

Dear President Johnson,

The Faculty Association is writing to express deep concern that health benefits could be cut for TSSU members as part of their current job action. Our concern is based on a message sent from SFU HR to TSSU implying that unless TSSU takes over the funding of the June healthcare benefits, their health benefits would be cut off entirely. While the BC Labour Code contains such a provision, it is rarely exercised, being seen as a measure of last resort.

For context, at that point in their job action TSSU members had implemented an overtime ban but nothing further. The implied threat to their healthcare benefits caused the job action to escalate, with TSSU setting up picket lines across campus on Thursday last week.

It is our view that removal of benefits would not be in the best interests of students, nor would it help to reach a collective agreement with the TSSU.

Members of the TSSU are our graduate students, our teaching colleagues, and our teaching support. They are also amongst the most vulnerable and precarious workers on campus. Many TSSU members are also international students, and in the absence of health benefits these members would be left without any access to healthcare without paying out of pocket. This action would also disproportionately impact TSSU members with disabilities or chronic illness, and to cancel the benefits seems to us to be a decision entirely antithetical to the University's commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

We ask the administration to reconsider their decision and retract the implied threat of removing healthcare benefits, which we feel would constitute an extreme measure in reaction to what was a relatively mild job action by the TSSU.

We also believe that retracting this threat will help defuse tensions between the parties, and increase the likelihood of them both returning to the table with a view to negotiating and settling a collective agreement, something that is in all our best interests.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,

Dave Hannah
Vice-President, SFUFA
Associate Editor, Journal of Management Inquiry
Professor, Beedie School of Business
Simon Fraser University