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LOCALLINES.ORG

LOCAL LINES

OPSEU LOCAL 415



"Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean."

-- Ryunosuke Satoro

Pretty Dramatic Cover, Right? Let Me Explain.

Identifying privatization is a tricky thing, mostly because of how slowly it occurs. At least at first.

When I think about it, I'm reminded of the great Netflix documentary *Predators*, specifically the episode on cheetahs. What makes cheetahs such successful hunters is not their speed per se, but the stealth at which they approach their prey.

Each step toward attack is silent and calculated.

We can see examples of this in the leisurely erosion of our health care system: the disappearance of OHIP out-of-country, routine eye exams, etc. And now, Ontario's postsecondary education system is being hunted down just the same.

We know the statistics: 10,000 jobs lost, 650 programs cut. But behind those numbers are real people — colleagues at our college who were once part of our community and are now suddenly gone. Programs that once defined our institution have been silently culled. Services that have supported our students are disappearing.



YIKES. Privatization is a beast.

It may not affect you directly today, but it's part of a much larger plan. And none of us here are immune to its impact.

When our team sat down to discuss the theme for this issue of *Local Lines*, two feelings emerged: immediacy and hope. Which is why this issue looks different. It's why there are flames on the front cover. The house is, really, on fire.

But where do we even begin to find hope?

HR emails, threats, and intimidation are real. As is despair. And even if your manager likes you personally, they'll follow the directives. Your dean will too. Even our president is following directives, making choices based on "funding shortages" that aren't accidental — they're the result of questionable financial decision making.

So, as much as this newsletter will give you the facts, and yes, it will hold your feet to the fire, and maybe even make you feel more afraid, we hope that it will also make you angry, give you courage, encourage optimism, and provoke action.

As the great historian Howard Zinn (1994) wrote,

"To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."

-IS

Kim Bosch

Editor, *Local Lines*

Not Your Usual Note from the President

By Tracy Henderson

The start to this semester has felt a little different than others: It isn't perhaps what we had hoped for. In the last month, it's become especially clear that President Brulé meant it when he said, "Nothing is off the table" when it comes to cuts at Algonquin College. No program, service, or job is safe.

And yet, we have chosen to anchor ourselves here because we believe in providing quality, accessible education for our learners. And we continue to fight for that belief.

SOLIDARITY NOW

Part of that fight includes solidarity with our hard-working Support Staff picketing every day.

And really, solidarity is not charity—it is self-defense.

The Support Staff strike is not "someone else's fight." It's the only real action standing between us and the erosion of our own jobs. Support Staff are drawing a line in the sand. If that line is crossed, management will push deeper into cuts – our programs, our careers, and our future at stake.

THE REAL THREAT

The cuts won't stop with Support Staff or the first round of faculty layoffs. Management is normalizing program closures and job losses across the board. Listen to their language. The College Employer Council's (CEC) calls proposals to pause layoffs, protect campuses, and stop closures "poison pills." But what they call "poison" is really protection—protection for jobs, students, and the public college system.

CALL TO ACTION

Each act, big or small, says the same thing: "No more."

Faculty solidarity action is refusing struck work, holding the picket line, participating in creative resistance—like Solidarity Gremlins (see page 3!), sharing social media posts, wearing buttons, writing letters, participating in advocacy, reaching out to others (see page 9!), talking to neighbours, friends, family and anyone who wants to know about what's "going on" at the college.

Yes, pushing back is *uncomfortable*. Yes, it means letting things fall through the cracks. But comfort is dangerous here. Comfort is what allows the slow erosion of jobs and programs to continue unchecked. We cannot afford to be comfortable.

IT'S WORKING

The tone of the administration's messaging, and the CEC's recent communications, confirm what we already knew: our solidarity with support staff is working. Human Resources is sounding more anxious with every update. They want us to believe that disruption is dangerous. They want us to feel guilty for refusing to smooth things over. And the employer is right about one thing: disruption is dangerous. Not to us, but to the agenda of privatization.

This isn't fearmongering—it's a sober assessment. Every lost job, every shuttered program, every reduced campus service strips away another brick from the foundation we all stand on.

Support Staff are holding the line right now, for themselves and for us. If we want a future in this system, if we want programs that survive, jobs that last, and students who get the education they deserve, then solidarity is not optional.

The real poison is privatization. And the antidote is solidarity.



