

Report of 1st Vice President

OPSEU CAAT-A Local 653 2022-2023

General Membership Meeting of OPSEU CAAT-A Local 653

May 23, 2023

My main message today is that **the union is us and the union is here for you**.

We will do our best to understand items and issues and then to advocate for you.

We also bring familiarity and supports and will do our best to help.

The Collective Agreement is more powerful than college policy. Indeed, legislation (for instance, the *Colleges Collective Bargaining Act*) is more powerful than college policy.

Everyone is encouraged to learn more about the contents of the Collective Agreement and to communicate about the contents of the Collective Agreement – including, **if you have a question, please contact a union steward and please ask it.**

Overall, there are items/issues that have come up:

- On September 23, 2022, the **decision document was released from Arbitrator Kaplan** with content to be included in the next Collective Agreement. Information summaries have been distributed by OPSEU, including with regards to Salary and Benefits, the Workload Task Force, the Letter of Understanding on Multi-Mode Adaptation, Job Security for Partial Load faculty, Equity, Indigenization, and Counsellors and Coordinators.
- Over the last few months, I have participated in multiple meetings with regards to exploring the **union staffing grievance** for the School of Veterinary Sciences.
- Over the last few months, I have participated in multiple meetings with regards to a **Group Grievance** filed in the Business Department.
- Over the last few months, I have participated in multiple meetings with regards to a **personal grievance** with regards to a faculty member on disability and leave from work.
- On November 29, 2022, **Bill 124 in the Province of Ontario was found to be unconstitutional** by the Ontario Superior Court, and OPSEU has asked the College Employer Council (CEC) to return to the bargaining table to negotiate a remedy. On January 26, 2023, the CEC agreed that Arbitrator Gerry Lee could be used to conduct the negotiations. The most recent news (as of mid-April 2023) is that Arbitrator Lee has not been available, and a new Arbitrator Eli Gedaloff will conduct the negotiations.
- The certification of **partial load faculty for unionization** continues to progress slowly.

I have concerns:

- There continues to be **new extra work for the union local to educate management** with regards to the Collective Agreement. The possibility exists that some faculty are experiencing working conditions outside of the Collective Agreement because not all details are always known.
- At Northern College, particularly in the last 5 years, there has been **dramatically increased international student enrolment** in some programs and regular offerings of Summer semester courses that have increased stress for faculty and students. There are **problems** including: unprepared students, students who do not abide by Northern College academic standards, lack of housing for students, lack of employment for students, excessive hours worked by students that hamper their academic success. There have only been inadequate responsive measures, not inclusive preplanning nor adequate monitoring of effectiveness. In discussions about student enrolment, management has **expressed a very corporate regard/desire for profit and a reluctance to help support student success or program quality**. It may be of interest that it has become known that 18 of 24 colleges in Ontario are forecasting a budget surplus for 2022-2023 (examples: Seneca \$83 million, Fanshawe \$11 million, Conestoga \$52 million), four colleges are forecasting a deficit (example: Sheridan deficit of \$18 million) and on the whole the college sector has been very very profitable in recent years.
- The **increased use of artificial intelligence software by students** makes meaningful evaluation much more challenging.

- Overall, I am concerned about the **increased workload** that faculty are experiencing. I feel that the **mental health awareness and recognition** at Northern College is not adequate particularly because there does **not seem to be adequate efforts to address root causes**. I am concerned that the approach to **professional development** (largely voluntary, no SWF time) is **not adequate**.

I have undertaken specific initiatives in service to the union local:

- Sought out opportunities for **sharing information** with the union local and our members including information gleaned from our members, newsletters, announcements, articles, and web postings. I have used this information as the basis for raising awareness amongst Northern College faculty and for raising concerns to management.
- Submitted to management that there should be an **annual forum convened to be a gathering of the college community (students, faculty, management, support staff and community members) to explore and address items (including experiences, challenges, achievements and successes)** with regards to international students with the goal of continuous improvement
- Submitted questions to Dr. Audrey Penner, including prior to a Town Hall meeting:

What would you like to know about Northern College, its direction, or anything else? *

Two Questions:

The Bill 124 that limits wage increases in Ontario has been found to be unconstitutional. As Northern College's representative on the College Employer Council, could Dr. Audrey Penner outline ways that she will advocate for wages lost due to Bill 124 and ways that she will advocate for better wages at Northern College?

There is apparently a plan in place to set up Lifeworks as the new agency to provide the Employee Assistance Program at Northern College. It could be that Lifeworks will remain the third-party investigator for disability claims by Northern College faculty. Could management provide information on how one agency will effectively accomplish both of these functions?

- Learned more about **short- and long-term disability** for faculty
- Revised a **document** (originally compiled by WS in 2015) that can be used by faculty to prepare for SWF workload meetings with their manager and also to check the contents of their SWF documents
- Submitted the **local by-laws document** for local 653 that might require proclamation from OPSEU
- Attended a grievance-handling educational in January 2023 and the OPSEU Convention in April 2023.

I am interested that our union local will continue to develop **good communications, improved capabilities, and more thorough knowledge**.

Interesting faculty- and union-relevant information can be found at:

<https://www.collegefaculty.org/>

All faculty are advised to create/change their email autoreply to indicate days that they are on vacation and therefore not reading nor responding to email.

In the fall of 2023, there will be new attention devoted to demand-setting for the next round of bargaining for the next Collective Agreement.

Warren Schaffer

1st Vice President – Local 653

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