

## AUDIO CALL SCRIPT

### FACULTY VOTE

Sonia: Good morning – this is Sonia Del Missier ... and Stephanie Ball... welcome to this call.

I am chair of the Colleges' Bargaining Team and I also spent my entire 39-year career at Cambrian College – most recently as a vice president but also, several years ago, I had the privilege of teaching part-time in the school of business.

I have been Chair of the Colleges' Bargaining Team during the last three rounds of bargaining, including this one. The previous two rounds of bargaining were successfully negotiated at the table without strikes.

Stephanie: I'm Stephanie Ball, I am vice-chair of the Colleges' Bargaining Team and a Dean at Durham College. I taught full time for several years at Durham before becoming dean in 2005.

Sonia: We want to start by talking about the settlement offer that you will be voting on.

Let me deal with one very important issue first and one of the reasons we wanted to have this webcast. The offer you will be voting on contains all of the items that we and the union team agreed upon. Nothing has been removed; nothing has been added that will negatively impact faculty – these are positive gains.

The union is telling you that this is a different offer than what we worked on with the union - one with concessions, one that will harm faculty.

All I can say is this isn't true. I don't know how I can be clearer about that.

Now most of the people listening don't know me or Stephanie personally, but we don't operate that way.

I have known and worked with hundreds of faculty members across Ontario during my career. More importantly I know from being involved with previous strikes that when this is all over we have to work together again to serve our students. I have too much respect for your dedication, hard work, and expertise to offer you a contract that doesn't address your concerns raised during bargaining.

The offer you will be voting on was presented by us to the union bargaining team to address all of the union's issues – let me walk through the offer and highlight important gains for faculty.

The offer includes:

- A 7.75% salary increase over four years for all employees in the bargaining unit; this is in addition to any increments on the salary grid that you would be entitled to over that time – the union agreed to this salary increase
- As well as the salary increase, we have provided improved benefits extended pregnancy and parental leave, increased maximum annual coverage for paramedical services from \$1,500 to \$2,000, and adding social workers and psychotherapists to the list of paramedical providers.
- For partial-load faculty we agreed with the union to include enhancements in our offer which address partial-load concerns such as:
  - Extending partial-load faculty the same rights as full-time faculty to compete for new full-time jobs;
  - Giving preference to creating full time jobs instead of part time or sessional jobs;
  - Enhancing partial-load job security by giving partial load employees the right of first refusal to courses they have previously taught and
  - Doubling the speed at which partial load employees will progress through the salary grid giving better recognition for their prior service;
- We also provide a firm commitment to meet with the union about the implementation of Bill 148 within 30 days of its passage to address concerns regarding equal pay for equal work.

- And finally, we have also agreed with the union on the establishment of a government-led task force on the future of Ontario colleges, including staffing models and precarious work

For our full-time teachers we have addressed their issues by giving our full-time faculty the opportunity to complete the teaching of courses that they have started in situations where the collective agreement has prevented that from happening. We have also provided the opportunity for full-time teachers to teach additional contact hours if they wish to, providing an opportunity to make additional money. It is important to recognize that these are voluntary changes to a teacher's workload to meet the direct requests of faculty across the system.

We have also ensured that student accommodation requirements can be addressed when workload is being assigned.

There are other improvements in the collective agreement as well.

Finally, as I am sure you are aware, for the first time, we have enshrined academic freedom language in the collective agreement.

So why was there no agreement at the bargaining table?

According to a message from the OPSEU Bargaining Team to members on November 8, the only issue standing in the way of settlement is the debate over who will have authority and control over curriculum.

We respectfully disagree with framing this issue as between faculty and college management. Rather, we believe that all stakeholders should continue to participate in the academic decision-making process.

We rely on you – the faculty – to make the decisions in the classroom on how to teach the curriculum to your students so that they learn and succeed. That is at the core of faculty expertise and the close relationship between faculty and students. Our objective is to support that, not to compromise it.

Faculty have the central voice in academic decision making but not the only voice.

Because, along with responding to the current and future needs of employers, our programs must remain fully compliant with provincial program standards, external accrediting and regulatory agencies, and professional associations.

