

The Blame Game:

Misdirected Finger Pointing Follows IRCC International Student Cap Announcement

Jordan Berard, *Local Lines* Editor

Over the past few years, *Local Lines* has published a number of articles about the Ontario college system's over-dependence on grossly inflated international student tuition fees to remain financially viable. We have also discussed the unscrupulous strategies used to trick and exploit international students into paying these exorbitant fees by some of the "bad actor" firms that colleges have hired to recruit them, and the further exploitation of these students through the creation of Private College Partnership Programs (PCPPs) that have been designed to attract international students, but ultimately suffer from a lack of financial accountability, nonexistent quality control, and the complete absence of the kind of academic and social student support services that many international students sorely need to help navigate their post-secondary education far from home (see "[Something You Can Sell on a Billboard](#)" (page 2) and "[Milking the Cash Cow](#)").

The [announcement from Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada \(IRCC\)](#) that a cap has been placed on the number of international student permits that will be issued over the next two years to Canadian postsecondary institutions suggests that the government—at least at the federal level—understands that this over-reliance on international students across Canada's postsecondary system has created an untenable, unfair, and unethical situation that is harmful to everyone except the colleges reaping the financial benefits of high international enrollment numbers (see the staggering numbers in [the table at the bottom of this CBC article](#)).

The announcement should have served as a wake-up call to college administrators, or at least a slap on the wrist severe enough to lead to some major reforms in the way that international students are recruited and supported in the postsecondary system. Instead, in the Ontario college system at least, it seems to have only lead to finger-pointing and name calling among college administrators (see [the embarrassingly juvenile, sexist, and racist remarks](#) from Conestoga President John Tibbits), and created another opportunity for many colleges to cry poor despite carrying massive financial surpluses. Not surprisingly, not a single college administrator has shown any remorse for the now very public information about the exploitation of international students and how they have been taken advantage of over the last decade that has come to light.

"It's the government's fault!" administrators say, and [it certainly is](#)...in part. (Speaking of which, have you signed the [Fund Our Colleges! Petition](#) yet? It's time for us, as educators, to raise our voices about chronic underfunding.)

Somehow, it also seems to be faculty's fault. How else to explain the freeze on faculty hiring (a similar freeze, curiously, doesn't seem to have been applied to management and administration positions...), and the "cancellation" of [already difficult-to-come-by faculty PD funding](#) that was imposed by the "Cost Containment Efforts and Mitigation Strategies" that were invoked by our Algonquin College Leadership Team.

As if that wasn't bad enough, Conestoga's John Tibbits has also chosen to blame international students themselves, for ["choosing to live the way they do."](#)

As is often the case in situations like this, fingers are being pointed in every direction except for where they should be: straight back at the college administrators who allow(ed) the exploitation of international students to happen in the first place and who have reaped the financial benefits along the way.



A (FINAL) WORD FROM ANNETTE

Annette Bouzi, Local 415 President

Growing in Numbers and Strength

This academic year has seen many positive steps forward for our membership. Despite challenging economic times, our numbers continue to grow. Before the hiring freeze was implemented, we welcomed 38 new full-time colleagues this academic year, and April numbers show 119 more partial-load members for the same period in 2023. We've also seen our membership engagement continue to increase, with 121 colleagues from across our college attending our February demand-set meeting to raise our voices about our working conditions. At the meeting, we debated workplace issues that mattered to us collectively and sent our provincial bargaining team our Local's priorities. We still have a ways to go in this round of negotiations, and we are in excellent hands with our skilled bargaining team, which includes Local 415's Martin Lee.

Coordinator Role and Duties - Update

Recently, we shared a change in how the college oversees its relationship with Coordinators. Under [Article 14](#), Chairs are required to reduce specific Coordinator duties to writing before these duties are accepted. This is the new language that came about from terms and conditions imposed by the college in December 2021. Following continuous dialogue with college management about how this new language was to be implemented, and after seeing no change in their approach, we encouraged colleagues to file grievances. One of these grievances went to arbitration in the fall and was settled on the basis that the Local and College form a working group on coordination duties. Based on feedback collected from you, we provided input on the new Coordinator Guideline document. It is far from perfect, and so the Local has not endorsed it. However, if used to adequately record the work that Coordinators are assigned, it can be a tool to better capture and compensate the actual work being performed. We expect this document to be a work in progress and thank you for your continued feedback.

