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College talks resume. Just for one day

By Carol Martin
SooToday.com
Sunday, November 29, 2009



The union representing full-time academic staff at Ontario's 24 community colleges will resume negotiations with college management tomorrow, says provincial bargaining team member Jeff Arbus.

"It looks like management has decided to accept our longstanding invitation to return to the bargaining table," Arbus tells SooToday.com. "But only for Monday."

Arbus is hopeful the two sides can get back to ongoing good-faith bargaining soon.

But in the meantime the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) is seeking a strike vote as soon as possible.

SEARCH

The union says its members need an opportunity to make a statement of solidarity since talks broke down on November 12 and members have been working without a contract for almost six months.

Arbus said management then enforced an imposed labour agreement that OPSEU members feel will undermine quality of education.

"It's not about wages this time," Arbus said. "It hasn't been about wages at all. In fact it is very much about workload."

Arbus said the union is asking for contract language that would implement recommendations proposed by a joint workload task force that examined workload, academic freedom and quality of education in the colleges.

Arbitrator William Kaplan ordered the task force be set up and charged with its mandate after a three-week strike by Ontario college faculty was settled in March, 2006.

The set of recommendations was released in March, 2009.

The College Appointments and Compensation Council supported and endorsed those recommendations when they were released but has since left them sitting on the table when it walked away from negotiations, Arbus said.

The bulk of the current labour disagreement, Arbus says, centres around the council's refusal to honour those recommendations.

"When you get down to the essence of it, the report says you treat college students more like university students by treating college faculty more like university faculty," Arbus said. "A good part of that would be to grant college professors academic independence and to recognize and deal with the workload issues they face."

After last week's Sault College board of governors meeting, President Dr. Ron Common commented on the situation with college faculty.

Common said he's not part of the negotiating team himself but heard that talks broke off because the agreement proposed by OPSEU was simply not affordable.

Common said he understood negotiations would resume when OPSEU brought a more affordable agreement to the table.

Learn more

[Workload task force's final report](#)

[Appendices and addendum.](#)

[OPSEU website](#)

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