

Herald talks break down

Talks between The Chronicle Herald and its striking newsroom workers broke down Friday when the union refused to continue to negotiate on the terms that had been agreed by both parties.

"It's sad and shocking that after more than nine months on strike that the union executive would pull a bargaining stunt to derail negotiations," said Ian Scott, the Herald's Chief Operating Officer.

"It's even sadder given that the talks had made progress with the union finally agreeing to drop its demand to control newspaper production, which is something unions at most Canadian papers agreed to years ago."

The union has rejected company proposals that offered:

- Wages up to \$84,000 in final year
- Seven weeks of vacation
- Sick coverage for up to six months
- 68 weeks of severance resulting from the current round of layoffs
- New seniority language requested by the union
- Company paid pension
- Paid overtime at 37.5 hours
- 11 company paid stat holidays

Even amidst a dramatically changing industry that has resulted in closures and downsizing of newspaper companies around the world, the contract offered by the company remains the richest newspaper package in eastern Canada.

"The union freely admits that the old contract was among the best in the country for the union, calling it 'gold plated'," says Scott.

"We are an industry in transition and it's regrettable that the union has put its national aims above the needs of the workers it is bound to represent," said Scott.

Over a year ago, the union's national president threatened to use his union's multimillion dollar strike fund to wage an "ugly" strike at The Chronicle Herald if it didn't achieve its bargaining aims.

"We want to see our journalists back. But we have to achieve a fair and equitable contract and a contract that can support the business going forward," says Scott.

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