

STRIKING TIMES

(Daily strike update of Sault College Faculty's newsletter, *LOCAL MONITOR*)

Day 1

OPSEU Local 613

March 7, 2006

EDUCATION QUALITY IS CENTRAL ISSUE

TORONTO – Education quality is the central issue as 9,100 Ontario college faculty go on strike, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union says.

“This round of contract negotiations is about the quality of education students receive in our community colleges,” said OPSEU president Leah Casselman. “It is about having smaller class sizes and more faculty so that each and every college student gets more time, more attention, and more feedback from the people who are helping them learn.”

“The report of the Rae Commission said our standard of living, and our quality of life, depend on people having access to education that is ‘on a par with the best in the world,’ ” she said. “Mr. McGuinty has made it clear repeatedly that he thinks the same.”

McGuinty said last May that improving education quality in colleges and universities meant more faculty and more faculty time for students.

“The union is bargaining to get exactly what Mr. McGuinty wants for our students – higher quality education,” said Casselman.

Ontario’s 24 community colleges are represented in bargaining by the College Compensation and Appointments Council.

“It is unfortunate but true that the employer’s model for the future of college education in Ontario is the sardine can,” said Casselman. “They want more and more students crammed into ever larger classes, with less and less faculty time for individual students.

“The sardine can model turns our colleges into diploma factories, where the quantity of graduates is more important than the quality of their education,” she said. “The global economy doesn’t care about the piece of paper. The global economy only cares how well our students have mastered the skills they need. That is why we are fighting for smaller class sizes. That is why we are fighting for more faculty time and attention for each and every student.”

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

1. Why are college faculty on strike?

Students get the best education when faculty have time to give them the feedback they need. College faculty are bargaining to get more faculty, smaller class sizes, and more faculty time, attention, and feedback for each and every individual student. The number one issue in this round of contract talks between faculty and the colleges is education quality. A strike may be the only way to convince the colleges to make quality education their top priority.

2. What is the Ontario government's position on this issue?

In May 2005, when he announced \$6.2 billion in new funding for post-secondary education, Premier Dalton McGuinty made it clear that he was very concerned about education quality. He named "more faculty" and "more faculty time for students" as the first two ingredients in his recipe for improving education quality.

3. Isn't this whole thing really just about wages?

No. The two sides are not very far apart on wages. Faculty and the colleges have reached a settlement without a work stoppage in every round of bargaining since 1989. What is different about this round is that a) we have a government in power that says it supports education quality and is willing to pay for improvements, and b) faculty have decided to take a stand before the situation deteriorates further.

4. Will students lose their school year?

There have been faculty work stoppages in 1984 and 1989. No student lost his or her school year in either case.

If there is a strike, the provincial government will have to act quickly to prevent the loss of the school year. Students should not withdraw from their programs or quit school.

5. How will students complete their school year?

Nobody knows for sure. Management at each college is responsible for deciding how operations will resume after a strike. They might extend the term, for example.

6. What can students do to help bring it to a conclusion?

Students should contact Premier Dalton McGuinty and tell him that they support a settlement that provides more faculty – and more faculty time – for each and every individual student. E-mail him at [**Dalton.McGuinty@premier.gov.on.ca**](mailto:Dalton.McGuinty@premier.gov.on.ca)

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