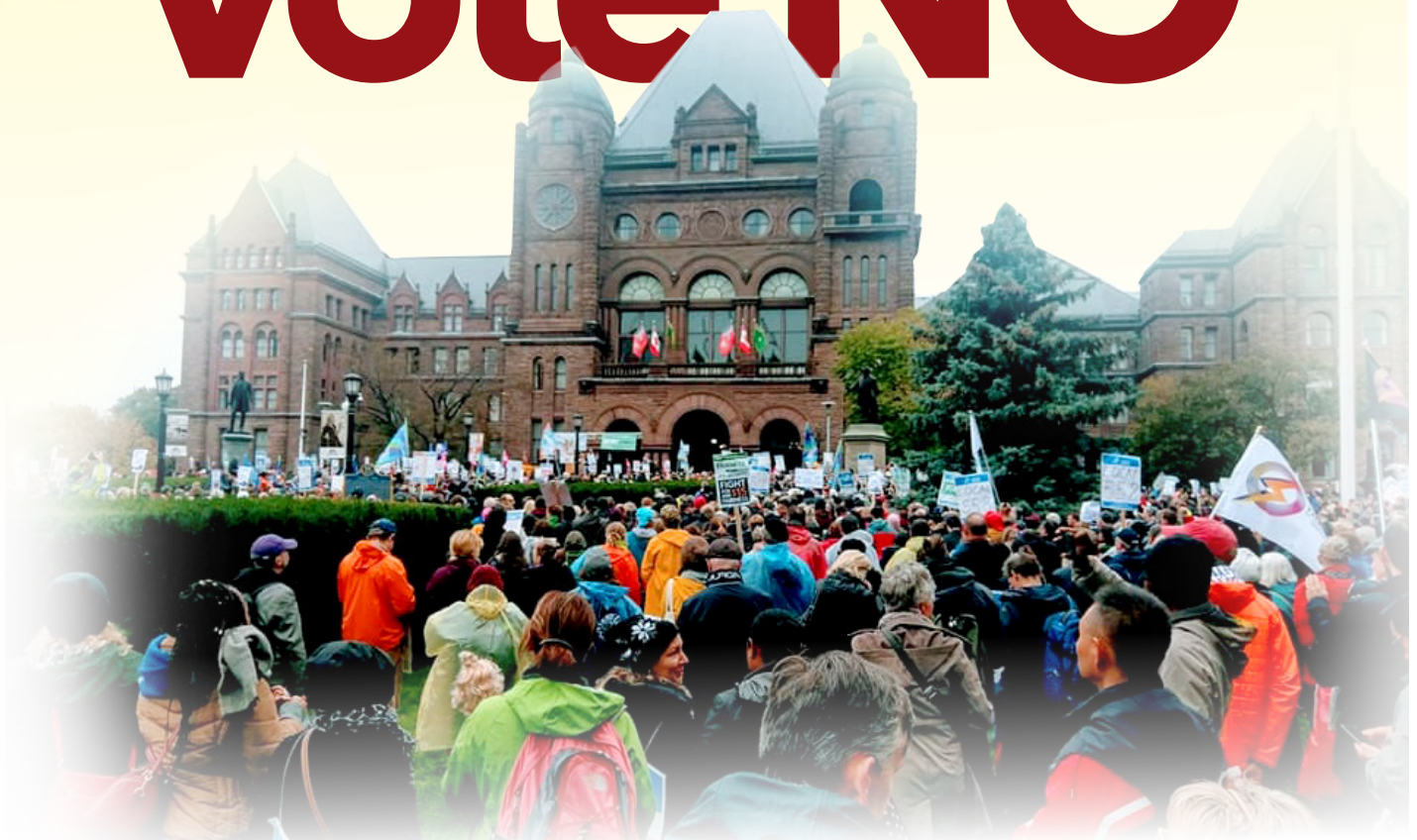


Vote NO



Fight off concessions and win academic freedom - reject the colleges' offer

College faculty will vote on the College Employer Council's so-called "final" offer November 14 to 16, the Ontario Labour Relations Board has ordered.

Under the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, the employer can force a vote on its offer any time after 15 days before the collective agreement expires. But it can only do it once - this is Council's one and only chance to avoid a negotiated settlement.

It is absolutely critical that faculty vote **NO** to this offer. Your bargaining team remains committed to getting a deal and getting students back in the classroom as quickly as possible. But that deal must be a negotiated deal - one that is acceptable to both sides.

For faculty, an acceptable deal means one that addresses our issues related to education quality for our students and fairness for all faculty.

What happened?

We fully understand your frustration with recent events. Here's what has happened in recent days.