Our view remains that working collaboratively to develop and deliver programs is the best way to keep our colleges relevant and responsive to the needs of employers and to successfully launch the careers of college graduates. I honestly believe that the academic freedom language we have provided recognizes and strengthens the existing collaboration on academic issues that exists in the colleges today.

This impasse is completely frustrating for us and for you, but I know that our frustration is nothing compared with the frustration that 500,000 students out of class are feeling right now.

Let me stress – the union and management teams have agreed to all major items except for academic freedom language.

This vote is your opportunity to end the strike now and get students and faculty back in the classroom as soon as possible. If the offer is accepted, faculty would start being paid this Friday - November 17 - and students could return to class as early as next Tuesday.

We need to end this strike now - and get faculty and students back in the classroom.

That is why Ontario colleges have asked the Ontario Labour Relations Board to schedule a vote on the colleges' offer.

An employer vote is never a preferred path, because a settlement should be reached at the bargaining table.

We took this difficult decision because quite frankly, we have exhausted all other options.

We understand that this decision is contentious. We would have preferred that you vote upon a recommended offer from the union, but the union continues to refuse to accept our academic freedom guarantees as a solution to that remaining issue and we can't agree to the union's demand in this regard.

The time has come to let you - faculty decide if the offer is acceptable. If you choose to accept the offer, it will end the strike.

To vote, each faculty member will be receiving an email today from the Ontario Labour Relations Board on their college email account that will provide voting instructions and a unique PIN for each individual. Voting can be done online or by phone. It is a secret ballot vote – no one will know how you vote – not the colleges and not the union. The Ontario Labour Board is responsible for the voting process. Please carefully review the email you receive. When the polls open Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. the OLRB Helpline will also be available if you are having any difficulties.

The email also has a link to download the entire employer's offer.

I'll pause there and let's get into some of the questions which have come from conversations, phone calls, emails and social media.

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## Q&A

**We'll walk through the questions first on the offer itself and then on the vote.**

- 1. Here is a concern that a lot of faculty are raising: The union is telling us that there are differences in this offer and that it is much worse than what was agreed to with the union. What do you say to this concern?**
  - This is a really important point and I understand why people would raise it...
  - Let me be clear, nothing has been removed or altered from the offer that the union received on November 6 – which contains all of the agreed to items. This is the offer you will voting on.
  - It's a better offer that came out of bargaining with the union in early November.
- 2. On that same theme: on Twitter many union locals say that the improvements have been removed from the colleges' offer. Can you comment on this?**
  - I honestly can't speak to why the local unions are saying that but again - all of the improvements I spoke to earlier are there.
  - Our offer contains everything we agreed to and nothing has been removed. Please review the offer and see for yourself.
- 3. The removal of overtime limitations has raised questions and comments from faculty. What can we say about this?**
  - We proposed the change because we want full-time faculty to have the opportunity to voluntarily complete the teaching of courses that they have started. And we want professors to be allowed to teach additional contact hours, if they wish. Again, this is their decision. Any added teaching hours with additional pay opportunities they choose to work are entirely up to the faculty member.

