

President's Report – OPSEU CAAT-A Local 653 GMM Oct 5th 2022

At a recent town hall meeting, Northern College administration announced that they had a significant budget surplus, in the area of \$15 million, and ongoing growth in student enrolment thanks to their private college partner Pures and growing international student admissions at both Pures and Northern.

Of course, it is good news when the college is on stable financial ground. However, the flip side is that with increasing student numbers comes additional requirements for investments in staffing and infrastructure resources, as well as proper planning. In the Local's opinion, the College is failing to plan and invest properly for the growth it is trying to achieve.

Profits over quality?

Your union representatives are also full-time faculty members. As a union, we are concerned about our members rights and working conditions. As faculty, we are concerned about education quality at Northern College and in the Ontario public college system as a whole. Fortunately, those two aims usually work well together. What is good for faculty working conditions (limits on total course hours, proper time for evaluation etc...) is usually also good for students and education quality.

At this time of growth and change, we are concerned that the college seems to be motivated primarily by profits and continual growth at the expense of program and education quality. Some examples:

- The college is reluctant to invest in the staffing and infrastructure resources needed to ensure students receive a quality education. Most notably, the full-time faculty complement has only grown by two since 2019.
- There is a growing reliance on non-full-time faculty to deliver courses. Often these faculty are hired at the last minute and left with little time to prepare for course delivery
- The partnership with Pures college seems to be at least partly driving the constant growth in student enrolment in certain programs – their enrolment is capped by the numbers at Northern.
- There are increasing demands on faculty to deliver courses in “hybrid” or “hy-flex” modes. Usually, combined delivery modes lessen the student experience and lower course quality.

What can Local 653 do?

As a local, our focus this year will be on a detailed study of faculty staffing levels at Northern – especially in terms of the ratio of teaching contact hours delivered by full-time and non-full-time faculty. We will share the results of this analysis with you all throughout the year. We will use that data to push for additional full-time faculty as warranted.

We also hope to improve the frequency of our communication with the membership, and make better use of our website and social media to keep everyone current with the latest developments.

What can you do?

As faculty, both full-time and partial load, you can help by being informed and engaged. Know your collective agreement, especially Article 11, and make it clear to your supervisor that they should respect the CA.

Neal McNair – President, OPSEU CAAT-A Local 653