



The Council’s “Setting the Record Straight” bulletin might deserve a “B” for bluster, but it gets an “F” for the facts...

As college faculty know, the greatest amount of our time goes toward supporting students who are struggling. For teachers, counsellors, and librarians, this is where the real work of education happens. We’ve already done our job when a student excels on their assignment – that’s easy. However, for those who aren’t getting it, we need to take the extra time to explain why, and to help them do better next time.

With this in mind, we need to take some time to unpack Council’s latest bulletin, released on September 27. In their missive, the Council lays out a misleading chart of supposedly “false” union statements vs. ostensibly true Council “facts.” Sadly, when interrogated, these “facts” largely turn out to be of the “alternative” variety.

1. Staffing numbers

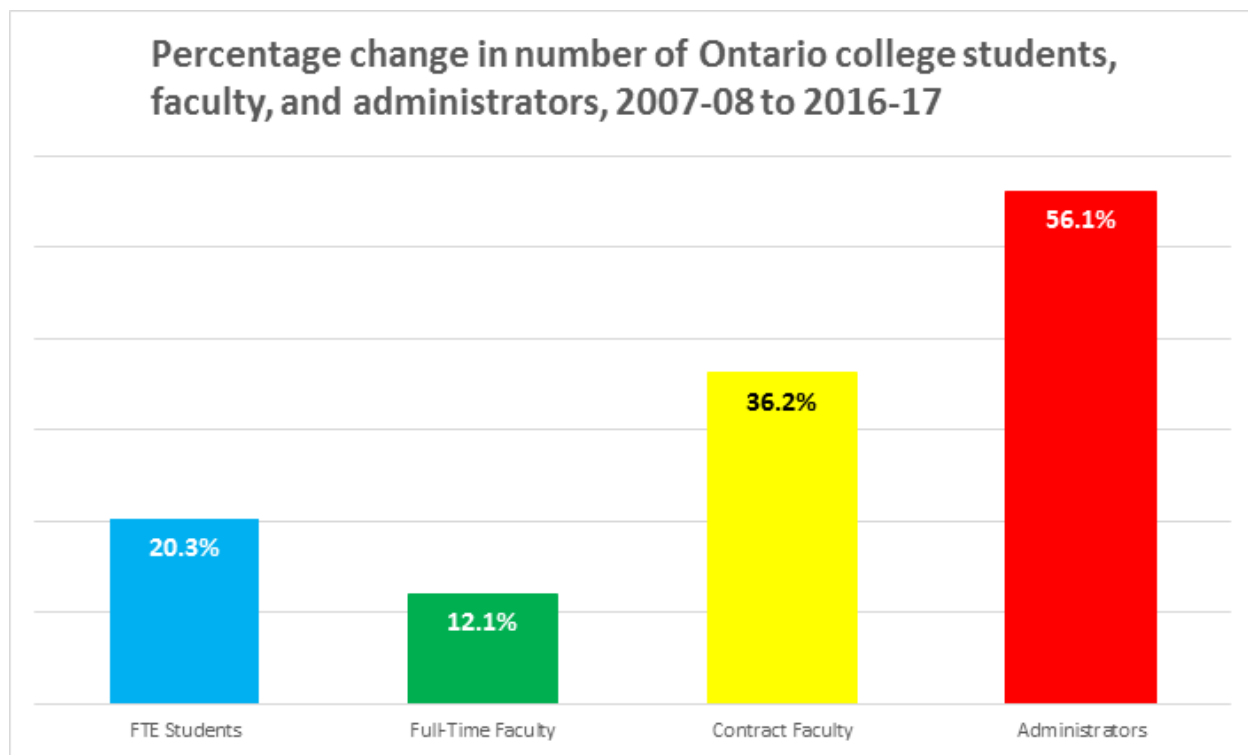
The Council disputes the union’s numbers on how much teaching is being done by full-time and non-full-time faculty in the colleges today. They say our numbers are way high. We say their numbers are way low.

In truth, there *is* debate about how to calculate the hours of teaching being done by full-time and non-full-time faculty. A major reason for this debate is that there is considerable teaching being done in the system that is not recorded in the Collective Bargaining Information Services (CBIS) workload data. For instance, there is no consistency in reporting on college faculty work being done in Continuing Education and in online courses delivered through Ontario Learn and eCampus Ontario. We know the teaching being done in these areas is extensive, but colleges won’t report it. While colleges refuse to give us reliable data that encompasses all of the academic work being done, accurate numbers are impossible to obtain.

