

Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology

THE SUPPORT REPORT

Ontario College Support Staff Newsletter

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Hands off Our Pensions!

Throughout the spring and summer, your CAAT Pension Plan representatives have been meeting with the Liberal government in two separate forums.

The first forum has been with the Pension Secretariat's office. Most recently we have met with MPP Donna Cansfield. She has been the messenger of the government to say that they will draft new legislation in the fall that says all jointly sponsored pension plans must have the following:

- 50/50 contributions between employers and members;
- A dispute resolution process in place;
- In case of a plan deficit in providing benefits to members, no contribution increases will be allowed until after December 31, 2017 and therefore future benefits must be decreased;
- In order to restore those benefits, the pension plan would have to be fully funded at 110% and this could not happen until after December 2017.

Our plan has 50/50 contributions and a dispute resolution process. If we allow the government to tie our hands, or to take away all our tools

for managing our pension plan, our plan will no longer hold the current benefit provisions. We believe in intergenerational equity because without it future members will be paying large contributions and getting far less in benefits. The result will be that people get fed up with paying large amounts of money and not reaping the rewards. Employers will get rid of defined benefit pension plans and the inevitable losers are all of us.

The second forum involves Ontario's plans for Broader Public Sector Pension Efficiencies lead by Special Advisor, Bill Morneau. He is exploring the pooling of smaller pension plans and other funds, and has indicated that he wants the CAAT Pension Plan to be part of this pooling. Believing that bigger is better, he proposes pooling the assets of our plan with others, such as the OPSEU Pension Trust, Hydro, Universities, TTC, Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Fund, etc. We are concerned that the government wants to take control of our deferred wages and pool them with others to create a large slush fund. This could in turn be used to pay down government deficits and/or pay for private/ public partnerships. We would no longer have the same control over our money as we currently do. Although



sometimes bigger is better, too big can mean bigger losses. We should be able to determine whom we pool with. We do not want the government to dictate this process and take control of our monies.

All of us have a vested interest in the outcome of these discussions and the planned new

legislation. Take the time to tell your MPP that they should take their hands off your pension plan. The OPSEU website contains tools to assist you with this. Your pension is your deferred wages. Allowing the government to ruin your retirement future is in no one's best interest.

How to File a JIC Appeal

What can be appealed through the JIC?

Any decision by your College or SunLife regarding any negotiated benefit that is part of our group insurance plan, including eligibility and dependent eligibility, life insurance, long term disability (LTD), dental, paramedical, drug claims, etc.

How do I authorize an appeal?

You must complete, sign and submit OPSEU's "Authorization to Discuss Claim File" form. This allows Kim MacPherson, OPSEU Benefits Officer, to discuss the particulars of your case, including personal medical information, with SunLife. The Committee respects the confidentiality of members filing appeals and only discusses specific personal information at meetings where absolutely necessary to argue against a decision. Specific medical documentation collected by Kim MacPherson for SunLife is not shared with committee members.

You must also complete, sign and submit an "OPSEU Medical Release Form" for each treating doctor, dentist, medical or paramedical specialist that has been involved in the decision you are

appealing. For example, if you are being treated by your family doctor, a neurologist and a psychologist, it would be helpful to your appeal to provide medical releases for all three doctors. Kim MacPherson will then have a signed permission from you to contact these doctors, ask questions to clarify your case, and seek notes or documentation that will help her prove to SunLife that their decision was in error.

How Long Does it Take?

Typically, straight-forward appeals can take two to three meetings or some months to resolve. The case must be explained to SunLife representatives. They then require time to re-evaluate their decision. Often there is more medical information required after their evaluation and additional time to evaluate the additional information after it is obtained and submitted by Kim. Long Term Disability cases, especially where there are multiple illnesses/injuries or inconclusive medical tests, can take six months to two years to resolve. Members filing LTD appeals should also file claims with E.I. for sick benefits, while waiting for their appeal to be processed. If their appeal is successful, they will need to pay any E.I. benefits back from the retroactive LTD money they receive from SunLife.

Who Can Help?

You may contact any elected member of your JIC or Kim MacPherson, OPSEU Benefits Officer, for assistance or to acquire appeal forms. Feel free to contact Kim and a JIC member. The better we understand your situation, the better we can argue on your behalf.

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Did you know?

You are entitled to three paid Professional Development days each year. You can find your rights under Article 9.5 of the collective agreement. You also might want to check with your union local to find out when the year begins and ends. In some colleges it is an academic year and in others it might be the budget year or calendar year.

If you don't use your annual days, they don't accumulate. For many rounds of negotiations, members have asked for an increase in the number of available days per year and yet we know many members do not use the current allotment.