- It is important to recognize that these are voluntary changes to a teacher's workload to meet the direct requests of faculty across the system.
  - Many faculty have requested this flexibility to provide class continuity. Stephanie, you mentioned that as Dean, you've had eight requests directly from faculty in the past year that you've had to turn down.
  - The existing workload limit protections remain. No one is being forced to exceed any of the current workload limits. These are added opportunities for faculty, not requirements.
- 4. Again, on Twitter, some faculty are asking why we haven't addressed the issues of partial-load faculty?**
- I want to start by saying we are very proud of the contributions our partial-load faculty make to our colleges.
  - The union and the colleges agreed to a whole series of improvements for partial-load faculty. These are:
  - Better Access to Full-Time Jobs
    - Requires colleges give preference to creating full-time jobs over partial-load and sessional jobs
  - Increased Pay for Partial-Load Faculty
    - 7.75% salary increase over four years along with salary grid advancement
  - Faster Salary Increase
    - Increases partial-load salaries by doubling the speed of progress through the salary grid by giving better recognition
  - Improved Job Security
    - Gives partial-load faculty priority to teach future course offerings through a new registry
  - Equivalent Rights
    - Grants partial-load faculty the same rights as full-time faculty to apply for new full-time positions
  - Furthermore, the government has agreed to establish a task force on the future of Ontario colleges that will look at various issues, including staffing models and the issue of precarious work.
  - We look forward to participating in this task force to address partial-load faculty concerns further.
- 5. A lot of faculty are asking what happened to the proposed staffing ratios?**
- This is another important issue: in fact - the union withdrew its staffing ratio proposal prior to November 6.
  - It is a very important issue - the union and the colleges agree that staffing issues and precarious work will be among the issues referred to the Task Force on the future of colleges.
- 6. Emails have come in with some faculty wondering if the government Task Force on the future of colleges will actually do anything – or if this is a way to ignore the issues and be quickly forgotten.**
- I understand why people would think that –
  - The union and the colleges agreed to the task force to get at a wide range of issues, including staffing models and precarious work.
  - The task force will be comprised of key stakeholders including faculty.
  - It is comprehensive in scope and its work will start in January with the final report going to Cabinet in 2018 with funding recommendations.
- 7. Let's turn to salaries: Some online comments say that 7.75% salary increase offered isn't enough.**
- The union and the colleges have agreed on the salary increase of 7.75% over four years. These same salary increases are contained in the union's last position which is posted on OPSEU's website. There are no salary issues remaining. We agree on this!
  - It is important to add that the increase is comparable to other settlements in the public sector.
- 8. A lot of people on the picket line and online are asking if they are going to be deducted even more pay after they return to work.**
- That's a very important question and it has a clear answer - Absolutely not.

- Once the strike has ended there will be no further deductions in your pay.
  - If the offer is accepted, faculty will be paid starting this Friday - November 17 - with no further deductions.
  - In addition, regardless of the length of the strike, faculty will still receive their 2 months' vacation.
- 9. There are a lot of questions from faculty on whether there will be any overtime paid when classes resume?**
- All faculty who exceed the teaching contact hour or workload limits in the collective agreement because of changes to the curriculum required by the strike will receive overtime.
  - In addition, the colleges' offer eliminates restrictive overtime limits which prevented full-time employees from voluntarily agreeing to work overtime.
- 10. There have been a lot of questions about Bill 148 and the claim that the colleges don't have to be compliant until after this offer expires in four years and that we are trying to get out of legal obligations.**
- Let me start by saying that this is another item the union and management have agreed to – this has been resolved.
  - The colleges would not and cannot avoid their legal obligations.
  - Second, what we have proposed would ensure that compliance with Bill 148 will occur faster than other sectors.
  - Once Bill 148 becomes law, the colleges and the union will meet within 30 days and work together on implementation plans to comply with the legislation.
  - Whatever we don't agree on will be sent to arbitration.
- 11. So let's turn to academic freedom where there have been a lot of questions and comments from faculty – wondering why we can't agree to the union's language.**
- You are right, Stephanie, this is one area where the colleges and the union do not agree.
  - To respond to academic freedom and reach an agreement, the colleges agreed that academic freedom in the Ontario College system will be enshrined in the collective agreement. This is a significant move on the part of the colleges. Unfortunately, the union has refused to accept the colleges' solution.
  - We respectfully disagree with framing this issue as an either / or issue between faculty and college management.
  - Rather, we believe that all stakeholders should continue to participate in the academic decision-making process – and that is what our proposal states.
  - We rely on faculty to make the decisions in the classroom on how to teach the curriculum to students so that they learn and succeed. That is at the core of faculty expertise and the close relationship between faculty and students. Our objective is to support that, not to compromise it.
- 12. J.P. Hornick – the OPSEU Academic Chair - has justified the union's version of academic freedom by stating that their language is used across the post-secondary system.**
- The union's language reflects what some universities have adopted.
  - Colleges are not universities: our focus and our primary responsibility is to prepare students for successful careers. Industry involvement and external accreditation both play an important role in that process.

