

THE *Quality Times*

Strike Bulletin of OPSEU Local 655
Cambrian College Academic Personnel



On Strike for Quality Education

Answers for students about the strike by college faculty

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 appears to be the only way to convince the colleges to make quality education their top priority.

2. Why can't you reach a settlement without a strike?

Faculty and management have been negotiating for over a year. Management is still demanding concessions that would hurt education quality. We have been clear in telling management that we will not do anything that compromises quality. That's why we are on strike.

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. What do the major student organizations or student councils think?

Many OPSEU locals have been in communication with their student governments. We are in contact with the provincial body, the College Student Alliance, to keep them informed. The CSA web site is at www.collegestrike.com.

6. Will I lose my school year?

There have been faculty work stoppages in 1984 and 1989. No student lost his or her school year in either case. The provincial government will have to act quickly to prevent loss of the school year. Students should not withdraw from their programs or quit school.

7. 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.

8. If there is a strike, do classes, field placements, and clinicals, etc., continue?

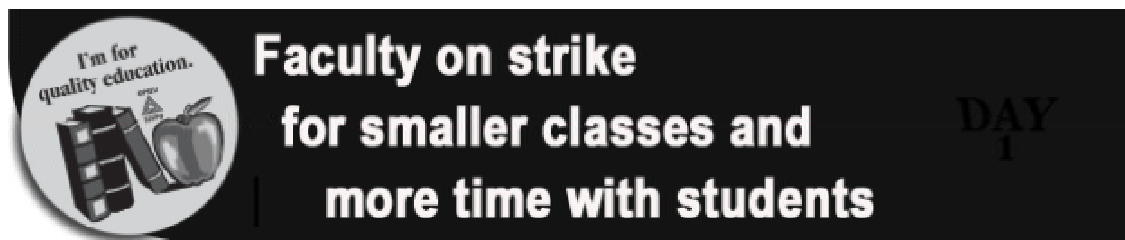
Without full-time teachers, any attempt to continue “classes as normal” would be futile. Each college will decide how it will proceed. Cambrian has cancelled all teaching.

9. Can students talk to their teachers during a strike?

You can talk to your teacher any time – but not about classes or curriculum. Teachers are forbidden by law from working at the college during a strike, and the college is forbidden by law from paying teachers during a strike. This restriction also applies to electronic communication including but not limited to e-mail or chat rooms.

10. What can students do to help bring the strike 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.



Student-Faculty Ratios in Context

Just over a decade ago, in the year before the creation of Collège Boréal out of the French language programs at Cambrian College, Cambrian had 4,000 full-time students and 380 full-time faculty, a student-faculty ratio of 11:1. Today, Cambrian has 4,300 full-time students and 210 full-time faculty, a ratio of 23:1. If Cambrian compares well in student-faculty ratio to other Ontario community colleges, it is not that the situation at Cambrian is good; it is a damning indictment of the state of affairs in the Ontario college system as a whole.

Take, for example, the situation in technical mathematics at Cambrian. A quarter century ago, technology students had five hours per week of mathematics in classes of 15-20 students. In recent years, technology students have three hours of instruction in mathematics in classes ranging from 30 to as many as 80 students. Today's grads do not have the same abilities in mathematics as those of a quarter a century ago as a result of these “efficiency gains”.

Smaller classes, more full-time teachers and more faculty time with students are key to providing Cambrian students with the quality education that they need to be full and productive members of society. Restoring quality to college education means increasing the number of full-time faculty. College management does not recognize this. This is why we have been forced to take strike action today.