All Out Solidarity Day of Action - Woodroffe Campus, September 19th



Faculty participating in the 'Button Up' event to kick off the Save Our Colleges Campaign. A button might not seem like much, but historically it has had massive success in union organizing and movement.

Alignment - Chaotic Good: Embracing your Inner Solidarity Gremlin

By Martin Lee

When our Support Staff colleagues walked off the job, they didn't do it lightly. They did it because our college system is under attack—undervalued, underfunded, and pushed toward a model where workers' rights and student learning are treated as disposable. Their fight is our fight. Gains in job security, protections against contracting out, joint campaigning for college funding, and guarantees against further campus closures will benefit the working environment for both Support Staff and Faculty.



OPSEU/SEFPO President J.P. Hornick proudly displaying their inner gremlin

So how do Faculty show support while respecting the strike lines? Enter [Solidarity Gremlins](#).

If you've seen our social media posts (as some 10,000 people did last week), you already know: gremlins aren't big, scary monsters. They're mischievous, clever little saboteurs. They don't smash the machinery: they gum it up. They meddle in ways that seem small but add up to real disruption. They remind management that while they may control the levers, we know how to pull the right strings... especially in a time when there's no Support Staff to right the ship.



Solidarity Gremlin (n.)

A mischievous but intentional disruptor who causes small-scale chaos in solidarity with others to support collective action, challenge systems, and build deeper connection. Unlike aimless troublemakers, Solidarity Gremlins disrupt with purpose, always in service of shared goals, mutual aid, or resistance.

It's this spirit we're calling on now: useful meddling, proactive chaos, and deliberate refusal to smooth things over while Support Staff are out on the line. Faculty can embody the gremlin spirit by doing only the work assigned on our Standard Workload Form (SWF) or contract. Nothing more. And for your protection, nothing less.

Think about the power of a gremlin-like act: refusing to log into a system that would normally be set up by Support Staff. Declining to troubleshoot IT problems. Letting the gaps show, rather than plugging them.



It might feel unnatural—after all, many of us are “fixers” by nature. We see a student in need, or an administrative gap, and we step in. But right now, stepping in to cover the work of striking Support Staff only undermines their fight, and by extension, our own. Picking up slack sends management the message that strikes are inconvenient but survivable. If, instead, we resist the urge to patch the holes, then the pressure builds where it belongs: at the bargaining table.

Solidarity doesn't always look like marching with a sign (although that helps too!). Sometimes, it looks like stepping back. Sometimes, it looks like letting a task go undone. Sometimes, it looks like reminding management, through creative non-cooperation, that the system works only because we all do. Even small acts of “proactive chaos” demonstrate solidarity, because they highlight just how essential Support Staff are to the functioning of the college



Solidarity Gremlins on the picket line.



LET THERE BE MEMES! Solidarity Gremlins have become a very popular fixture on the Local 415 socials.

Embrace your inner Solidarity Gremlin. Share the memes. Spread the word. And most importantly, resist the urge to fix what isn't ours to fix. Support Staff are holding the line for us all. The least we can do is let management feel the chaos they've created.



September 17, 2025

Sent via email

Dear President Brulé,

This letter is regarding the recent communication your college sent to OPSEU/SEFPO workers concerning their "professional conduct."

I assure you that college workers are dedicated to professionalism; they take their work seriously and care deeply about the success of their students.

I want to respond to the language your office used regarding "vigilant" surveillance, which does little to bolster the professionalism of Algonquin College.

As you well know, all college workers have a constitutional right to engage in solidarity with their striking colleagues. A heightened security presence will not diminish this right.

Rather than policing your employees, I would encourage you to focus on negotiating a fair contract for full-time support staff. Furthermore, should you wish to take action on your professed commitment to student success, I recommend reversing the dozens of program and service cuts at Algonquin College, which will cause irreparable harm to the surrounding communities.

Sincerely,

JP Hornick
OPSEU/SEFPO President

CC: Tracy Henderson, President, OPSEU/SEFPO Local 415
Christine Kelsey, President, OPSEU/SEFPO Local 416

In a letter dated September 17th 2025, OPSEU/SEFPO President JP. Hornick addresses "policing" communication from Algonquin College to workers:

"I want to respond to the language your office used regarding "vigilant" surveillance, which does little to bolster the professionalism of Algonquin College. As you well know, all college workers have a constitutional right to engage in solidarity with their striking colleagues. A heightened security presence will not diminish this right."

