

# Faculty Update

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## STRIKE OF 2006

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE • LOCAL 556  
College Professors, Counsellors & Librarians

## We're moving the system *Up!*

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### NEGOTIATIONS AND THE STRIKE *by Ted Montgomery, for the team*

Some members have expressed concerns about the media coverage of the faculty strike. I have been in touch with locals around the province and can tell you that both inside and outside of Toronto there has been considerable coverage. Naturally, there is much complaint about the strike and some focus on salary, but when one reads through that initial layer, there is increasing support for the real issues — our issues.

We know that management has been investing heavily in trying to focus on salary. Media, looking for a quick hit, often grab onto that. But, increasingly, the issue of smaller class size and more full-time teachers is being reported and highlighted. Interviews with students almost always begin with the students' frustration but move on to the students' concerns about class size.

That the Toronto Sun gets it wrong and blames the teachers is not surprising. All the private media are owned by corporations and seldom if ever side with any workers in a labour dispute. Compared to other strikes (and even lockouts for those who remember the hockey dispute) we have done far better than workers usually do.

We have constantly pointed out—and it has been picked up on radio and TV—that we are seeking the implementation of the Rae Report findings as they pertain to quality and to student/teacher interaction. Faculty demands also highlight the critical support of other educational professionals—counsellors and librarians. Give students more quality contact time with their teachers. Rae, without overtly taking sides, has re-endorsed that goal.

Premier McGuinty and Minister Bentley have also commented. Keep in mind that the government are on the employer's side of the table. Nevertheless, they have not taken sides in their public statements. While we would love for them to say that they side with faculty, that is not going to happen. But neither have they endorsed the position of college management. All they are saying is that bargaining should resume. We agree—the sooner the better and with a serious new offer on the table. The offer that produced a 96% rejection and a nearly 81% strike vote obviously will not be ratified. To make an offer late on March 6th that was knowingly and admittedly worse than that tabled previously was clearly intended to provoke a strike not find a settlement.

The propaganda machine of ACAATO under the direction of David Lindsay, Mike Harris' former Chief Aide, has been hard at work denigrating faculty. OPSEU is researching the province-wide media coverage and will be reporting back on that shortly.

### Return to Sender

You will soon be receiving a letter from the management negotiations group (L. Joy Warkentin). This is an obvious "end run" around the Faculty Union. Please write (in Bold caps) "**RETURN TO SENDER**" on the front and drop it in any mailbox. If you've already opened it, just tape it back together and "Return to Sender". *The info in the letter is available on the ACAATO website.*

## MCGUINTY'S SUPPORT FOR OUR ISSUES

• “The new Quality Improvement Fund will help postsecondary institutions **hire more ...faculty so that students have better access to their instructors**” (Source: News Release from the Premier's Office, November 29, 2005)

• Premier McGuinty made it very clear what he meant by Quality Education: “**By quality, we mean more faculty at colleges and universities, to accommodate higher enrolments and help students succeed, more faculty time for students**, more students completing their undergraduate programs and going to grad school and easier movement for students between colleges and universities.”

(Source: Sample letter to MPPs sent out before the strike)

• Premier Dalton McGuinty said his government will soon move to make colleges and universities more accountable for the funding they receive... Minister of Colleges and Universities Chris Bentley of London will soon announce a new agency that will monitor long-term accountability agreements colleges and universities must sign in exchange for new money. “**The agency will measure improvements in class sizes and the amount of time instructors spend with students.**”, he said. Paddy Musson [President of the Faculty Union for Fanshawe College and the Chair of OPSEU's College Academic Division] said **the strike could have been avoided if colleges had hired more teachers, as McGuinty had asked.** “If the colleges had paid heed to McGuinty's directions regarding the new money going into the system, we wouldn't be on strike now.”, she said.

(Source: The London Free Press, March 8, 2006)

## RYERSON FACULTY ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS OUR PICKET LINE

Lifting our spirits higher than a Timbits sugar hit has been the solidarity contingent of six to ten professors from the Ryerson Faculty Association picketing with us at St. James and on the GBC building at Ryerson. Faculty at Ryerson see many common issues with our strike and plan to be on the picket lines twice a week for the duration of our strike. *Hurray for the RFA!*

## NEWS FROM THE SA—FACULTY ISSUES ARE THEIR ISSUES

The 5 Pillars of the Student Association. action plan:

1. We demand that the provincial government refund tuition fees for any classes misses and reimburse students for all expenses incurred as a result of the strike.
2. We urge students to abandon College facilities and not cross picket lines.
3. We support a 10% increase in the hiring of full-time faculty.
4. We demand that management return to, and stay at, the bargaining table immediately to discuss the new “10%” offer put forward by the faculty union, and that it negotiate with meaningful responses.
5. We insist that there be no tuition increases and demand an increase in public funding for the college system.

*“Ontario faculty members have reached the end of their rope. Faculty can't teach properly with ever-expanding workload and ever-diminishing ratios of full-time faculty. They don't like providing students with less than their best. Why should college students have to endure sub-standard learning conditions?”*

(Source: Student Association Fact Sheet)

## OPSEU'S POSITION ON THE TUITION HIKES

A news story quoting an OPSEU spokesperson gave the mistaken impression that the union approved of the fee hikes as a means to settle the current strike by college faculty. This is not the union's position.

“We have been on record for years stating that we support the long-term goal of zero tuition for post-secondary education in Ontario,” said Paddy Musson, Chair of OPSEU's College Academic Division.

“We believe in Mr. McGuinty's three principles of quality, accessibility, and accountability for post-secondary education,” Musson said. “There is no way that raising tuition fees can make post-secondary education more accessible to students.”