

NEWS RELEASE / COMMUNIQUÉ

Strike mandate signals time to resume serious bargaining: OPSEU

(TORONTO – Jan. 13, 2010) – In a show of province-wide support, community college faculty have given their bargaining team a strike mandate in a move that tells management it's time to negotiate seriously.

“Our members have delivered a clear statement. If management is serious about reaching a settlement then it's time they returned to the bargaining table with the singular goal of reaching an agreement,” said Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) president Warren (Smokey) Thomas.

“With today's strike vote we are saying the time for inflexibility by management is finished. Let's get down to negotiations and the sooner the better.”

Faculty at 18 of 24 colleges voted to give their bargaining team a mandate to call a strike if negotiations are unsuccessful. OPSEU represents more than 9,000 full-time college professors, counselors and librarians.

“Our first goal is to reach a fair settlement without a strike, but if that's not possible the earliest strike date could be mid-February,” said Ted Montgomery, chair of the bargaining team.

“At the start of this round of bargaining our members set out some firm demands, including workloads, salary and academic freedom, and we intend to deliver results on those demands,” Montgomery said.

The union continues to maintain that the colleges implement the recommendations of an independently-chaired special workload task force, established after the 2006 faculty walkout. Both sides had agreed to the task force recommendations which included academic freedom and workload, but in bargaining management is renegeing on that agreement.

The union is also calling on the colleges to withdraw their imposed terms and conditions of employment that were arbitrarily put into place – in the absence of a negotiated settlement – on Nov. 18, 2009.

“Our members are upset by the fact that they find themselves working under terms and conditions of employment that have been imposed on them by management,” said Montgomery.

He also called on John Milloy, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and Premier Dalton McGuinty to reinforce their government’s commitment to quality education by directing college negotiators to return to the bargaining table with the intent to arrive at a fair settlement.

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