Under Article 4 of the Collective Agreement, employees have the right to a work environment free from harassment and intimidation. The College's own HR22 Respectful Workplace Policy reinforces this promise, stating that all employees should be treated with dignity and respect. Added to this is AD21 Safe to Speak Up, which explicitly commits the College to protect employees from retaliation when raising concerns in good faith. Yet many staff are experiencing the opposite: dismissive attitudes, silenced voices, and situations where speaking up feels unsafe.

When the very safeguards designed to protect employees are disregarded, it erodes trust at its core. This is more than a morale issue; it's a warning sign that affects so many things. Dedicated, skilled staff won't remain where they feel bullied or undervalued. New talent will think twice before joining an institution whose practices don't match its policies. And when employees are disengaged or working in fear, the student experience inevitably suffers.

Awards and glossy marketing cannot hide the truth forever. A workplace is defined not by its press releases, but by how employees feel when they walk through the doors each day. Respect. Fairness. Trust. These are the measures that matter.

Algonquin has a choice to make. It can continue polishing its external image or it can confront the growing disconnect, uphold its own policies, and rebuild trust with its employees. One option sustains a reputation, the other sustains a community.

Because in the end, all that glitters is not gold.

*If you feel harassed or unsafe in your workplace, please reach out to us at
Local 415.*

You are not alone, and your voice deserves to be heard.

All That Glitters Is Not Gold

By Tara Ettinger

For eleven consecutive years, Algonquin College has proudly celebrated being named one of the National Capital Region's Top Employers. On paper, the College touts initiatives that "support" employee well-being and that "foster inclusivity, diversity, equity, and accessibility."

But for those of us working here, we see a very different reality.

In the past two years, the College has strayed even more so from the values that purportedly earned it those accolades. Policies meant to ensure fairness and transparency have been ignored. Recent communications, both before and since the Full-Time Support Staff strike started, have come across less as leadership and more as fearmongering. That is not the Algonquin I have known for over twenty years as both an alumna and employee.

These tactics highlight an even more troubling issue: bullying in the workplace.

NOUSFERATU AT ALGONQUIN COLLEGE

Nous Group was hired a year ago to help Algonquin College in the institutional/strategic planning processes (Board of Directors' Meeting Minutes, October 2024). Who or what is Nous Group? It's an international management consultancy group already notorious in Canadian higher education for restructuring budgets under the guise of "efficiency."

The company has been dubbed "Nousferatu" after the notorious vampire movie; much as vampires drain people of their lifeblood, Nous Group drains the lifeblood of public education.

WHAT LURKS IN THE SHADOWS

The common tactics used by Nous Consulting

"CORPORATIZATION" AND "MANAGERIALISM"

Nous encourages higher education to adopt a corporate-style structure. In short, decision making gets concentrated to senior administration, rather than being distributed across faculty and departments. Central management over shared governance. Managers rather than subject area specialists.

ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL TEMPLATE & BENCHMARKING

Nous applies much the same framework or "template" for all postsecondary environments without attention paid to each institution's unique context. Benchmarks are used to compare faculties and services. Management then can push decisions driven by external comparison over internal academic or community values.

CRISIS NARRATIVES USED TO JUSTIFY CUTS

On the guidance of Nous, AC senior leadership has created a "crisis" narrative. Such alarmism biases decisions toward harmful program and service cuts. Instead of blame being directed at government underfunding, inefficiency within departments justifies austerity actions.

CUTS THAT COMPROMISE ACADEMIC MISSION

Nous often starts with program cuts, quickly eliminating any courses with low enrollment. Lab-based special instruction or unique disciplinary offerings are targeted for cuts or scaling back. Students no longer have access to the same quality or diversity of academic programs.

QUESTIONABLE COST-SAVINGS VS. ACTUAL FUNDING GAPS

Even if all of Nous's efficiency recommendations were implemented, the savings wouldn't close the gap, and the real issue is underfunding at the provincial level. Program cuts are often symbolic; they get attention but don't yield big savings. Curiously, more substantial cost savings available in administration or infrastructure don't make it to Nous recommendations.

FEAR AMONGST ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

Chairs and deans are encouraged to be corporate managers over academic leaders. This leads to more precarity, shorter contract terms, and less focus on faculty life. Nous creates this by-design pressure on managers to make difficult and unpopular cost cuts to save their own positions.

