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**College faculty strike vote sets table for talks**

TORONTO – The bargaining team for faculty at Ontario’s 24 public colleges has received a strike mandate from its members, setting the table for collective bargaining that is scheduled to resume next week.

Sixty-eight per cent of college faculty represented by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) entrusted their elected team with the ability to call a strike if the College Employer Council refuses to budge on key issues.

“College faculty from across the province debated and voted on 16 proposals to improve the quality and fairness of the college system in Ontario,” said union bargaining team chair JP Hornick. “Since bargaining started 10 weeks ago, management has ignored every single one of them.

“Hopefully this strike vote will be the incentive the colleges need to start negotiating for real.”

The collective agreement for 12,000 professors, instructors, counsellors, and librarians expires on September 30, 2017. No strike or lockout deadline has been set.

Key issues in the talks include the role of faculty in academic decision-making and fair treatment for contract faculty.

Eighty-one per cent of college teaching is done by contract faculty, all of whom have no job security and are paid significantly less than the negotiated rates for full-time permanent faculty. With the introduction of Bill 148, the *Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act*, “equal pay for equal work” has become a top issue not only for college faculty, but for college administration as well.

“With Bill 148 on the horizon, college management simply cannot ignore the rights of contract faculty,” said OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas. “Equal pay for equal work is a fundamental feature of the new bargaining landscape, and it will be a key feature in any settlement.

“College faculty have the full support of their union in getting a fair collective agreement that addresses their issues,” he added. “And we have $72 million in the strike fund to back that up.”

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