

December 11, 2009

Members of the CAAT-A Bargaining Unit:

On Monday Dec. 14 your bargaining team will return to the negotiating table in an effort to reach an agreement with the Council representing community colleges. While I remain optimistic we can arrive at a tentative settlement, I am also very aware that, to date, the Council has demonstrated almost no willingness to engage in serious negotiations – witness the imposition of its terms and conditions of employment on Nov. 12.

Over the past two weeks, members of your bargaining team have visited all 24 community colleges to share information and to listen to your voices as we navigate the negotiating process. I was delighted to learn from the team that we enjoy considerable strength on the ground as we approach the Jan. 13 strike vote.

One of the most common questions the team heard from CAAT-A members was in respect to the support you can anticipate from OPSEU in the event that the Council continues to refuse to bargain in good faith in the days leading up to our strike vote.

On this issue let me be clear: you can count on OPSEU being there for you now and following the outcome of our strike vote – without hesitation and without reservation. This is my firm pledge, which is endorsed unequivocally by all 21 executive board members.

The OPSEU strike fund currently stands at \$53 million. We have professional and skilled staff in our mobilization, bargaining and communications units, in Toronto and across the province, ready to rally their resources behind CAAT-A members. We are justifiably proud that OPSEU is the envy of organized labour in Ontario and across Canada when it comes to our commitment to bargaining unit members who elect to endorse a strike vote.

We do not wish to strike, but the intransigence of negotiators for the Council at the bargaining table leaves us no option but to mobilize our considerable resources behind our CAAT-A members.

The ball is in the court of the Council; it can choose to negotiate in good faith and reach a settlement, or it can continue its practice of avoiding the real issues that you directed your team to deliver.

Meanwhile, OPSEU is prepared to deploy all of our financial, human and professional resources in the interests of reaching a deal that meets your demands.

In Solidarity



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President