

# Examiner Bargaining Update

<http://www.opseu240.ca/>

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## The Offer

Make no mistake, this is a horrible offer. The Bargaining Team unanimously rejected this offer, as did all 24 Local Presidents, the entire Divisional Executive, and all 32 members of the Bargaining Advisory Committee. This isn't just a couple of "radical unionists" spoiling for a fight. This is the entire leadership of the division and all of the people specifically tasked to understand our Collective Agreement and to bargain most effectively in the interests of college faculty.

*So, why is the offer so bad?*

### 1. Four Years

First, it is four years. We have traditionally signed two or three year deals. A four-year agreement locks in our terms of work for a long duration and doesn't enable us to bargain modifications should important external factors change - such as election outcomes or broader economic trends. The Union generally wants a shorter deal to enable this flexibility and responsiveness, while the employer wants a longer deal. A four-year deal is a clear win for the employer.

### 2. Insufficient Money

Second, the money is not great. An average of 1.75% per year might barely offset inflation, or it might see us lagging behind, should predicted increases in inflation occur in the coming years. The money is also less than was offered to college support workers in their four-year contract extension. If this is an attempted buy-off, then it is a lousy one, and one that will do nothing to move our salary closer to where it should be - at the mid-point between high school teachers and university faculty.

### 3. Major Concessions

Third, the deal includes two major concessions:

#### ***Extension of the Article 2 Moratorium***

The first concession is that the deal would continue the moratorium on Articles 2.02 and 2.03A of the Collective Agreement. These are the only Articles in our CA that allow us to pressure the college to hire full time over non-full-time faculty. Through filing staffing grievances based on these articles, several locals have been successful in adding hundreds of new full-time hires. Without the ability to file staffing grievances, we will see the system-wide ratio of non-full-time to full-time grow even worse. We are currently at 70% non-full-time to 30% full-time. With another four-year freeze on Article 2, we may very well be at 80% to 20%. The current ratio of non-full-time to full-time is unsustainable. 80 / 20 would be catastrophic.

The moratorium extension will hurt all faculty. Partial load members will see four more years of reduced hiring and four more years in which the goal of a full-time job becomes increasingly distant. This is unfair to our highly qualified and experienced partial load faculty who are rightfully expecting full-time employment.

Full-time faculty will see more precarious, contract workers. They will be expected to work well beyond the SWF to do a growing amount of full-time work (course development, course revision, co-ordination, departmental committees), with fewer full-time faculty left to do it.

If the number of full-time faculty continues to drop, it can also threaten the viability of our pensions. Right now, our plan is stable, but at 25% or 20% full time faculty, we may see increased pension contributions.

## **"Revenue Neutral" Clause Concerning Bill 148**

In Bill 148, the provincial Liberal government has tabled legislation that is designed to improve the working conditions of part-time employees, province-wide. The Bill will lead to improvements in the conditions of our partial load members, which the union fully supports, and which is reflected in proposals we have tabled during bargaining. The colleges are clearly panicking about the expense implications of this equity Bill, which would necessitate changes to our Collective Agreement that improve the pay and benefits of partial load faculty. In an underhanded attempt to turn equity into a zero-sum game, the employer has included a condition in their current offer that any CA changes due to Bill 148 must be "revenue neutral". This means that any gains for partial load would need to be offset by take-aways from full-time.

Again, this take-away has impacts for all faculty. For partial load, it means that potential changes from Bill 148 will be blunted, and that any long-overdue improvements they experience will be used to pit them against full-time faculty. For full-time, it means that they will take a direct hit, as concessions are used to fund improvements for non-full-time.

### **It Ignores Our Issues / It Assumes the Status Quo is Acceptable**

By far the most important reason why this offer is unacceptable, and why it needs to be firmly rejected by our membership, is that it does absolutely nothing to address the important issues faced by college faculty.

The employer offer does nothing to address the lack of faculty academic freedom and intellectual property protection. Without changes in these areas, faculty will continue to see their work stripped from their hands, privatized, and outsourced. Faculty will continue to be marginalized from academic decision-making and be forced to develop, deliver, and evaluate courses based on the bottom-line, not on their expertise and educational outcomes. At Mohawk we have seen what a lack of academic freedom brings. With academic freedom, the debacle that was Blended Learning would never have occurred, and online technologies would have been rolled out through faculty initiative, with proper institutional support, and in ways that make academic sense.

The employer offer also does nothing for our partial load members. For too long the important issues of partial load have been swept aside by the employer. Our contract faculty need real job security, improved pay and benefits, and pathways to full-time employment. We need to reverse the downward spiral of precarious academic work within Ontario colleges, and to establish a ratio of full-time to non-full-time that enables the quality of education to be maintained.

### **Now is the Time to Stand Up, Not to Roll Over!**

The employer is hoping that college faculty will forego bargaining and simply "roll over" our agreement - with the addition of major takeaways. They are hoping that full-time faculty will see a small wage increase and jump at it, while throwing partial load and students under the bus. They are betting that our members will fail to see the opportunity before us to make real gains on the critical issues that we face - issues that we have strong public support for.

That's what the College Council and their high-priced lawyers, Hicks-Morley, are hoping for, but it is the opinion of Local 240 that the employer is dreaming in technicolor. They have seriously underestimated our full-time members, and the commitment they have to fairness for all faculty. They have seriously underestimated our partial load members, and their commitment to the quality of college education. Finally, they have seriously underestimated the due diligence and commitment of our Bargaining Team, our Bargaining Advisory Council, and our divisional leadership.

Instead of "rolling over" we need to send a strong message to the employer that we're serious about our issues. We need to send the team back to the table with a strong strike vote, and a mandate to truly move faculty, and the college system, forward.