



Negotiations News



Bargaining information for OPSEU members in the CAAT-Academic Division

Management Breaks Off Talks

Management has abruptly broken off negotiations. They have refused the Union's offer to continue negotiations and unilaterally imposed new terms and conditions of employment on faculty. Those terms and conditions will now form the current Collective Agreement. Faculty have been given an incomplete contract and need to force management back to the bargaining table to negotiate. Many of the critical issues remain to be resolved.

In the immediate future, very little will change. Faculty have received their winter assignments and will receive a modest increase in pay. In the long run however, the issue of imposed settlements threatens the future of collective bargaining in the colleges and threatens the integrity of what faculty do. It's a problem that needs to be addressed and it's a problem that faculty must be prepared to fix.

The imposed contract has a few improvements that the bargaining team successfully negotiated before management walked away from the table on November 12. Improvements include increased maximum salary while on sabbatical from 70% to 80%, strong language to prevent bullying, an additional statutory holiday, and some flexibility in vacation at the faculty's discretion.

The parts that management unilaterally imposed are just plain wrong. They allow workload that is significantly more than the current average and can do that continuously over a four-year period for up to 20% of faculty. Those 20% of faculty would not receive credit for preparation and evaluation, there would be no limit to the number of students or the number of courses, and no credit for complementary functions. The only limit is to the annual teaching contact hours and days which could be averaged over a four year period. This is less protection than existed 35 years ago in 1974.

In a bizarre twist, the imposed terms include a new joint committee – the "Classification Task Force" while at the same time management is refusing to take part in all provincial joint Union-Management committees.

The imposed contract is incomplete. Management unilaterally walked away from the bargaining table leaving many of the critical issues unresolved. What's missing? The key recommendations of the workload task force. There is no language on academic freedom or collegiality. There is no enhancement of workload, nothing for librarians, nothing for counselors, nothing for partial load teachers, and no benefit updates.

In 2006, faculty went on strike and gained the establishment of an independently chaired task force to review the entire issue of the work of educating and the control of that process. That task force made 13 recommendations that faculty were prepared to endorse in their entirety. Academic freedom and collegial decision making were the cornerstones of those recommendations. Management is strongly opposed to both academic freedom and collegial decision making. Rather than accept the unanimous report of the task force and negotiate its implementation, management abandoned negotiations and unilaterally imposed new terms of employment that do not accurately or fairly implement any of the task force recommendations.

Where do we go from here?

Having done the heavy lifting of gaining the workload task force in the last round of bargaining, the task at hand is to get those recommendations implemented. That will happen at the bargaining table only when management returns and seriously addresses those issues raised by the task force. In previous rounds of bargaining, management walked away from the bargaining table and only returned to bargain seriously when the union team was given a strike mandate. The only difference this round is that management decided to exercise its new power to impose its incomplete terms of employment. Some improvements have been imposed; there are imposed concessions; but, the business of negotiations is not finished.

Faculty elected the bargaining team and gave them a mandate to negotiate specific improvements in the Collective Agreement. Historically, in past rounds of bargaining a strike vote has proven effective in getting the colleges to resume negotiations and improve their offer. The Union is currently working with the Ontario Labour Relations Board on setting a date for a strike vote.

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