

OCTOBER 26, 2017

Resolving the Strike

After almost two weeks into the strike, we want to provide our view of the path forward to resolve the strike and get faculty and students back in the classroom where they belong.

How did we get here?

The strike was called by the union after 68% of the employees who chose to vote, voted to support a strike. Only 60 percent of the eligible employees voted. Prior to the strike vote the union indicated in many communications to members that voting in favour of a strike didn't necessarily mean a strike would occur.

On September 14th when the strike vote was held, the colleges had made an offer to extend the collective agreement that was consistent with deals that had been accepted by teachers, college support staff, hospital professionals, and Ontario public servants. The union rejected that offer. The colleges requested that the union allow its members to vote on the offer. The union declined to do that and started the clock ticking towards a strike date.

Have the colleges addressed any of the union's concerns?

In an effort to avoid a strike, the colleges modified their offer and attempted in a practical way to address some of the union's expressed concerns. The colleges' offer that is on the table right now specifically requires every college, when it is staffing a program, to give preference to creating full-time jobs over partial-load jobs except where justifiable operational considerations require different staffing. If the staffing does not seem right the union can challenge the staffing and an independent arbitrator determines if the staffing is appropriate.

Colleges think that this approach is a sensible way to address the union's staffing concerns. The inflexible staffing ratios proposed by the union would hurt the quality of programming. That is why the colleges have proposed a more flexible solution but one that still addresses the union's concerns.

Why can't the college accept the union's proposals?

The union's demands haven't been accepted because they would ultimately add more than \$250 million to annual costs, eliminate thousands of contract faculty jobs, and affect the quality of college programs.

Colleges have different mandates, but the collective agreement covers all 24 colleges. Some of these are large colleges serving students in the GTA and others are located in smaller communities around the province. Each college engages with community stakeholders to develop and deliver programming responsive to the community's training needs. Colleges staff these programs based on the needs of the curriculum along with the needed qualifications and the availability of teachers in their communities. The staffing needs of each program will differ.

A staffing ratio doesn't add a single hour of classroom instruction, despite costing the system hundreds of millions of dollars. Instead, the union's proposed ratio would increase full-time employment and reduce contract employees to the point where an estimated 3,350 contract faculty jobs will be lost. Those are 3,350 employees we currently employ who deliver our programs. These are good people who provide a valuable service to our students.

Why should the colleges' final offer be considered?

The colleges think the final offer is fair to our faculty and responsive to what we heard at the bargaining table. We had hoped that the union would accept the colleges' final offer, or, at the very least, put the colleges' final offer forward to its members for a vote.

Our final offer is comparable to, or better than, recent public-sector settlements with teachers, college support staff, hospital professionals, and Ontario public servants.

It is regrettable that the union chose not to take the colleges' final offer to its members for a vote. They are legally entitled to do that at any time.

The colleges believe the offer is a reasonable basis for settlement. Please don't simply accept our word for it. Please review the colleges' final offer at <https://thecouncil.on.ca/download/12677> . We hope faculty will take the time to read it and make up their own minds.

How can the strike be resolved?

We believe that the best and quickest resolution to the strike is through a negotiated settlement, or by allowing faculty to vote on the offer.

The colleges remain available to return to the bargaining table to negotiate a settlement based on the final offer they made prior to the strike starting. We hope that the government-appointed mediator will indicate soon that the union wishes to address the issues in a positive manner so that he can bring the parties together. We want our faculty back doing what they do best.

Academic Bargaining Update is a newsletter from the Colleges' Bargaining Team to keep you informed on progress made or when significant events occur during collective bargaining. The English and French versions of this newsletter are also posted on the College Employer Council's website at <http://www.thecouncil.on.ca/>

We welcome your opinion

We are interested in what you have to say and welcome your opinion. Please feel free to contact any member of the Colleges' Bargaining Team or send your views in writing to: **peter.mckeracher@thecouncil.ca**