



Negotiations News



Bargaining information for OPSEU members in the CAAT-Academic Division

York University full-time faculty reach a settlement

Consistently over the last year, university settlements in Ontario have been averaging around 3.2% annual salary increases. These settlements are typically for three years. The referent groups for Ontario university faculty bargaining are other Ontario universities. The most recent settlement is for the York University Faculty Association (YUFA). It was reached September 21. It follows the established trend.

Salaries for the full-time faculty at York are increasing by 3 per cent this year and 3 per cent again next year. The 2011 increase to the academic base salary is pegged at 2.5 per cent. The university has agreed to set aside \$1.5 million to finance workload reductions from 2.5 courses to 2 courses per academic year. A joint committee has been established to facilitate the workload reduction by May 2011. Recommendations from this committee must be presented to the YUFA membership for ratification. Should the recommendations not be ratified, the \$1.5 million goes directly to faculty salaries. This would represent a salary increase worth

approximately an additional 1 per cent in 2011.

As occurred in the other university settlements over the last year, the various coordinator-type stipends received by faculty are increasing by 3 per cent. Other gains include a variety of changes regarding equity issues.

Benefit improvements include a significant increase to the vision care maximum and out-of-country medical coverage for both active and retired employees. The university is also contributing an additional 15 per cent funding to the retirees' benefits costs effective 2011.

This settlement was achieved without a strike. The York University Faculty Association represents full-time faculty, and is not to be confused with the contract faculty group that engaged in a long and bitter strike earlier this year. The YUFA settlement was achieved in a little over three months of bargaining. York management respected the need for workload improvements and economic bargaining consistent with the established referent groups. There will be a successful settlement in college bargaining when college management accepts the same realities.

Academic freedom and the Workload Task Force Report

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines academic freedom as the "freedom to teach or to learn without interference." This concept has been well established in post-secondary institutions and is one of the cornerstones of academia.

The Workload Task Force

identifies an absence of academic freedom in the colleges and strongly encourages the parties to integrate academic freedom, in principle and in practice. The Task Force Report states at the end of their general conclusions on page

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Academic freedom

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24: “We also conclude that collegiality, academic freedom and professional development are important objectives in any college system and our recommendations have taken these objectives into account. We must note, however, that we detected some distrust between the parties that was present at all of the regional meetings.” Some of this distrust comes from the way some faculty view management and some comes from how management treats faculty. Management’s desire for control fuels this distrust.

The closing recommendation of the unanimous Task Force Report is about “Professional Standards and Relationships”:

“Given the rise of applied degrees, college/university partnerships, and collaborative programs, Ontario’s Colleges are clearly expanding and developing as complex institutions of higher education.

We recommend, therefore, that the parties consider mechanisms that will enhance collegiality, professional development, and academic freedom.

Collegiality, academic freedom, and professional development are important objectives in any college system and some of our other recommendations have also tried to take these objectives into account.”

The Task Force is quite clear that if colleges are to progress and succeed they have to address the issue of academic freedom. The union’s proposal on academic freedom gives substance to the principles talked about in the report. Management has refused to respond to our proposal. Instead, they refer only to the concept of collegiality which is distinct and not to be confused with academic freedom. These are two separate but related principles.

The union’s proposal on academic freedom has been fashioned from what exists in Canadian universities where it is an entrenched and respected principle. One of the mechanisms that helps establish and foster academic freedom is decision-making bodies with a majority membership of faculty: senates in most universities, educational councils in the Union’s proposals. In developing this demand, the union modelled its demand on the academic councils that exist in the British Columbia college system.

Management’s reply has been a resounding and unequivocal refusal on academic freedom. By their own admissions and actions, they clearly demonstrate that the concept of academic freedom would have an impact on their managerial control and they have no interest in relenting that control in any circumstance.

Academic freedom is not just a good principle. It is a clear, cogent, important, and unanimous recommendation of the Workload Task Force. The employer likes and wants the “flexibility” recommendation but rejects the academic freedom recommendation. That is not an option if there is to be a settlement on workload.

College enrolment continues to rise

Confirmed first-year enrolments at Ontario community colleges have increased overall by 7.4 per cent this year. This September, 118,053 first-year students were enrolled compared with 109,919 in September 2008. While there have been declines in some sectors of the economy, that has definitely not been the case at any of Ontario’s 24 community colleges.

The enrolment increases across the province range from a low of 0.6 per cent to a high of 35.8 per cent. No college has a decline in enrolment. The five largest

colleges averaged an increase of 6.4 per cent in first year enrolment. This is the third year in a row that enrolment has increased. Last year’s increase in first-year enrolment was 6.1 per cent.