International Students and Funding

The two-year cap on study permits for international students imposed by the federal government in January shone a light on the overreliance post-secondary institutions, including our College, have placed on international student tuition. For far too long, Ontario colleges and universities have depended heavily on international students as a key source of funding. One point we agree with the college on is that the provincial government must improve its post-secondary funding—[the lowest per capita across the country](#). At Algonquin, we have not gained faculty positions due to any increase in our international student enrollment numbers. Following that same logic, it must stand that if international student enrollment should decrease, none of our jobs should be lost.

Updates in OPSEU and Region 4

With 2024 being an election year in all areas of OPSEU/SEFPO, Local 415 members have been active with all of these processes. At a regional level, Chrissy Tremblay, Melissa Shaw and Veronica Attard (who is a support staff colleague at Algonquin and Vice-President of Local 416) were all re-elected to their roles as Executive Board Members for Region 4. They play an important role in ensuring that issues important to us regionally are advanced and actioned at the provincial level of our union.

The OPSEU/SEFPO Coalition of Racialized Workers (CoRW) held its inaugural Election Summit in March. Local 415 members who attended were Alton Wu, Ala' Qadi, and me. After learning more about the history of the CoRW from one of its founding members and Chair, Peter Thomson, the delegation heard from guest speakers on issues of self-determination in a democratic environment. Local 415 2nd Vice-President Ala' Qadi was elected as one of our CoRW Region 4 representatives, along with Mezaun Hodge from Local 494.



Ala' Qadi, Annette Bouzi, Carl O'Toole and Tara Ettinger all attended the Region 4 meeting, held in Ottawa this year, in person. Not pictured are Mariella diBello and Gregg Mapp, who attended virtually.

A (FINAL) WORD FROM ANNETTE (CONTINUED)...

Convention 2024 was a time for us to gather with members across all of OPSEU/SEFPO to discuss, debate and vote on matters and policy that affect us all. Delegates voted on our provincial union leadership, reelecting both JP Hornick and Laurie Nancekivell to their second term as President and First Vice-President, respectively. We have seen a welcome change in OPSEU/SEFPO since President Hornick and Vice-President Nancekivell were elected to these roles in 2022. With the addition of 7 Equity Executive Board positions, our union has become more democratic and inclusive, intentionally bringing diverse voices into our union's leadership. Our membership has also seen our leadership lay the blame where it is deserved—at the hands of a government that chronically underfunds institutions and seeks to privatize public services. This affects us, as college faculty, just as it affects every Ontarian—we all rely upon and need strong public services. In the Hornick and Nancekivell leadership team, we have seen a union leadership that is not afraid to have difficult conversations and speak up for workers everywhere.



Pictured above L to R: Greg Mapp, Tara Ettinger, Annette Bouzi, Judy Puritt, Tracy Henderson, Martin Lee, Carl O'Toole and Ala' Qadi who attended OPSEU/SEFPO Convention 2024 in Toronto as representatives of Local 415.



Hundreds of Convention 2024 delegates took to the streets to protest the Ford government's LCBO privatization plans.



With Martin Lee at Convention 2024.

Solidarity Beyond Our Campus and in Our Lives

Members have been very supportive of the political activism taken on by Local 415, with many attending rallies, sending letters of support and consciously showing solidarity. We sometimes get questions about why our union is political. My answer to that is simple: unions are inherently political and have a duty to be. To paraphrase some of my comments when I spoke in favour of [Resolution 11 at Convention](#), raising our voices when it is easy to do so is not the role of a union—we need to use our collective power when speaking up is hard. As advocates, our role goes well beyond the bread and butter issues of our collective agreement. We show support for workers rights everywhere, including Palestine, where workers have been calling for global solidarity.