Last week, the mediator called the two sides back to the table at Council's request. Negotiations resumed on Thursday, November 2 and continued over the weekend. We started essentially where we had left off just before the strike began. Over the three days, we slowly started to see some progress. We modified our stance on some issues, and Council indicated that they were willing to remove some of the concessions they had been demanding.

A significant gain made by the team, with the help and cooperation of the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development, was the agreement to establish a Provincial Task Force on a number of key issues with a significant dollar cost. The task force would examine these issues and make recommendations, by May 18, on staffing complement (the 50-50 full-time/partial load issue), precarious work, and collegial governance. All recommendations from the Task Force will be brought to Cabinet for funding consideration.

As of Sunday night, November 5, the only significant issues left on the table were Council's remaining concessions and the no-cost issue of academic freedom. Your union bargaining team felt that a deal could be reached by Monday morning. Instead, Council came to the table Monday morning and refused to engage in any further negotiations. The offer they tabled added even more concessions.

Then they told us they had contacted the OLRB to schedule a forced-offer vote.

A forced-offer vote was always a possibility, but we had hoped Council would not be so callous as to jeopardize the semester, if not the whole academic year, for students and faculty alike.

Council and the college presidents who advise them are showing complete disregard for how their behavior impacts students and faculty.

What are the vote details?

The vote will be an electronic vote. Faculty will be able to begin voting online at 9 a.m. EST Tuesday, November 14 and voting will end at 10 a.m. EST on Thursday, November 16.

All faculty are eligible to vote. An independent company hired by the OLRB will send an email to your college email address. This email will contain all the details you will need to vote.

Please note that checking your college email for this reason is NOT strikebreaking. You are not checking your email to go to work; you are only checking it to be able to exercise your democratic right to vote.

The OLRB will announce the vote results on Thursday, November 16.





Will we stay out on strike during the vote?

Yes. There is no other option.

We must continue to stand together in solidarity. Practically speaking, the union cannot call off a strike when there is no negotiated agreement and no return-to-work agreement. To go back to work and run classes for a week or two while voting logistics are worked out would remove all pressure on the colleges. We all want to be back in the classroom and helping our students, but those would be terrible circumstances under which to return.

Council's demand that faculty suspend the strike while waiting for the vote to be held is a public relations strategy: it allows the employer to accuse the union of prolonging the strike. But make no mistake, they are the ones prolonging it.

This could have been wrapped up today had they been willing to negotiate in good faith. If they were going to do a forced offer vote, the time to do that was weeks ago, when they first had the opportunity, not now.

Is this really just about academic freedom?

No. Council's offer also contains serious concessions, detailed below.

Academic freedom is all about faculty making academic decisions for our courses and for the benefit of our students. That includes having a say in evaluation methods, delivery methods, final marks, textbook selection, course design, content, and research. Currently, management has all the final decision making power, and there is no way to challenge this except by including this language in our collective agreement.

Some faculty do get to make some of these decisions, but it is important to remember this is always at the whim of management. Faculty's professional opinion on academic matters – and grades – can be overridden at any time and for any reason by a supervisor. There are many cases where managers apply pressure to change final grades, and others where final grades have been changed without the professor's knowledge and outside of any formal grade appeal. Faculty input into academic decision-making has eroded to the point where faculty have no real input into delivery modes (online, hybrid, etc...), pre-requisites and co-requisites, or even weekly outlines.

Evaluation factors on SWFs are often changed arbitrarily. Faculty have been directed to switch to automated tests in many courses. These decisions should not be exclusively in the hands of management. Academic managers often have no prior background in education or teaching experience, and they are not experts in, or even knowledgeable about, the subject matter being taught. The bottom line is that the integrity of programs is being compromised.

The faculty team's proposal is clear: we are not asking for exclusive and absolute control, but we do need a meaningful say in these matters. As it stands, administrators are the ones with exclusive control.

Doesn't the employer's offer address academic freedom?



No. The employer's letter of understanding entitled "Academic Freedom" is actually a reiteration in large part of the harassment language already existing in the collective agreement. In addition, this letter of understanding specifies that all 24 colleges must have a college-specific policy on academic freedom. However, these policies largely already exist and have given rise to the very problems we are trying to address this in this round of bargaining. These policies would create more restrictions on us than we currently have. This letter does nothing to address our role in academic decision making in our own courses and undermines any role we do have.

What concessions are in the offer?

The employer's offer is aimed at weakening the very articles that faculty have been on strike over for the last three weeks. As written:

- it weakens Article 2 by explicitly excluding part-time faculty work and therefore removes limits on the colleges' use of part-time rather than full-time employees, and
- it weakens Article 2 by removing the conversion language for sessional employees (article 2.03C), creating one less pathway to more full-time jobs;

The addition of new articles 2.04 and 2.05 in Council's offer is a clear attempt to do an end run around Bill 148, the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act. Bill 148 will mandate equal pay for equal work for people doing the same work regardless of their employment status. Articles 2.04 and 2.05 are designed to draw a hard line between partial-load and full-time work so that partial-load faculty are not able to achieve equal pay for equal work.