THE UNION'S NEVER DONE ANYTHING FOR ME!!

Taken from an article written By Rick Nemisz

(Rick retired in June after over 35 years of service to Durham College and the members of the CAAT Support division)

A fair statement? Probably most that read this article consider this a very accurate statement. I can tell you that it is not unique to the members of any College Support Staff Local, or OPSEU members in general.

It is a statement that I have heard numerous times over the years as a union activist, from members of every union that I have had the pleasure of meeting and talking to.

After listening to it the number of times that I have, you actually begin to ask yourself the same question; only because you are an activist you start to search for an answer.

As some of you may know, I have been a little bit involved with the union both locally and provincially for a couple of years. I know from experience that it is always the union that brings members' issues forward.

Since our Collective Agreement is our terms and conditions of employment let me start the quest for my search to the answer there.

Since it is normally the union side of the bargaining table that is searching for improvements to our wages, benefits, job security and language improvements for our members and college employees, I wanted to compare what we had in 1970 to what we now have:

- In 1970 the wages ranged from \$1.74 per hour to \$4.83 per hour, 42 years later they range from \$17.78 per hour to \$46.38 per hour. I believe the Union got that for me, I don't believe the Employer graciously handed that over.
- In 1970 your annual incremental increases (moving through the pay grid) could be withheld, subject to satisfactory performance of duties, your 6 month probationary period could be extended by an additional 6 months by the College. Now your step increases are automatic and they can't unilaterally extend probationary periods.
- In 1970 we had the statutory holidays found under the law except for two holidays as specified by the college, but you were expected to be at work

between Boxing Day and New Years Day. We now have that week off and sometimes we are able to get the colleges to agree to additional days off.

- In 1970 you were allotted two weeks vacation after one year of service, three weeks after three years service and four weeks after twenty years of continuous service. Check out Article 11 of your current Agreement, not only do you receive vacation days quicker but you also receive additional days for each year of service and there is two more weeks of vacation allotted.
- In 1970 an employee could apply for a maternity leave. If it was not practical for the College the employee would be terminated, but be given preferential treatment for future vacancies. No Supplementary Benefit Plan, No parental Leave, No seniority, and you would be given “preferential” treatment if you wanted to return to work. Let’s not forget that it was Union Activists lobbying governments to change the 17 weeks into a year’s leave of absence.
- In 1970 you could be granted a leave of absence without loss of pay to attend the funeral of your parent, spouse, child, brother or sister. I think you will find our current Article 12.5 is a greatly expanded version of this.
- In 1970 there was no Personal Leave with Pay (Article 12.2), no Citizenship Leave (Article 12.7), no Parental Leave (Article 12.3.2), no Adoption Leave (Article 12.3.2), and no Prepaid Leave Plan (Article 12.8).
- In 1970 there was no bumping process. If it was determined that your classification required one less person, then the one with the lowest seniority was laid off. They were not given an opportunity to “bump” into any other job.

Ask yourself if this is the type of workplace you would want to leave to your children and grandchildren.

- In 1970 your benefits included \$2,000 of Life Insurance, which you had to pay 25% of the premiums, OHIP coverage, which you had to pay 25% of the premiums and Workmen’s Compensation. There were no “sick days” (Short Term Disability Plan), there was no Long Term Disability Plan except if you happened to qualify for Workman’s Compensation. There was no Extended Health Plan, which includes the 85% reimbursement of prescribed drugs, equipment, paramedical services such as Speech Therapists, Physiotherapists, Psychologists, Osteopaths, Chiropractors, Chiropodists, Podiatrists, Naturopaths or Masseurs. There was no Vision Care, there was no Hearing Care and there was no Dental Plan. Today, the College pays 100% of the premiums for everything except for Long Term Disability, Vision and Hearing where they pay 75% of the premiums.

There have been a number of other improvements in our Collective Agreement in those 42 years that I have not mentioned here. I have had the privilege of representing the members on several bargaining teams. I can tell you from that experience that all of these changes were not given to us by the employer. Your bargaining team had to argue, make representations, research and provide documentation to achieve these goals and twice we had to take a strike. So yes, the union did do this on your behalf.

In today’s world where employers and governments want to strip collective agreements, take away rights and entitlements, and contract out work to the lowest bidder; take a moment and ask yourself what will this mean for me and for the workers of tomorrow. What will the jobs 42 years from today look like if workers have no rights to wages, benefits, job security or pensions? Ask yourself if this is the type of workplace you would want to leave to your children and grandchildren.

THIS NEWSLETTER IS APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION BY:

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