

Negotiations News

Bargaining news for OPSEU members in CAAT Academic

#11 November 9, 2005

Vote Nov. 29 Reject this offer !

On Tuesday, Nov. 29, faculty will be asked to contribute directly to the bargaining process by rejecting management's offer of settlement. That offer deserves no support. It is filled with concession demands. It fails to address the workload needs of college faculty and students. It provides zero improvements to employee benefits. It would force faculty salaries back to high school teacher levels and is more than 1.5 per cent below the current rate of inflation.

The offer of settlement attacks faculty professionalism and seeks to greatly expand the managerial discretion of supervisors.

One example of the attack on faculty professionalism is management's demand that any faculty member who is not at the college for any five-day period without advance approval from the employer would be deemed to be terminated. During non-teaching periods, faculty would need prior authorization from their supervisor to work at home or anywhere other than in their office. Without authorization in advance, a faculty member who worked away from the college in the May/June period or in the college's spring break would be terminated. The faculty member could subsequently try to get the college to accept reasons for being off college premises, but there would be no assurance of winning one's job back.

On a smaller scale, management is demanding that every teacher publish office and on-line hours for four hours each week. Management is offering to increase time for routine out-of-class assistance to students from three hours to four but only if faculty post those four hours. The faculty bargaining team told management that student needs could not be neatly packaged into a pre-determined, fixed schedule of four hours every week, that teachers do more hours some weeks and fewer in other weeks based on student needs and demands.

Management's demand is patently contrary to improving quality. It has only one objective – micro-management. It demonstrates a fundamental and insulting distrust of faculty. And, by the way, the additional hour for out-of-class assistance to students was also tied to faculty accepting management's completely unrelated demand for averaging of teaching contact hours. Full details of the offer will be made available to faculty well before the vote.

Workload has been a major issue in negotiations for some time now. Representatives from the colleges and the union visited every college as a part of the Workload Task Force. The first priority of that Task Force was to examine "time spent in preparation, evaluation and feedback, and

complementary functions.” Faculty told those Task Force members loudly and clearly that the time spent was undervalued. They work far more time than the workload formula provides on the SWF. The survey of faculty confirmed this message and provided reliable numbers to back it up. The year-long workload diaries kept by many faculty at all colleges further confirm the message.

Management has ignored the Task Force college meetings, has denigrated and attempted to undermine the survey, and has proposed their agenda in the alternative. Their agenda: get rid of the workload formula. This time they want to do that piecemeal by removing limits on the number of sections a teacher can be assigned in any semester, by removing weekly limits on teaching hours for purposes of averaging, by removing any set credit for evaluation when they assign any part of the marking to someone else, and by offering so-called pilot projects which do away with the formula.

Some of these demands, they say, are voluntary. There is a long and unequivocal history of so-called “voluntary” arrangements in the colleges. The pressures some managers can and have put on

faculty make voluntarism a sham. The colleges operate in a hierarchical structure, some more than others, in which a manager can wield considerable power and influence. Vulnerable faculty members have no realistic opportunity to deny a request that they “volunteer.”

For whatever reason, the management negotiating committee has declined to table a reasonable or realistic settlement offer. Perhaps they want to test the faculty’s resolve on workload issues. Perhaps, despite the findings of the joint Wages and Benefits Study, they believe faculty salaries should not rise above the level of high school teachers. Perhaps, they just don’t know what they are doing.

The union team remains committed to bargain towards a settlement. That takes two parties and so far this management group is committed to its workload concession demands and to driving faculty salaries downward in relation to our comparator groups. All the faculty can do now is send the message that this offer is unacceptable. It will be up to management then to accept and respond appropriately to that message.

Management bargaining backwards

On Tuesday Oct. 24, management tabled new demands which took a harder position than their previously tabled position. This is called bargaining backwards. They say these moves were motivated by meetings held with managers around the province.

By tabling new demands now which take a harder position than previously, this management bargaining committee is deliberately driving the parties further apart. They know that the faculty will never accept the demands they insist on. Since management will not bargain responsibly, and since they insist to the union team that faculty

want the management demands and will be well served by them, we told them we had no choice but to put their offer to a vote. The members will decide on November 29.

Management claims “the Union’s demands would result in the need to hire 1500 new faculty to deliver the same curriculum.” Interestingly, when the workload formula was introduced, more than 1000 faculty were hired. In the last 20 years, while college enrolment has grown by nearly 50 per cent, the number of full-time faculty has fallen by nearly 25 per cent. So, while the management figures are speculative at best, college faculty

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make no apologies for workload demands that will result in more full-time hires. That will serve the students well.

Also, management claims that the faculty workload demands “would dramatically reduce the number of teaching contact hours.” Not true. What is true is that management would have to decide whether to reduce teaching hours, or class size, or the number of different preps, or sections, or complementary functions, etc. It is management that has reduced teaching hours by cutting program hours, cutting semester lengths, using phantom hours, and a variety of other cost-cutting measures in the interest of efficiency. The real cuts were to quality. That is exactly what

Bob Rae told Ontarians in his assessment of the college system. Faculty have told their bargaining team and the Workload Task Force that workloads have gotten too high and the key result is a serious decline in quality. That must change.

Management claims that delaying a settlement could put the students’ academic year “in jeopardy.” Yet they table positions in October that drive the parties further apart. All we want is a fair settlement – the sooner the better. But this management committee has only put on the table one offer – one that is utterly unacceptable. All we can do is reject that offer – it is the only one there is – and see if this management negotiating team finally gets realistic.

Salary: Management must get serious

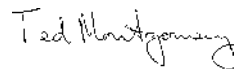
On salary – Management’s offer is for a two per cent raise this year. The September rate of inflation, according to Statistics Canada, was 3.4 per cent annually. The union is asking for a 4.5 per cent increase this year.

This management committee wants the union to endorse a four-year deal where salary is less than what high schools got and much less than Ontario University settlements. It is not going to happen. A two per cent offer is not, as management argues, “a reasonable basis to start discussing monetary issues.”

Put a serious offer on the table and the faculty union will be quick to reply. Oh, and by the way, management tells us that the two per cent would have to be reduced by the cost of any benefits we might want to get.

**To get in touch with the bargaining team,
send a message to: caata@opseu.org**

On behalf of the Bargaining Team:



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