

Negotiations News

OPSEU



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Bargaining news for OPSEU members in CAAT Academic

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Quality is central

The Provincial Government has clearly acknowledged the need to fix Ontario's post-secondary education system. Bob Rae was commissioned by the McGuinty Government to examine the state of post-secondary education and make recommendations for improvements. His report was due this month, but it is now expected a bit later in the year.

Rae held roundtable discussions with stakeholders and conducted town hall meetings around the province. A presentation was made to Rae in camera by OPSEU President Leah Casselman, College Academic Division Executive members Peter McKeracher and Fernand Bégin, and other OPSEU postsecondary education representatives.

Rae and his panel of advisors heard about the need to give attention to the deterioration of Ontario's colleges. No one can reasonably or cogently dispute that the quality of education and training services in the colleges has declined over the last decade and is now at a precipice. Bob Rae has already acknowledged this. The opportunity to fix what is broken is there – if management is up to the challenge.

Central to ending the slide of quality and reversing the trend is to achieve a workload system that does not leave classrooms overcrowded, teachers overburdened, and the educational and human

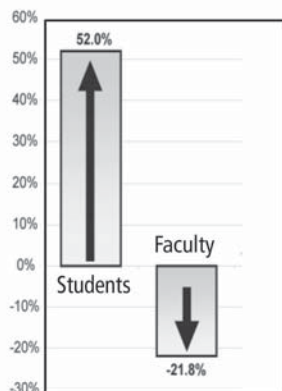
resources stretched well beyond reasonable limits. College students deserve better.

College faculty have made it unmistakably clear that the workload issues must be central to the next collective agreement. Management, in previous rounds of negotiations, have resisted faculty demands that would protect against unreasonable assignments. Instead, they tabled proposals to eliminate or weaken the existing limits on workload. Faculty have consistently and unequivocally rejected these regressive proposals. At recent Workload Task Force meetings at every college, teachers, counsellors, and librarians have reaffirmed that message. Decisions regarding the educational matters of the colleges must be made on the basis of educational priorities, not shortsighted fiscal objectives.

One legacy of the previous provincial regime was to use a list of so-called "Key Performance Indicators" to measure college performance. Though excluded from the list, the real KPI of the success or failure of college management and of the Colleges Compensation and

Appointments Council, which oversees the colleges on behalf of the provincial government, should be the ratio of full time faculty to full-time students in the colleges. The number of students that each teacher is responsible for is the central element of the elementary and secondary systems. We should note that, while it is not a feature of their collective agreements, universities use the same measure in their undergraduate and graduate programs as a marker of quality.

Percentage Change in Full-Time College Students and Faculty over the 15 years from 1988-89 to 2003-04



Source: College Compensation and Appointments Council & MCTU

Colleges need to recruit and retain excellent faculty. In order to do that, the colleges will need to offer working conditions and compensation packages that fit appropriately within the spectrum of teacher groups in Ontario. That means college faculty salary and benefit packages must fall between those of high school and university teachers. Realistically, they should be at the midpoint between those groups.

Faculty representatives from all of the colleges met in December and laid out the direction the colleges need to go if they are to turn around the declines of the last several years. Faculty have developed proposals to amend the workload formula and the system of workload assignment. Without these changes, the quality of education and training in the colleges is destined for continued decline.

The bargaining team will strive to reach a settlement which achieves the mandate set for us by faculty. The team's task over the next several months will be to advance the issues of workload, faculty salaries, and other priorities. The key to success will be the resolve and determination of college faculty.

The bargaining team will ensure that you are informed from the beginning to the end of negotiations. We look forward to working with you once again.

The bargaining team

Ted Montgomery

For the fourth time, Ted chairs our bargaining team. An academic upgrading teacher from Seneca College, Ted has been in the college system for over 30 years and has served as local chief steward and president.

Ted brings not only great experience to negotiations but a record of success as well. "Negotiations are a matter of finding solutions to complex challenges. It is a matter of improving conditions for faculty, never about going backwards, or trading off one benefit to achieve another. This time, faculty have made it clear that

workload problems must be resolved. These issues are inextricably linked to quality. The overall decline in quality is well documented now, as is the parallel increase in workload. The parties must find solutions to these issues."

Faculty bargaining teams under Ted's leadership have achieved meaningful results. Those results have been the product of the combined efforts and commitment of the team at the table and the faculty at the colleges whose solid support gives the team both the tools and the strength to succeed.