A number of other changes the employer has proposed are significant takeaways for faculty as well:

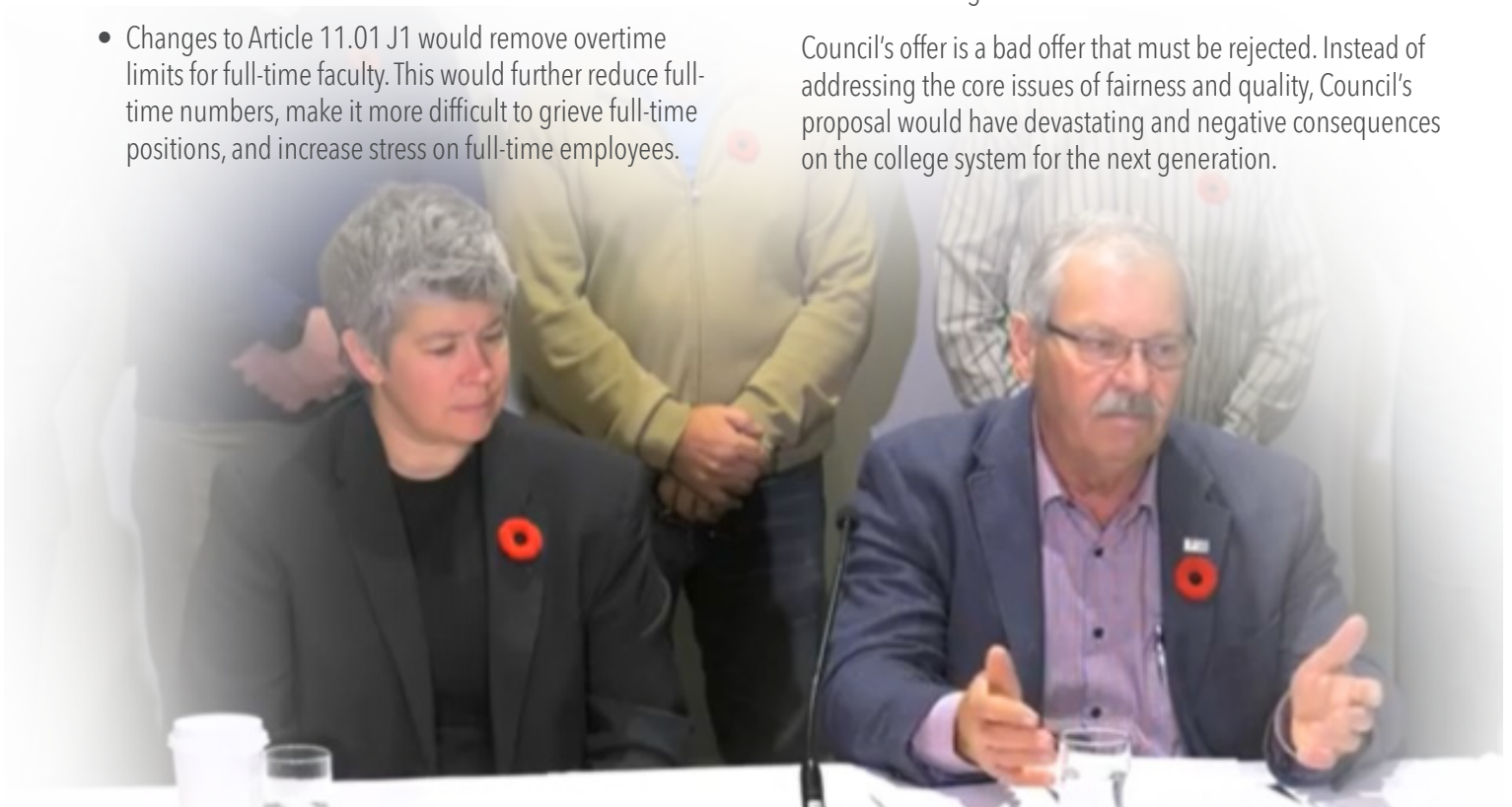
- Changes to Article 11.01 J1 would remove overtime limits for full-time faculty. This would further reduce full-time numbers, make it more difficult to grieve full-time positions, and increase stress on full-time employees.

- A change to 11.01 B1 would remove the maximum number of weeks a teacher could teach.
- A change to 11.01 D3 would remove the provision to give SWF credit for curriculum development completed in a non-teaching period.
- The employer's offer (11.01 H3 and 11.04 B3) would increase management control over faculty professional development and lessen faculty input into it.