CENTRALIZATION OF NON-ACADEMIC OPERATIONS

While cuts or savings in non-academic/support services are less controversial, critics argue that centralization can reduce flexibility, increase bureaucracy, slow response times, etc. And, these services are still needed, so they are now outsourced and privatized creating even more tiers within the institution.

LACK OF TRANSPARENCY

Major decisions at the college are made without sufficient stakeholder input. The processes are opaque and it is not always clear which recommendations came from Nous vs. what college leadership chooses to adopt.

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Summer Musings: Observations in Austerity From H Building

By Patrick Kostiw

As an off-cycle Full-time Culinary Instructor, I have always been tightly tied to our spring semester program, working with students going all the way back to 2010. This past spring however presented a culmination of circumstances that exposed the mismanagement of the college, leading to smaller numbers of students and empty spaces. The cracks in our program became canyons, and it became very easy to see just how the College Executive Committee's plan for privatization would roll out here at Algonquin College.

Our Culinary program lost Post-Graduate Work Permit status with the federal government, which resulted in abrupt changes to the student visa program. As a result, a significant financial tap for our program was shut off. In addition, years of cutbacks to our courses in terms of quality, quantity, and variety of food products has left a vastly different program from that of 2015 when I was hired full-time. This has resulted in a Culinary program at Algonquin College that is no longer as highly regarded in the culinary community as it once was.

The culmination of these issues came to an obvious head in the spring of 2024. The pivot away from International student enrollment came too late and years of increased cost control measures had ruined our once sterling reputation with domestic students. This left the halls empty and the labs quiet.

On the upside, for the students on campus from our January intake, a wonderful time was had; every piece of equipment was always available, the change rooms were never crowded, there were no line ups at the photo copier, and the washrooms were always clean. But there was also a substantial lack of differing perspectives. I was the only chef teaching most courses, so students were denied the professorial variety normally offered in our program.

For me, the lack of collegial interaction with other faculty members was noticeable. Our paths rarely crossed, so any discussions on how to bring the program back to life were sparse. I kept thinking, if I was a manager, I would be walking around with my head clucking like a chicken saying 'efficiencies, efficiencies' trying to find solutions.

Do not be fooled. Management is not clucking like chickens because the plan is already in place. Every empty space or cost-saving encountered in operating a program is further evidence of the Doug Ford solution of shrinking colleges and renting the space out to private enterprise. The recently cut Hairstyling and Esthetician programs will no doubt be rented to a colouring firm to privately train staff. 'Privatize, privatize' is the mantra.

It is not just smaller colleges that need to worry; it is any program in the system that has an "extra cost" associated with its operation. My advice is to get on campus and voice your opinion to management every time you can to protect all programs. I used to joke that the administration would love a college with no students or faculty, and now I believe they have found a way to do just that by becoming landlords.



A lonely campus guide table sits empty as Support Staff walk the picket line. Students have been promised that few disruptions would occur from the strike, however countless food services, events, and supports have been suspended.

Meanwhile, the College Executive Committee continues to reject bargaining in good faith.

Humanity Matters – Hope Remains

By Judy Puritt

In one of my Comms classes in Week 4, we had a phenomenal guest speaker from Global Affairs. The speaker, a senior deputy director of client engagement at Global Affairs, shared some lived-experience wisdom and suggested actions students could take to live authentic lives. The talk was grounded in being human, bringing your humanity to a conversation, and not shying away from hard conversations. We were all fully captivated, and it reminded me about my approach to activism within the Local.

And, of course, the current reality is that public postsecondary education is in a tough season in Ontario, and across the country. Chronic provincial underfunding, poor institutionally led fiscal management of funds, federal immigration changes to end the excessive abuse around international student dollars, linked with a not-quite-recession-shrinking-economy, mean colleges and public education is at great risk. The vulnerability for those working in the sector is significant – we've seen the cut programs, the departed colleagues, the uncertain students.

Throughout 2025, your Local reps have been engaged in numerous dialogues with senior college administrators and with teams across the province. Not all of the conversations have been agreeable, remotely pleasant, or led to mutually agreeable outcomes.

What I can promise, without any hesitation, is that I, along with the rest of your Local leadership team, stand for faculty. If you reach out to me with a question, I promise that you will hear the truth. I won't duck a conversation, and I won't mislead you with my responses.