Sandi Webster

This is Sandi's fourth consecutive time on the bargaining team; and third time as vice-chair. Sandi has been at St. Clair College for 34 years: more than 20 of those years as an officer of Local 138; the past nine as president. She is the union chair on the College Workload Monitoring Group and the College Employment Stability Committee, and is a member of the Union/College Committee.

Sandi has a diverse teaching background in post-secondary and non-post-secondary programs. She has also taught curriculum development to college faculty in Ontario and in China.

Those who have worked with Sandi describe her as focused, hard working, and committed to union principles and equity. The experience she gained as a member of the last three bargaining teams will be put to good use in this round.

Peter McKeracher

Peter has been on the last four negotiating teams. He is a professor in the School of Justice Studies at Durham College in Oshawa and teaches a variety of courses in legal administration, including courses on employment law, labour law, administrative law, and immigration law.

Peter has served as president of OPSEU Local 354 since his election in 1989, has been a member of several provincial union committees, and is presently on the CAAT (Academic) Division Executive. Peter lives in the City of Kawartha Lakes, is married, and has three children.

Damian Wiechula

Damian was on the 2001 negotiating team and returns to bargaining with energy and enthusiasm.

He has taught mathematics, science and business in the Technology and Business divisions at George Brown College for 25 years. He has been a steward for 18 years and is currently first vice-president and chief steward for his Local.

In addition to having been on the College Workload Monitoring Group for 16 years, eight as the union chair, he is also on the union/college committee and the Health and Safety Committee.

Daniel Bouchard

Daniel is new to the negotiating team this year. He began his career at Cambrian College in 1986 as a professor with the School of Justice and Public Security in the French division.

Daniel has been a steward and communications officer with his local. In 1993 he was elected to represent faculty of five colleges (Cambrian, Canadore, Confederation, Northern, and Sault) for the creation of Ontario's second French college, Boréal.

In 1995 he transferred from Cambrian to Boréal and since then has been an active member of the local executive as a steward, chief steward, and member of the union/college committee, the College Employment Stability Committee, the College Workload Monitoring Group, and the Health and Safety Committee.

Jeff Arbus

This is Jeff's second time on a bargaining team. The first was a great experience, he says, both in terms of what there was to learn and also the opportunity to contribute to the success of negotiations.

Jeff has been a union activist throughout his 27 years as a teacher at Sault College. He has held many positions in the local and has been local president for six years. His main teaching areas include the human services, with counsellor training being one of his areas of concentration. He has delivered training internationally in the area of resolving confrontation.

Jeff brings highly developed communication and strategic planning skills and a knowledge of the issues facing the smaller, rural, and northern colleges. He brings considerable experience to the area of job security. He notes that this will be a challenging round of bargaining and adds that the employer will soon know the resolve of the bargaining team and of the faculty.

Harry Plummer

Harry brings a wealth of experience to this, his sixth negotiating team. He has been teaching in the College system for 35 years: the first four at Confederation and the rest at Loyalist. He is the chief steward in Local 420, a position he has held for six years. Prior to that he was the local president for 16 years.

Harry has a background in finance and computers. His skills with spread sheets and data bases will be put to good use analyzing the workload data that will support our demands for improvement in the workload formula. "We've tolerated the shortcomings of the workload formula for 20 years," he observes. "It's time to fix them."

The knowledge he has acquired during his 20 years of service on the Joint Insurance Committee will be invaluable in our pursuit of the means to reduce the cost of Long Term Disability insurance.

Brenda Wall, OPSEU Researcher

Brenda was born in Australia and has worked as a secondary school teacher in Australia and Canada. For five years she worked as a full-time volunteer for the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and the African National Congress (ANC).

Brenda has worked in the labour studies programs at Humber and Georgian colleges where she was an active OPSEU member.

Brenda also worked as a sessional coordinator at George Brown College's School of Labour. She has been a researcher and training advisor for the Canadian Labour Congress and CUPE. She brings valuable experience as OPSEU's education research officer.

Lester Yearwood, OPSEU Negotiator

Lester has been with OPSEU since 1990 as a grievance officer and a regional staff representative. In the latter capacity, Lester negotiated on behalf of several bargaining units in OPSEU's Broader Public Sector. These included hospital and care centre workers. Lester's extensive bargaining experience has given him a solid grounding in the complex processes of negotiations. He has experience with our collective agreement over his eleven years as a grievance officer.

Lester states: "I know that joining the college faculty bargaining team at this time will be a challenge. It is one I look forward to eagerly. With this team, I am confident that college faculty will again succeed in achieving an important contract settlement."

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Ted Montgomery, chair

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