The McGuinty government has committed that every qualified student has a place at an Ontario college. Although funding does not vary directly with enrolment, there is a strong correlation between the two and funding for colleges has increased across the province.

No benefit improvements if management has its way

Management's proposals for settlement contain no benefit improvements.

The union has tabled several demands for improvements to benefits. Here are the highlights:

- Reimburse drug costs at 100 per cent from the current 85 per cent
- Remove the 50 per cent co-insurance requirement for orthodontic care and for crowns and bridges
- Increase vision care to \$500 from the current \$400
- Increase hearing care to \$4,000 from the current \$3,000
- Include semi-private coverage for stays at medical recovery centres
- Increase Basic Life Insurance to \$75,000 from the current \$25,000
- Add "Registered Social Worker" to the list of paramedical services

The union does not expect to achieve every one of these, but in the normal course of bargaining some benefit improvement is customary.

At this time, retirees and current employees are in one group for the purpose of establishing life insurance premiums. Management has proposed splitting the group for the post-retirement life insurance premiums. While this would result in a tiny premium reduction for the colleges and the active employees, it would lead to a dramatic premium increase for retirees. This is not a proposal that will lead to settlement.

It's time for management to get serious about benefits negotiations.

Partial-Load teachers: a long-standing workload inequity

Partial-Load teachers are members of our bargaining unit who teach between seven and 12 hours per week and are compensated on the basis of each teaching hour. The Standard Workload Form (SWF) does not apply to them and the colleges do not calculate their actual workloads. As a result, while their teaching hours are limited to two-thirds of a full-time teaching workload of 18 hours per week, their actual workload hours often approach or exceed those of full-time teachers. This is absolutely unfair and has been a long-standing inequity. It needs to be resolved.

The union has proposed that each Partial-Load teacher receive a SWF and that the workload formula would apply. There would be a weekly workload hour limit of 26 hours and teachers would be paid on the basis of workload hours, rather than just teaching contact hours. The normal allowance for routine out-of-class assistance to students and time for normal administrative tasks would not be included in the 26 hours. Rather, the hourly rate of pay would be adjusted upwards to compensate for the additional work performed under the allowance.

Applying the workload formula is a sensible, reasonable and efficient way of distributing workload in a fair and equitable manner. It treats teachers equally and — just as important — it treats students equally. When all teachers have reasonable workloads and are compensated for the work they perform both in and out of the classroom, the overall quality of education improves and all students have an equal opportunity to learn.

Unfortunately, management has rejected this proposal. They have told your union bargaining team that they require the "flexibility" to continue their current practice and do not want to apply the formula to Partial-Load assignments. That antiquated thinking has relegated Partial-Load teachers and their students to that of second-class citizens within the community college system.

Management proposes Classification Task Force

In his 2005 report, Bob Rae acknowledged what faculty have been saying and identified that the colleges needed more full-time faculty. In response to Rae's report, the McGuinty government pledged \$6.2 billion for just that goal. Here is what McGuinty said on May 13, 2005:

"... Which brings me to what Ontarians demand in return for this massive investment. And it is: higher quality and better accountability... By quality, we mean more faculty at colleges and universities to accommodate higher enrollments and help students succeed, more faculty time for students..."

The ensuing years have shown us that this massive investment has not been properly applied by the colleges. The ratio of full-time faculty to students has actually decreased since that time, and once again the system is being strained by a further 7.4 per cent increase in enrolment. Faculty have once again tabled staffing demands designed to help ensure the quality education that Bob Rae and Premier McGuinty envisioned.

Contrary to their stated position that they wish to ensure that full-time faculty can contribute effectively to support the diverse educational needs of students, the bargaining team for college management has flat-out rejected all of the faculty's staffing demands.

Management has proposed a Classification Task Force. This Task Force would look at "additional bargaining unit teaching classifications." The union has

Update on Return-to-Work grievances

The arbitration panel and the lawyers for both sides are canvassing dates for the next phase of the process of dealing with the return-to-work grievances from the 2006 college faculty strike. Management's preliminary objections have been dealt with and the grievances will proceed. The next phase will be case management discussions to look at how to handle the nearly 2000 claims. We will keep you posted as decisions are made.

received differentiated staffing proposals from management in the past. This is less direct, but no different in intent. The first job of management's proposed task force would be to "consider classification structures in other post-secondary institutions." So while management is interested in this part of the university model, it is not willing to consider the other aspects of university education. Management refuses to acknowledge the principles of academic freedom, faculty senate, workload limitations, and the salaries and benefits which constitute the university model as a whole.

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