The bargaining team recently got a glimpse of this "hidden work" when the College Employer Council released its voting list for the part-time organizing drive. The Council submitted a list to the OLRB of 14,237 part-time and sessional academic employees in the colleges. However, their staffing data only reports 10,865 part-time and sessional faculty. These 3,372 additional non-full-time faculty represent a 31 per cent increase over the Council's "official" numbers. This is a troubling discrepancy indeed.

There has been no dispute that the true number of non-full-time faculty positions is over 70 per cent. This is a shocking enough number system-wide, but hides the fact that at several colleges, the ratio is actually far worse. For instance, at Collège Boréal in Sudbury, as of September 2017, 86 per cent of faculty positions are non-full-time, while only 14 per cent are full time.

When looking at system changes as a whole over time, the story becomes crystal clear: growth in contract faculty, administration, and students that far outpaces growth in full time faculty.



So let's create a shared set of accurate data, and stop the bickering

The faculty team has created a proposal on faculty complement that would provide an agreed-on, shared set of data collected by an existing, independent government body: CBIS. Our proposal would also create a minimum 50:50 ratio of full-time to non-full-time faculty. The College Employer Council is refusing to even consider this proposal, with no rationale beyond that they simply don't want to do it.

2. Health of the CAAT Pension Plan

Council states that the faculty pension plan is currently stable and fully funded, and this is something the faculty bargaining team has never disputed. However, what the faculty team *has* repeatedly said is that, while the pension plan is fully funded right now, **if the level of full-time faculty continues to fall, then it makes it more difficult for the Plan to manage risk.** In a high-risk environment with low membership, higher member pension contributions might be the only option available to address future downturns.

It's important to stress that this information comes directly from the Plan. A member of the faculty bargaining team, Darryl Bedford, is also a Trustee of the CAAT Pension Plan. On September 26, plan administrators communicated to plan members and trustees that the growth in new part-time plan members has eclipsed new full-time members. Although it is good for the Plan to welcome new members, contract faculty do not have secure employment and are not a reliable source of future contributions. If this trend continues, it could have worrisome implications. Again, given that the intended direction of the Council is clearly toward more contract faculty, this is a legitimate concern.

Council also states that "none of the colleges' proposals lead to reductions in full-time positions." This statement is wholly disingenuous, as an extension of the Article 2 moratorium means that full-time faculty who retire in the next four years are unlikely to be replaced. The colleges don't need to eliminate positions to achieve their goal of drastically reducing the full time workforce – they can do it through simple attrition.

3. "There are no concessions"

That their offer "does not include any concessions" is a statement Council has repeated often. **It is also completely untrue.** In the last round of negotiations, faculty agreed to a grave concession. This was a moratorium on the union's ability to file grievances relating to Article 2 of the collective agreement. This article enables the union to push colleges to hire full-time rather than non-full-time positions.

Arbitrator MacDowell wrote in 2015 (*Service Employees International Union, Local 1 v Elgin (Elgin)*, 2015 CanLII 759) that to protect existing positions in a bargaining unit, staffing preference language must be included in the collective agreement. In a footnote of that decision, MacDowell refers to Article 2 in our collective agreement as the type of language that is required to protect these jobs.

The only bright side is that the moratorium expires at the end of the current agreement. As of September 30, the moratorium is over. What Council's offer would do is extend this major concession for an additional four years.

Given this history, it is simply incorrect for the Council to continue to assert that its current offer has "no concessions" in it.

4. Faculty salary and comparator groups

The Council states that “Ontario college faculty are not behind comparator groups.” After the 1989 strike, a joint union/college task-force determined that the salary of a college professor should be set at the mid-point between the highest-paid high school teacher (the lower comparator), and the highest-paid professor at the Ontario university with the lowest rate of compensation (the higher comparator).

A look at the data is instructive:

As of 2017:

- The highest-paid secondary school teacher in Ontario makes \$100,560 (Superior-Greenstone School District)
- The highest-paid faculty at the lowest compensation Ontario university makes \$165,909 (Nipissing University)
- The mid-point between these two figures is \$132,674, which is where the highest college faculty salary should be according to the comparator group agreement.
- Instead, the highest paid college faculty currently makes \$106,853, which is 20 per cent below the comparator group level.

