

Without fairness, there can be no deal

Fifty years in, our college system has its successes – and its flaws.

On the one hand, the system has grown in leaps and bounds, supporting the economic growth of a province that continues to boast one of the strongest economies in the country. On the other, it has failed to keep up with changing times, with a structure that sidelines faculty when it comes to decision making and fails to provide for the academic freedom needed to support student learning.

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It's also a system that is increasingly reliant on underpaid, precarious contract faculty, who are given little or no prep time, are paid a fraction of full-time wages, and have no idea whether their position will be there in a matter of months. The

need to address this was identified as one of the top demands by members during our demand-setting process earlier this year.

The college faculty bargaining team looked closely at the issues caused by this unfair

situation, and put our findings together earlier this year in the first issue of [Ontario's public colleges at 50: A Better Plan](#).

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Team calls strike vote

In response to the refusal of management to discuss the core issues identified by faculty in negotiations, the bargaining team has asked the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) to schedule a strike vote for early September.

According to bargaining team chair JP Hornick, the team has put forward proposals that “would improve academic decision-making through collegial governance and academic freedom, create fairness in how partial-load and contract faculty are treated, and support the success of students. We’re asking members for a strong “YES” vote to help the team push for the best deal possible.”

In the news release issued Thursday, OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas pointed out that “college faculty are committed to providing high-quality education for the hundreds of thousands of students who rely on Ontario colleges to prepare them for the rest of their lives. It’s time for management to listen to their expertise on how best to do that.”

More information will be provided once a date has been set by the OLRB.

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Bargaining Team



From these findings, and looking at the best practices of other postsecondary institutions across the country, we have developed a better plan for a fairer system. This week we introduced this plan at the negotiating table.

Our plan would create fairness in how faculty are treated, and in turn, support the success of students. It would provide a path to full-time jobs for faculty who want them; equal pay for equal work; access to benefits for all faculty; and improved job security for partial-load faculty through a right-of-first-refusal system and a move to full year contracts. You can find more details on these proposals inside this bulletin.

We also proposed a simple way that the Council could work with us to ensure that these

improvements reach all contract faculty, not just those who fall within the arbitrary range of teaching hours that determines whether someone is considered a partial-load member. Unfortunately, the management team ignored our proposal to work together to improve the working conditions of contract faculty.

Inside this bulletin you will find details on each of these proposals, links to the language proposed at the bargaining table, and a discussion of next steps, given the refusal of management to even consider addressing these core issues. These steps will include the scheduling of a strike vote for early September, where a strong "YES" vote will give us the strength to push for the best deal possible.

Proposals that improve life for partial load faculty

On Tuesday, we presented a set of proposals designed to ensure the fair treatment of all faculty. All faculty, regardless of full-time or contract status, deserve equal access to workload protections, wages, and benefits. Further, the Ontario public college system as a whole – and students in particular – benefit from a college system characterized by security and stability, rather than one based on precarity.

[You can find the proposed language,](#)
[and the full text of the bargaining team's presentations for introducing them here.](#)

Our proposals on this issue include improvements that will:

1) Create more full-time jobs for faculty who want them

Faculty need job security to be able to fully support students. The trend across the country is toward reducing precarity through changes to collective agreements to include faculty complement language.

Complement language allows students, employers, administrators, and faculty to know that our system has the stability needed

to provide high-quality, public postsecondary education. It does this by balancing the need for flexibility with the stable pedagogical foundation that comes with dedicated, regular full-time faculty.

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To accomplish this balance, our proposal sets a faculty complement ratio of 70 per cent full-time to 30 per cent contract positions, a reversal of the current 30 per cent full-time to 70 per cent contract mix.

This is in line with a number of other higher education collective agreements in Canada that have set a ratio of full-time to contract faculty. This ratio will create pathways to full-time jobs for contract faculty who seek them, while giving contract faculty who would choose to remain part-time the ability to do so.

2) Provide equal pay for equal work

Our proposals will provide equal pay for equal work by basing partial-load wages on the full-time salary scales, pro-rated according to the percentage of a full-time workload as calculated using the same Standard Workload Formula (SWF) full-time faculty use.

What would this mean for partial-load faculty?

Currently, a full-time faculty member at step 8 makes approximately \$24,462 in a term of teaching, based on a 15-week term. By contrast, a partial-load faculty member at the same step, with 7 Teaching Contact Hours (TCH) per week (51

per cent of a full-time workload) makes \$9,837 in a term. Under our proposed system, this faculty member would make \$12,476. This would mean an increase of more than \$2,500 a term, just to provide equal pay for the work that is being done.

If this principle of equal pay for equal work was extended to all contract faculty, not just our unionized partial-load members, the difference would be even greater. For example, a non-unionized part-time faculty member at Algonquin college at the same step on the grid teaching 6 TCH currently makes only \$4,802 in a term, despite the fact that they are performing the equivalent of 40 per cent of a full-time workload. If they were paid equally based on the work they are doing, that would increase to \$9,800 a term – \$5,000 more, or double what they are currently being paid.

The significant gap between the current wages and what these faculty would earn under a system that provided equal pay for equal work demonstrates the need for action. With the introduction of Bill 148, the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*, and the government’s statements about ensuring that part-time workers receive equal pay for equal work, it’s unacceptable that a government-funded organization continues to under-pay its workers in such an egregious fashion.

What equal pay for equal work would mean for faculty

	One term’s wages (current system)	One term’s wages (equal pay for equal work)
Full-time faculty	\$24,462	\$24,462
Unionized partial-load faculty with 7 TCH (51 % of full-time workload)	\$9,837	\$12,476
Non-unionized contract faculty with 6 TCH (40 % of full-time workload)	\$4,802	\$9,800

*Wages based on the fourth step of the relevant salary schedule

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3) Improve job security for partial-load faculty

Students do better when faculty have enough consistency to bring what they learn from teaching one course to their teaching of another, and when they are able to focus on their job, rather than worrying every few months about applying for the next one.