As I step into my last weeks as President of our Local, I have been reflecting a lot on solidarity. In the labour movement, the term is used unabashedly – but what does it really mean? What I know for sure is that solidarity is not seasonal or transactional – it is a way of life that is practiced through action. Solidarity builds our unity, finding strength across differences. It understands that baked into the employer-employee relationship is an intrinsic conflict that counts on us, as workers, to be divided. We must continue to have social justice conversations and build new spaces that center historically marginalized voices. This is the practice of solidarity and what will truly create equality for workers in Local 415 and everywhere.

It has been an honour to represent and work with the membership of Local 415. Thank you for your trust.

Rinse and Repeat: The Latest on Bargaining

Martin Lee,
Local 415 Secretary and CAAT-A Bargaining Team Member



By now, I think everyone who has been following their email will be aware that the bargaining process for 2021-2024 has concluded, and another one is well underway. To call the previous round a marathon would be an understatement! For the entire period, Shawn Pentecost, our Local Treasurer, was sitting at the bargaining table (much of it virtual), and I, for one, am grateful for that herculean effort.

That being said, I don't think I've encountered anyone who doesn't have some big questions about what really happened in the last round of bargaining and what it means moving forward. Partly because of the huge time frame for the process, and partly because of the COVID-fog/Groundhog Day nature of the pandemic, it's probably worthwhile talking a bit about what happened, how it all finished, and what comes next.

One of the first important things to note was Doug Ford's [Bill 124](#), which overshadowed the entire process. Bill 124 was introduced in 2019 and effectively removed the ability of public employees to negotiate for salaries. Instead, wage increases were to be capped at 1% annually for three years (so, from 2020 to 2023). Thanks to a massive legal battle fought by OPSEU along with several other unions, [the bill was ruled unconstitutional in September of 2022](#)... two years after our bargaining process started!

With that in the background, in November of 2020, we elected a seven-member bargaining team who went straight to work organizing demand-set meetings and soliciting the voices of members. OPSEU Local 415 had its demand set meeting on February 4, 2021, as we passed through yet another wave of COVID. Collectively, the division (all academic units at Ontario colleges) met early April 2021 to discuss, collaborate, and combine all of our demands into a final demand set, solidified by the beginning of negotiations in July. To reiterate, bargaining started in July of 2021: a full two years, one month, and seven days before the two sides finalized the agreement.

During that time, the College Employer Council played some new-ish tricks which will no doubt be familiar to many of us. In December of 2021, the colleges decided to impose terms and conditions —effectively taking their demands and forcing them onto all employees.

(continued on the next page...)

2021 CAAT-A BARGAINING



Rinse and Repeat: The Latest on Bargaining (continued...)

In response, faculty united behind a work-to-rule campaign—a first for Ontario colleges—demonstrating just how much work we all do without it being recognized by management.

Ultimately, William Kaplan arbitrated an award (which, incidentally, was our bargaining team’s request from an early point) that enshrined new rights for partial-load faculty, Counsellors and many of the equity deserving members in our collective.

But still, Bill 124 loomed over our head. We received retroactive pay: a welcome respite from the inflationary pressures we’ve been experiencing for the last two years.

We’re now in an unenviable position of having a new collective agreement which has been in force for less than a year while we are starting to bargain... again.

Collectively, we have been through a lot in the last round of bargaining. It began in an uncertain and unprecedented time for us all, as COVID-19 shut the world down between us, between our students, and between our families and support systems. We learned to teach via Zoom to dozens of small black boxes on screens, giving us all the labour of teaching a class without any of the ability to interact with our students and peers. We watched our salaries and wages drop by 12% while the colleges raked in some \$2 billion dollars (inflation went up by 15%, while we received 1% annually).