The union's proposal enshrines academic freedom into the collective agreement and clearly identifies our rights, responsibilities and limits within the article. Management's proposal on this is to have a letter of understanding that needs to be renewed in subsequent collective agreements. Their language enshrines inequity between faculty teaching at different colleges.

The employer's offer also includes the same deeply flawed Return-to-Work protocol that saw over 1,400 unresolved grievances from the 2006 strike. That protocol was so flawed that faculty members were not paid for additional overtime worked following the strike.

Council's offer is a bad offer that must be rejected. Instead of addressing the core issues of fairness and quality, Council's proposal would have devastating and negative consequences on the college system for the next generation.

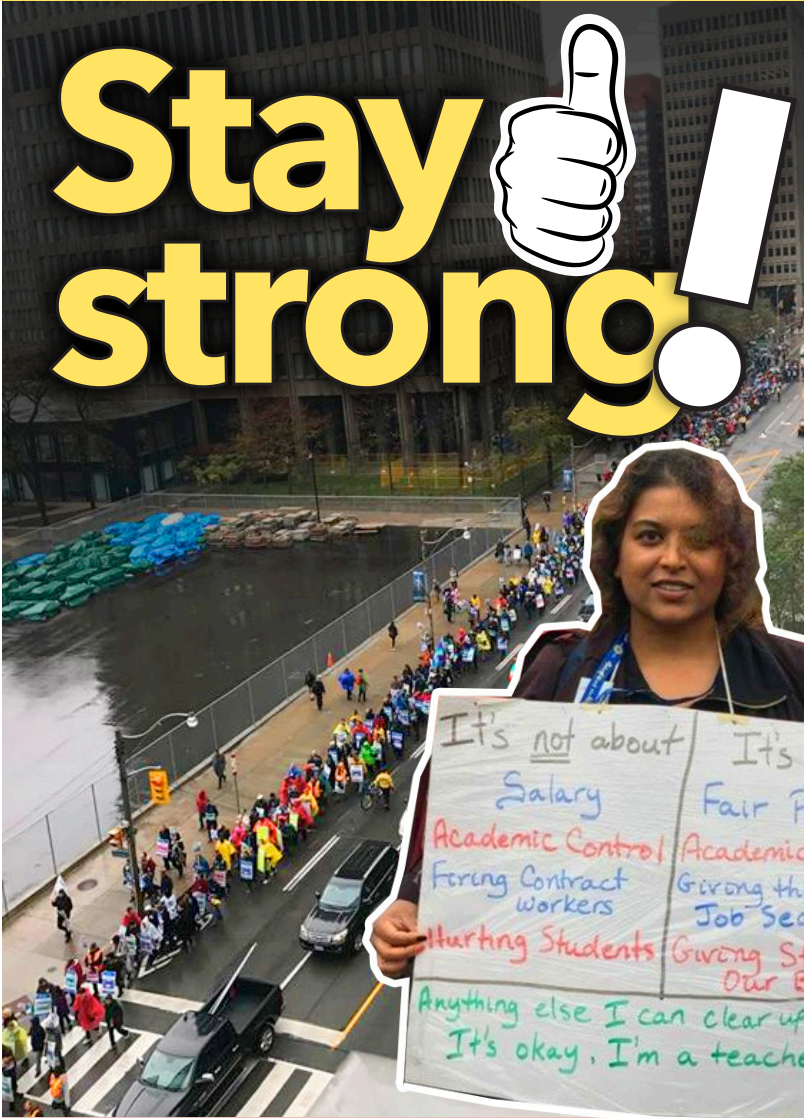


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Stay strong!



There is still a chance to get a solution at the table, and no matter where you are in Ontario you can help us do it. Keep up the pressure! Contact your college presidents; Don Sinclair, CEO of the College Council; your MPP; the Premier; and Advanced Education Minister Deb Matthews. Tell them to use their influence to get Council back to the table.

There was no reason for the Council to walk away from the table. There is no reason to prolong the strike other than sheer mean-spirited bullying.

If we stand together now we will show them we are stronger than ever and we will win this. Your team appreciates your support and is resolved to see this round of bargaining through to the end. We are all in this together: college faculty, teachers, university faculty, students, and contract workers everywhere.

In solidarity,

Your college faculty bargaining team

Do you have a question about the strike?

Call our Strike Hotline at **1-844-661-5433** visit: www.collegefaculty.org

Contact us by email at collegefacultystrike@opseu.org



#Standwithfaculty

Do you have a picket line story and/or photos to contribute to *On the Line*? Email Emily Visser at evisser@opseu.org

To contact your CAAT-A bargaining team, please write to: bargaining2017@gmail.com

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