August 22, 2017

Dear Faculty Members:  
  
As you may already know, on August 8, the College Employer Council, which represents all 24 of Ontario’s colleges in bargaining, made a settlement offer to cut short the current round of collective bargaining for partial-load and full-time faculty.

This pre-mature offer ignores all faculty proposals to address fairness and quality in Ontario’s college system—proposals that were democratically developed and voted on by faculty in meetings across the province. Significant deficiencies in their offer included:

* A proposed wage increase that is less than the projected rate of inflation, less than what was offered to support staff, and puts us further behind in relation to our comparator groups (high school teachers on the low end, and university teachers on the upper end).
* A 4-year extension of the “Article 2 moratorium,” which strips away the union’s right to fight for desperately needed full-time jobs.
* A so-called “revenue neutral” clause designed to prevent the colleges from having to spend any new money to meet their legal obligations to treat contract faculty fairly under the province’s upcoming Bill 148 “Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act.” And,
* The employer’s proposal does not address any faculty issues.

In addition, if the employer believes this is the best offer they can make to college faculty, they have the opportunity to do so through a final offer vote as outlined in the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act.

Following extensive consultation with and the full support of all local presidents and our provincial Bargaining Advisory Committee, our Bargaining Team will present a comprehensive response this week to address the significant issues you have brought forward as demands.

Management claims that the system is working and stable. We know, however, that the status quo is not working. Our system is facing a staffing crisis: contract faculty now make up 70% of all faculty and work under extremely inequitable conditions. Librarians and counsellors lack the protections of a workload formula. Our workloads are exploding with new online technologies and the stress of holding departments together without enough full-time members. Managers are increasingly exercising their authority to take academic decisions out of the hands of faculty—the real experts—with no checks and balances. And without intellectual property protection, more and more colleges are taking our course materials and licensing them to private career colleges—literally selling our jobs out from under us. These are the real issues that must be addressed at the table. For faculty, this round is about quality and fairness. It’s about building the colleges our students need.

Bargaining will continue through September; however, on September 14, we will be asking you to support our team’s call to authorize a strike mandate. By no means does a strike mandate vote mean there will be a strike. A strong strike mandate will tell the College Employer Council that it’s time to get back to the negotiations table and start talking about what Ontario’s colleges need.

In solidarity,

Nicole Zwiers, President, Local 354