CAAT-A Colleges Academic Division OPSEU SEFPO

Negotiations News

Bargaining Information for OPSEU Members in the CAAT-Academic Division

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Talks Continue

Immediately after compiling the strike vote results on January 13th, the Union contacted the mediator to advise him of those results and ask him to pursue further bargaining dates. The Colleges agreed to meet beginning on Tuesday, January 19th.

The colleges had last broken off talks on December 15. The strike mandate did bring the Colleges back to the table and also produced some positive bargaining results. Unfortunately, the Colleges were not yet ready to address the key issues of the Workload Task Force Report. Nevertheless, even small progress is good.

Although salary has not been the union's focus, the first proposal from the colleges was to add 0.25% more salary in the second year of their 4-year offer. That would make the salary offer 1.75%, 2%, 2% and 2%. That revision to 2% in the second year increases the offer by a gross of $246 for those at the top step and by $142 at the starting step.

In addition, the Colleges:

- withdrew their demand to increase retiree life insurance premiums. The imposed term would have increased the costs to retirees five-fold.
- withdrew their demand that an employee who changes from employment at one college to a different college would lose the right to continue with the pension plan.
- amended the list of arbitrators withdrawing some of the persons they had added when terms and conditions were imposed on November 18.

The Colleges have NOT removed the imposed terms. The offer is amended: the imposition is not.

The Union made several moves to stimulate further bargaining. In particular, based on media comments heard from College negotiators, the Union amended the academic freedom proposal. The revisions make it clear that faculty, in the exercise of academic freedom, remain accountable to external accrediting and regulating bodies, the Ministry, the terms of the Collective Agreement, and program requirements.

The strike vote had some impact, but the colleges have not yet moved on the positions that really matter to avoid a strike — the matters identified by the Workload Task Force. In fact, faculty proposals for some changes to the workload system were passed at the local and the provincial demand-setting meetings in February, 2009. The Task Force Report in March 2009 confirmed the validity of the faculty proposals.

With the counsel of the mediator, the parties agreed to recess negotiations and to return to the table on January 26th. The faculty bargaining team will continue to work for a fair, equitable, and reasonable settlement.

Costing Analysis of Union Proposals

Salaries and Benefits

Management claims increases in salaries and benefits will cost $51 million per year. The actual cost is $24.4 million.

Bargaining unit salary costs are currently $620 million per year and just under 2500 faculty are at the top step. A 2.5% increase per year and a referent group allowance that increases from $500 to $2000 in years 2 and 3 cost $16.8 million in year 1, $21.0 million in year 2 and $21.4 million in year 3. The average cost is $19.7 million per year.

The increased cost in benefits for vision care, catastrophic drug coverage, improved basic life insurance plus employer pension contributions is $4.7 million. Management claimed that family day would cost the colleges $3.5 million. Actual costs could arise only from hiring replacement teachers or paying overtime. They do neither. Lost productivity could be booked as a cost, but there is no loss. Curriculum delivery and assistance to students is simply rescheduled.

Workload

The Colleges claim that the Union has demanded a two hour teaching reduction per week which would require them to hire 1100 additional faculty at a cost of $96 million. There is no such demand. Here are the demands. There is a proposal for a 20% increase in evaluation factors and additional preparation time for on-line courses and courses where translation is required. For costing purposes, the Union projects a possible increase in evaluation time arising from collegiality, and an increase for out-of-class assistance time for faculty with weekly student numbers in excess of 175 — both recommended by the Workload Task Force. These additions could generate an average increase of up to 3 workload hours per week. The current average workload is 41 hours per week. The equitable assignment of work would result in zero cost.

Staffing

The Colleges have claimed that a demand to convert all sessional, partial-load, and part-time positions to full-time would cost $71 million. There is no such demand. The requirement to give preference to full-time positions over sessional and partial-load positions already exists, so there are no true added costs there. The Union demands are to give preference to full-time positions over part-time and to use in-house staff rather than contract bargaining unit work to outside sources. The latter demand could possibly reduce revenue or could increase revenue depending on college marketing. The former has costs only where the college has been inappropriately using part-time staff contrary to existing staffing principles.