Yes, there are times where confidentiality makes conversations sound evasive. There have been times when we can't initiate a conversation and have to wait for faculty members to come and ask us to clarify a situation. But even under those dark clouds, I tell members that they need to do what's best for them. We all have different realities, and based on them, we need to consider and reflect on how to manage the current crisis. In all cases, my goal is to deliver the truth – positive or negative.

Through it all, I know I teach and work at the college because I believe in public education. A deep love of learning and desire to provide foundational communication skills to students in our rapidly evolving world is core to my teaching, coordinating, and working as your First VP.

I don't have all the answers, but I am willing to dig for answers, and I will bring my honest, ethical self to our dialogue. Hope remains core to my outlook for the future—a hope that includes public institutions like public education. Send me a quick email and we'll chat; we might each learn something, and at least, we'll have connected.

Stronger Together: Building a Collective Agreement for all Faculty

By Gabriela Lopez

For over four decades, part-time college workers in Ontario were prohibited from unionizing by the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act (CCBA). In 2008, the Province was forced to amend the CCBA following the [2007 Supreme Court of Canada decision](#), which recognized collective bargaining as a constitutional right.

The vote to become unionized took place in 2017. In June 2025, the Part-time/Sessional (PT/SL) Bargaining Team and the Divisional Executive, seven and five members respectively, were elected. The team includes part-time professors teaching this semester, as well as professors with no hours this semester. Some are working at more than one college, and some have lost their programs altogether. We all know what it feels like to wait and wonder if there will be a contract before the term begins, and we've felt how little recognition there is for the time we put into teaching without the protection of a collective agreement. Now, our team is about to negotiate the very first collective agreement for the CAAT-A Part-time and Sessional Division –and that's something worth celebrating!

We are optimistic because the Full Time division has been through bargaining cycles, a strike vote, and work action, and we can learn from their experiences. However, the voice and knowledge of the PT/SL Faculty are essential as we begin the critical work of building our first collective agreement

We need to hear from our PT/SL colleagues about their thoughts on employment security, precarious work, wages, workload, equity, academic freedom, union representation, and other topics. I invite all PT/SL Faculty to complete the Demand Survey that the Bargaining Team launched on September 23rd. Your participation will lay a strong foundation for future rounds of bargaining that reflect your priorities, experiences, and values. The survey is available in [English](#) and [French](#), is anonymous, and takes only a few minutes to complete using the respondent's preferred device. The survey will stay open until Monday, October 13th, 2025.

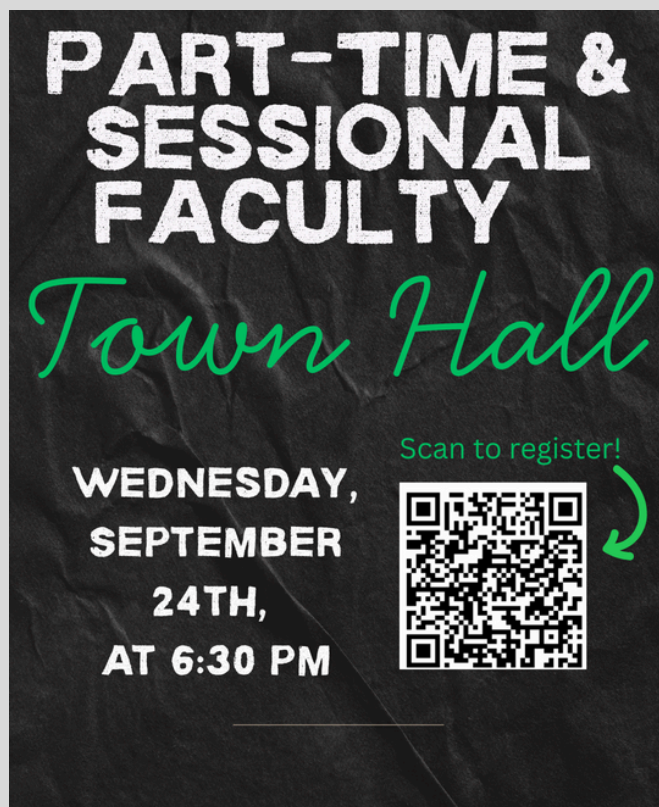
After, the Bargaining Team gathers member demands, analyzes them, drafts proposals, and presents them to the members at the final demand meeting. The team will then develop proposals from those demands to be tabled during bargaining.