Once more, when the actual numbers are looked at, Council is caught seriously distorting the facts. **Faculty are 20 per cent behind their comparator groups right now. Over four years of Council’s offer there would be absolutely no gain for faculty in relation to comparator groups.**

5. Bill 148 – Does the Council really care about fairness for contract faculty?

Council's original “extension” offer tabled on August 1 would have ensured that the equity-promoting intentions of Bill 148 would be undermined. The Council's most recent proposal has removed the "revenue neutral" language, but the Council has made it clear that colleges will still argue at arbitration that there is no new money available to ensure fair compensation to partial load members. Given that 2016 alone saw a system-wide operating surplus of more than \$188 million, and that over the past 10 years, the accumulated system surplus sits at over \$1.2 billion, Council’s claim that they can’t afford equal pay is absurd. This is about a lack of will and not a lack of funds.

6. Are the colleges broken?

The faculty bargaining team consulted with members and locals in all 24 colleges and brought their concerns to the table. In contrast, the Council has maintained that the system is working for them, that faculty or student concerns are not legitimate, and that there is nothing at all that needs changing.

Although committed faculty and support staff do their best to provide quality education to college students, **aspects of Ontario colleges are broken:**

- the vast majority of faculty are precarious, non-full-time workers with no job security and insufficient pay and benefits;
- students don't have sufficient access to faculty who are the primary educators, mentors, and counsellors for their success both inside and outside of the classroom (e.g. St. Lawrence College just eliminated its only full-time librarian position);
- academic standards are slipping, grades are overturned in the interest of retention, and evaluations are simplified to control costs (e.g. Conestoga College's new policy allows Deans to unilaterally overturn faculty grades);
- online and "blended" course delivery is being forced on faculty and students as a means to save on money and on classroom space;
- colleges increasingly adopt the work of universities – degree programs and research – while possessing none of the structures that safeguard academic standards – academic freedom, academic senates, and intellectual property protection;
- the increasing challenge of student mental health in the colleges is being met with a steadily dwindling complement of qualified counsellors;
- increasing numbers of international students are being recruited without ensuring these students have the services and academic supports they need to succeed;
- students are paying steadily higher tuition, and receiving less in terms of educational quality.

Faculty priorities this round would address these concerns and directly improve college education.

7. What will the impact on contract faculty be?

Council states that: "The union's proposal on staffing ratios means that 7,120 contract faculty positions will be lost, with only 2,840 new full-time faculty positions gained – a net reduction of 4,280 contract faculty jobs."

In the faculty team's latest comprehensive offer of settlement, we made a significant move on the issue of faculty complement, even though this is one of the most important issues we have on the table. Faculty's current proposal to establish a 50:50 ratio of full-time to non-full-time is the bare minimum staffing complement needed to ensure stability and quality in the system.

When using the Council's own conservative 2016 staffing data, our proposed 50:50 ratio would lead to a complement of 11,450 full-time, and 11,450 non-full-time faculty. This would create 3,970 additional full time faculty positions over the life of the new Collective Agreement, with a corresponding loss in non-full-time positions. **Contrary to the Council's assertions, what our proposal would actually do is convert contract faculty jobs into full-time faculty jobs.**

In addition, our proposals create better job security (one-year contracts), enhanced seniority, and equitable pay and benefits for partial-load faculty.

8. Does the Council's offer actually "enhance benefits"?

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The misinformation continues when Council speaks of "benefit enhancements." In the Council's offer there is a proposal for "catastrophic drug coverage" – a new benefit that is 100 per cent funded by faculty. **A benefit paid for entirely by our members is not an "enhancement."** Similarly, their other proposal for changes to parental leave also reflects no gain for members, and instead presents potential dangers as it narrows the definition of what constitutes parental leave.

Back to reality...

Upon analysis, Council's September 27 bulletin truly deserves an "F" for its repeated instances of distortion and misinformation. It is simply the latest in a long line of attempts to distract faculty, students, and the public from the realities of a system in crisis, and from the concrete, cost-effective, and achievable proposals that faculty have to fix it:

- Academic freedom and collegial governance to balance academic decision-making and ensure student success.
- Fairness for contract faculty to create job security, ensure equal pay for equal work, and improve the student experience.

A sufficient full-time faculty complement to maintain stability and improve quality.