Bargaining for the new collective agreement (our current one expires September 30, 2024) is well underway. Compensation, work-load and academic freedom are leading the bargaining demands. People are squeezed financially, overworked in the classroom with modes of delivery which tax the brain and body. Our academic freedom rights are slowly being chipped away. Partial-load members continue to be precarious in their employment. As Counsellors and Librarians work tirelessly to support students and faculty, the colleges chip away at their numbers (14 colleges have no full-time Librarians, and 4 colleges have zero full-time Counsellors).

It’s time to do what is right for our students, and what is right for the colleges and communities we serve. All academic employees: Librarians, Counsellors, partial-load and full-time Instructors and Professors deserve better. We must push for it, together!





Course Renewal and Leaves: RCR and PD

Judy Puritt, Local 415 1st Vice-President

Acronyms. Educators and institutional settings attract abbreviations.

If you are full-time teaching faculty with a SWF, have you received your routine course renewal (RCR) time for this academic year? That is, did you receive hours on your Fall, Winter, and/or Spring SWF? In 2023, SVPA Janzen announced, “[s]tarting September 2023, each full-time faculty member who is SWF’d for 35 weeks or greater, will have an allocation of up to 112 complementary hours for course renewal to be distributed over the academic year.”

RCR time is intended to support “the ongoing need for faculty... to deliver high quality learning experiences for our learners.” That is, faculty are to use these 112 hours to keep themselves current and informed in their fields, in education trends, about resources, and in ways that are beneficial to their teaching. RCR is self-directed and not guided by a chair, meaning the individual determines how to use the time. Further, RCR should not be tied to a specific course, it should be allocated in meaningful ways, and “for those faculty whose SWF assignments are unequal across all three terms, the renewal hours will be primarily allocated to the lighter term.”

If you did not receive your RCR time in F23, W24, or S24, please speak to your chair or contact the Local for review. RCR time can not be carried beyond the academic year.

SVPA Janzen promised that the commitment to 112 hours of course maintenance time will be provided per academic year moving forward.

What about your PD – Professional Development – days? Have you asked for and scheduled your 10 PD days for the academic year? (faculty: CA 11. 01 H 1; counsellors and librarians: 11.04 B 1). You can ask for at least five of these days to be consecutive working days for PD (faculty: CA 11. 01 H 2; counsellors and librarians: 11.04 B 2).

Although PD dollars are frequently in short supply, we can still ask for the days. Tips from colleagues who regularly use their PD days include:

“I ask for a few days in a row to catch up on current articles, and to scan the ‘—’ (professional association) website and make sure there have been no changes I need to incorporate in my classes.”

“My PD days are taken when the opportunities arise. I look for free online webinars (this year there were a lot on Generative AI and AI in the Classroom), and then try to block those as full days so I can complete related reading.”

“This year, I looked for interesting and relevant courses on Employee Learning (at the college) and on LinkedIn Learning (through our college subscription). I booked the time with my chair and took my days.”

Whatever your approach, don’t let these days go unused. It is your right to engage your manager in a discussion about PD which should result in your PD arrangement. Finally, note that PD requests are “subject to agreement between the supervisor and the teacher / the Counsellor or Librarian, and **such agreement shall not be unreasonably withheld**” (CA 11.01 H 3 / CA 11.04 B3, emphasis added).

Back to the opening question – have you used your RCR and PD?

Steward Nomination Results and Upcoming Election General Membership Meeting (EGMM)

Steward nominations for the Local 415 Local Executive Committee (LEC) closed on Friday April 26th at noon. Since fewer steward nominees were submitted than Local 415 can have, all nominees were acclaimed.



Join us on **Wednesday, May 29 from 2 to 4 PM** in room T130 or virtually for our **Election General Membership Meeting (EGMM)**. Your voice counts—only those in attendance are able to vote.

At the meeting, an update will be provided on Local and provincial matters. We will also proceed with the election of the six officers of our Local and hold elections to union committees for 2024-2026.

[Click here for more information and to sign up to attend!](#)



OPSEU Local 415 Announcement

Election General Membership Meeting (EGMM)

WEDNESDAY MAY 29, 2024
2:00 - 4:00 PM

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFO!](#)

