

Herald response to unfair labour complaint

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(HALIFAX) – The Chronicle Herald has been working through its negotiators in an effort to reach a deal with its 55 striking editorial staff but the union appears intent on playing games in the media, says Herald negotiator Ian Scott.

The comment comes after the union announced it is pursuing a legal challenge to the company's bargaining process, citing as unfair company demands for changes to the collective agreement that exist at other media companies throughout Canada.

Scott, the company's chief operating officer, said the Herald elected not to pursue a claim of unfair bargaining after the union backtracked on its commitments in the lead up to conciliation talks on November 4th.

“We felt strongly that we had the grounds for an unfair negotiation complaint but decided against it as the only thing a complaint will accomplish at this juncture is to slow down any hope of negotiating a settlement to this 10 month old strike,” said Scott. “A legal challenge obviously puts the freeze on negotiations.”

The union tried a similar tactic to pressure the company during the short lived labour dispute last year with unionized press workers and mechanics. The union complaint was never pursued and was eventually withdrawn by the union.

“It's tough to swallow when the union claims that the employer isn't negotiating. The union's chief negotiator stalled negotiations in the lead up to conciliation with comments like saying ‘No is bargaining.’”

Scott expressed surprise at the union's tactics, saying that late last week and over the weekend the union indicated it was preparing a comprehensive proposal for the company to consider. Scott said Monday that the

company will review the union's offer to settle the strike but will logically have to focus on responding to the union's legal challenges first.

"The union's erratic approach to bargaining is unfortunately going to further slow the process," said Scott.

The union representing journalists and newsroom staff has been on strike since January 23rd when it walked off the job in support of its contract demands. The parties met for conciliation November 4th but talks concluded when the union refused to honour terms it agreed for the negotiations, including a media blackout.

30

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