I am excited and honoured to have the opportunity to represent my colleagues in the PT/SL Faculty Division. All faculty (full-time, partial-load, part-time and sessional) strengthen our union as a whole. There is power in numbers, and although things are challenging, we are STRONGER together.

You can contact us with questions or comments:

PT/SL Bargaining Team: ptbargaining2025@gmail.com

PT/SL Divisional Executive: facultyptdivex@gmail.com



The Part-Time and Sessional Faculty Town Hall took place on September 24th and was very well attended.

“Hi, I’m Amy From Algonquin”: Making Connections One Person at a Time

By Amy Simoneau

Change doesn’t happen because of one person—it takes all of us, working together. When everyone pitches in, community organizing becomes easier and more meaningful.

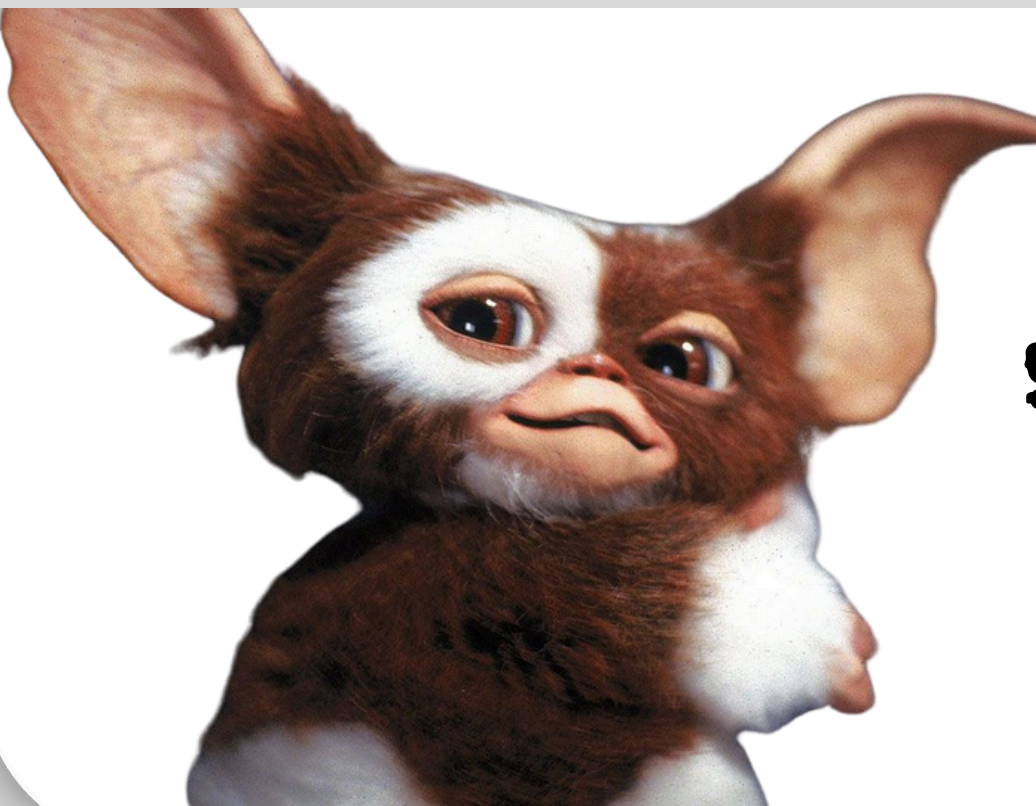
I’m not a union steward nor am I even particularly political most of the time, but the escalating threats to our college system had become difficult to ignore. It was time to step up and help.

It was simple – I just started reaching out to people. I began by introducing myself as a colleague – “Amy from Algonquin” – then asked whether they’d heard of the Save Our Colleges campaign. If they had, I asked what they’d heard. If not, I summed up the threat in two sentences: “The college sector has laid off 10,000 positions provincially. It’s one of the biggest mass layoffs in Ontario history, but it’s happening quietly.” Then I briefly described the campaign and asked for their support by wearing a button on September 4th. If they said yes, I thanked them... then asked for a little more: to spread the word in the community and encourage their colleagues to join in.



While I leaned on some of the skills I teach as a Communications professor – phone and text etiquette, keeping a message clear and focused, and using basic persuasive techniques – anyone could have done the same. What made my effort successful was persistence and the willingness of the Local’s membership to keep saying yes.

I’m proud of how Algonquin responded. Your overwhelming support shows we’re ready for change, and if we all stand together, we can make it happen.



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