Our bargaining team has heard faculty's concerns on these issues, and has tabled proposals that will improve the job security of partial-load members. These proposals will provide partial-load faculty with a right of first refusal on partial-load assignments that include courses they are qualified to teach, which will be based on seniority. Seniority, with this new language, will be accrued after eight months to reflect two semesters of work, and retained for three years following the end of the last contract.

Our proposals will also provide more stability by increasing partial-load contracts to 12 months in length, and having them assigned three weeks

prior to the start of the academic year. This will allow additional time to prepare courses, and will provide stability for students, faculty, and the colleges.

To address the issue of last-minute contract cancellations by colleges, our proposals also add cancellation fees when partial-load contracts are cancelled after being assigned. Partial-load faculty are in a precarious position, and have made decisions not to take alternate work based on a contract offer from a college. They deserve compensation in cases where this contract is cancelled.

4) Give partial-load faculty access to benefits

Our proposals would also end the current system that excludes some faculty from receiving workplace benefits provided to others. Under our new language, partial-load faculty would be provided with equal benefits to those available to full-time faculty.

Looking out for contract and sessional faculty

Colleges responsible for training the workers of tomorrow should ensure they are setting a good example for how employers should act. In line with the principles put forward by the government in Bill 148, and in the Premier's comments on the subject, we believe that all faculty, whether labeled partial-load, contract, sessional, or full-time, should be treated equally. This means that all faculty should receive equal pay and have equal access to benefits, regardless of their employment status.

While contract faculty continue their decade-long struggle to unionize, with a vote scheduled this

fall, there is no reason these faculty should have to wait for equal treatment. Instead, we proposed a simple way for the Council to work with us to ensure that these improvements reach all contract faculty, not just those who fall within the arbitrary range of teaching hours that determines whether someone is considered a partial-load member. Under our proposal, both the Council and the union would jointly agree to voluntarily recognize all contract faculty – including part-time and sessional faculty – as members of the college faculty bargaining unit, ensuring all contract faculty are treated fairly.

A management team that doesn't want to work with us

The 50th anniversary of the college system should be a time to embrace the fact that the system has both successes and flaws. It should provide an opportunity to look back at the goals set out for colleges at their creation 50 years ago, take stock of where we have met them and where we've fallen short, and put in place a plan to close those gaps.

That's how faculty see it. Sadly, that's not what we're seeing from the management team.

College administrators seem all too happy to cut ribbons, eat cake, and attend parties to celebrate the anniversary of the system. But they don't seem to want to do the work of actually taking a hard look at our colleges, or discussing with faculty what needs to be done to make them better.

In early July, our team sat down and laid out a plan for better academic decision-making through collegial governance and academic freedom, along with other improvements.

This week, we tabled proposals designed to address our system's growing reliance on underpaid, precarious contract faculty who are denied basic rights, job security, or equal pay.

In both cases, management refused to discuss these issues at the table.

The refusal of the management team to work with

us on any of these improvements badly needed by Ontario's public college system is deeply disappointing.

Particularly galling, this week's proposals were aimed at addressing the unfair treatment of partial-load and contract faculty. And with the government, and the media, spending the spring and summer discussing the need for labour reform to improve the working conditions of precarious workers, you would think that the colleges

responsible for training the next generation of workers would want to be leading the way with the example they set for how workplaces should be run.

Sadly, our experience this week has been the opposite. While the government, through Bill 148, is proposing significant changes to ensure equal pay for equal

work, and prevent employers from labeling a group of workers as casual or part-time in order to avoid paying them fair wages, the colleges seem determined to continue doing just that.

With each day of negotiations, the position of management is becoming clearer. They're happy with the way things are, and have no interest in addressing the very real problems facing our college system.

We propose improving the structure of Ontario colleges to support student success, by introducing collegial governance and academic freedom? They say no.

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We suggest ways to improve the grievance process to address the real problems facing members? They say no.

We propose a long-overdue update to the class definition of a counsellor? They say defer it to committee.

We put forward changes so that all faculty, whether full-time or partial-load, would receive equal pay for equal work? They say – you guessed it – nothing.

And yet college management claims to be committed to reaching a deal. Just not one that offers any solution to the top issues of faculty.

Management doesn't seem to understand that our top demands this round of bargaining are about more than our wages. The issues that need to be fixed won't be addressed by a wage increase and a promise to send issues back to the same committees that have failed to address them so far. Without changes to the structure of the college system to ensure collegial governance and academic freedom, and without fundamental changes to how contract and partial-load faculty are treated to create a fairer system – there is no deal to be found.

Our team has heard, loud and clear, that members aren't interested in a deal that doesn't include serious improvements on these issues. And we know that the success of our students – both those entering our classrooms this fall, and those who will sit there in the years to come – depends on addressing these issues and putting in place a better plan.

College faculty have that better plan – but we need a partner on the other side of the table

willing to work together on making that plan a reality. Without that, there can be no deal.

In the weeks to come you will start to see our public campaign ramp up as we invite all Ontarians to take a look at the challenges facing our college system as it turns 50, and the

better plan that faculty are proposing. Please help us by sharing this plan with your friends, your family, and your colleagues, and encouraging them to stand with us as we fight for the better college system that Ontario students deserve.

In solidarity,

JP Hornick
Chair, College faculty bargaining team

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To contact your CAAT-A bargaining team, please write to: bargaining2017@gmail.com

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