations. Through program and course registrations, SIAST served almost 26,000 distinct students with programs that touch every sector of the economy. SIAST operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

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Information about SIAST can be found at www.goSIAST.com.