- The engagement of stakeholders and industry advisors in academic decision-making is a foundation of the college system. It's what helps keep our programs relevant and responsive to the changing needs of today's workforce.
  - That's why we are proposing our language on academic freedom which we're encouraging everyone to read. Our language gives our faculty the latitude to think and speak freely on matters relating to their curriculum.
  - And it does this while preserving our ability to continue the collegial approach we've always had in our academic affairs.
- 13. Let's turn to the vote: Faculty are upset that we are forcing a vote and appearing to prolong the strike.**
- The reason we are asking for a faculty vote, is because we have been unable to reach a negotiated settlement.
  - We made significant moves and addressed all faculty priorities brought forward to us by the union bargaining team. The offer that is available for faculty right now – on the table – should have ended this strike that is now entering its fifth week.
  - We came to the decision that we could not postpone a resolution indefinitely – not for faculty and above all, it is unacceptable for our students.
  - We understand that this decision is contentious. We would have preferred faculty vote on an offer recommended by the union. I can assure you that the decision to ask for the vote was not an easy one.
  - But we exhausted all other efforts – and we need to resolve the strike.
  - The time has come to let faculty decide whether the offer is acceptable.
- 14. A lot of faculty are online asking why the colleges waited so long to call this vote.**
- We never wanted to call a faculty vote – we always wanted to get a negotiated settlement.
  - We addressed all faculty priorities and the offer that is available for faculty right now – on the table – should have ended this strike.
  - An employer vote is never a preferred path, because a settlement should be reached at the bargaining table. But we reached the point where we had exhausted all efforts at the bargaining table and we need faculty to decide.
- 15. Some faculty are expressing concern that the colleges or the union will know how they vote because it is an electronic ballot.**
- The vote is secure and a secret ballot – the colleges and the union are not running the vote and will not know how individual faculty voted.
- 16. An email from a faculty member asked what threshold of turnout is required for the vote to be legitimate.**
- There is no threshold - the vote will be decided by a 50% + 1 majority of those who cast their vote.
  - To be clear, if only 1,000 faculty vote, they will decide the issue for all 12,000 faculty.
  - That's why it is so important for every faculty member to vote.
- 17. College faculty are saying they are confused about what will happen if the offer is approved.**
- If the offer is approved, the faculty will start being paid again the day after the vote - on November 17 - and students can be in class as early as next Tuesday.
  - If the majority of faculty accept the offer, then the strike will end and classes can resume within a few days.

**18. Another faculty email claims that a rejection vote will force the colleges to accept the union's demands or result in back-to-work legislation.**

- No, it will mean that the faculty have rejected the offer and that the strike continues.
- It will not change our view of academic freedom which remains the one principal area of difference between the colleges and the union. The colleges have been clear about this from the outset of bargaining.

**19. Many faculty are expecting that a rejection vote will force the government to pass back-to-work legislation and solve this with binding arbitration.**

- To answer this, I'll turn to the union's response.
- OPSEU's President Smokey Thomas spoke against the government acting at an OPSEU townhall last week, and I quote – "The Liberals do not have at their disposal the ability to legislate you back. I don't think they're considering it now."
- He went on to say – "They [the government] would be extremely reluctant to use it [back to work legislation] because they know at the end of the day they would lose the Charter challenge... so I don't think they'll do that."
- Presumably, Smokey Thomas was referring to a Charter challenge that OPSEU would mount if the government introduced to back-to-work legislation.
- It's also important to understand that binding arbitration was removed from the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act because it impedes effective bargaining.
- Arbitration is not an option to end this strike.
- If the offer is rejected, there will be no quick resolution through legislation.

**20. One final question - faculty are asking why they should vote in favour of the employer offer when their union doesn't support the offer?**

- This comes back to our first point.
- At the end of the day, the offer you will be voting on contains all of the items that we – the colleges - and the union team agreed upon.
- Nothing has been removed; nothing has been added that will harm faculty – these are positive gains.
- The offer addresses faculty priorities, moves us forward and deserves serious consideration.

Thank you to everyone who is listening. We hope that this has helped to answer some of your questions.

Finally, I want to direct everyone who is listening in to visit the website [www.collegevote.ca](http://www.collegevote.ca) for more information.

We are launching this site in response to the union's continued misrepresentation of the offer being voted on by faculty. These union tactics are not fair to our faculty or the 500,000 students who are depending on the outcome of the vote. Faculty want to review objective information and make their decision based on facts.

I'll repeat that website address – [www.collegevote.ca](http://www.collegevote.ca).

We ask all faculty listening to please read the offer and please exercise your right to vote.

Thank you.