

Important update from your CAAT-A Bargaining Team on wage reopener settlement with the College Employer Council

Dear Faculty Members,

We are pleased to share with you the outcome of our recent mediated settlement with the College Employer Council regarding our compensation for the period 2021-24.

Given the circumstances, we believe we've achieved a commendable outcome.

It is essential to understand the context in which these negotiations took place. Unlike an arbitration where outcomes are awarded in a decision by a third-party arbitrator, we had to come to a mutual agreement between both parties. This was purely a mediation with no binding mechanism, and in such an environment, leverage is often limited. Quite simply, both sides had to agree.

Considering these constraints, we are incredibly proud of what we have accomplished together. We achieved an outcome very similar to what we are seeing arbitrators award (**award** being the operative word) in other postsecondary contexts.

Our collective efforts have resulted in:

- A 3% salary increase for the first year,
- A 3% increase for the second year, and
- A 3.5% increase for the third year

(Including the 1% increases originally awarded in September 2022 by Arbitrator Kaplan under Bill 124.)

This is the first time since 2006 that we have secured a wage increase beyond 2%. These increases are long overdue. Consequently, the top-step salary for professors, counsellors, and librarians will be \$126,689, effective October 1st, 2023, which is roughly \$8,000 more than it would have been under Bill 124. As well, given that the adjustments cover the period since October 2021, members – including partial-load members – should see retroactive payment for increases within the next month.

We also achieved significant improvements to our paramedical benefits that could result in thousands of dollars in additional savings for members. Effective October 1st, 2023, SunLife will cover 90% (up from 85%) of paramedical expenses, up to \$4,750/year (up from \$2,000/year).

We must caution that these improvements were possible because Bill 124 was declared null and void by an Ontario Court. However, Doug Ford's government is currently appealing that decision. If the law were to come back into effect, the parties have agreed that our mediator, Eli Gedalof, will address and resolve issues of the law's impact on this settlement.

During the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic, each of us stepped up, doing what was necessary to navigate our students and our colleges through the crisis. We experienced significant unacknowledged and uncompensated increases in our workloads, adapting and innovating to ensure that our students received the education they deserve.

It is crucial to note that at the same time that we've been pushing our limits, the colleges have reported record profits. In this year alone, they collectively reported a staggering \$656 million surplus, and since our strike in 2017 they've accumulated over \$2.3 billion in profits. These profits are a direct result of the tireless efforts of our faculty members, including full-time professors, instructors, counsellors, librarians, and

the precarious, contract faculty who make up over 40% of our bargaining unit.

These profits have been built on our backs, and it is high time we receive our fair share.

In our final demand set process, we prioritized an increase in wages and benefits that align with our established comparators and increases in inflation. This fight for fair wages is not just about numbers — it is about respect, recognition, and ensuring that our compensation reflects our worth.

We have been lagging behind our comparators. We should be at the midpoint between the lowest top step for university faculty and the highest salary for high school teachers in Ontario. This deal does not get us there, but it does bring us closer to that benchmark, even if we still have some distance to go.

As a bargaining team, we want to be clear: this agreement was made possible only because the 16,000 college faculty members stood together during a challenging round of bargaining that began in July, 2021.

Together, we authorized a strike mandate despite the pandemic. Together, we rejected a management offer that failed to address our demands. And now, together, we have finalized a collective agreement that achieves significant gains in compensation and equity, including addressing partial-load issues.

COLLEGE FACULTY

Bulletin



So, while we celebrate this necessary step forward for full-time and partial-load faculty today, let's look ahead to returning to the bargaining table next year, by which time the report of the Workload Task Force should be complete. We can all look forward to engaging in free and fair bargaining without punitive, unconstitutional legislative constraints.

We want to extend our gratitude for your solidarity and trust throughout this wage reopener process and look forward to your support in the fight ahead.

Your CAAT-A Bargaining Team

Ravi Ramkissoonsingh, Local 242 (Niagara) - Chair

Michelle Arbour, Local 125 (Lambton)

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#Bargaining for *Better*

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Authorized for distribution by:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JP Hornick".

JP Hornick,
OPSEU/SEFPO President