

May 5, 2020

To All Ontario College Support Staff Members, Full-Time and Part-Time:

We hope you are well. These are unprecedented times for our Division. Many colleges have already begun layoffs. We have an urgent decision to make, and we need your help. We are extremely sorry for the rush, but we wanted to do this as democratically as possible.

Council has approached OPSEU and invited us to discuss a proposal that would allow temporary layoffs for Regular Part-Time and Full-Time Support Staff, without bumping, with improved access to return to your own job, and for full-time employees, the ability to continue your benefits with no or little additional cost. We need to decide whether to accept this invitation. Your Local Presidents overwhelmingly voted today to give that decision to you.

Your FT Divisional Executive and Employee Employer Relations Committee have elected a delegation including Mike McKeown of Durham, Connie Collins of St. Clair and Bob Holder of Niagara, to attend the meeting with Council. They will be joined by three delegates from the PT EERC. They will begin preparing immediately, just in case you say YES, so no time is wasted.

The Question

Should a delegation from our Bargaining Team / EERC accept the invitation from Council to discuss a short-term, temporary layoff process in return for enhanced entitlements for the laid off employees?

CON

Our full-time layoff language is very strong. The bumping process alone might delay efforts of the College to minimize costs during COVID-19. Layoffs and bumping are permanent in both our FT and PT Agreements, and the result of layoffs will be wide displacement and relocation of staff throughout the college. When the COVID-19 threat is over, we will be recalled, by seniority, as jobs return, but not necessarily back to the work we were doing before COVID-19. For these reasons, many colleges have continued paying support staff who are not currently working. Allowing temporary layoffs may make it easier for colleges to lay people off without completely disrupting their staffing. In addition, a furlough on bumping will mean that employees with less seniority may continue working, while those with more seniority are laid off. We must rely on our trusted language and not rush to change it during an emergency.

PRO

COVID-19 restrictions are lasting longer than the parties originally planned, and there will no doubt be layoffs of full-time and regular part-time employees. How many will depend on your college's financial situation and how long the social distancing restrictions need to remain in force. The Council prediction is 40-60% of our bargaining unit. Even if your college is healthy, management must be responsible to the tax payers, and right now, many tax payers are out of work. It is critical that we take this chance to enhance members rights while laid off, to protect them and to minimize bumping and displacement. In addition, our PT have only nine months of recall rights, and our FT, either 12 or 18 months. If COVID-19 restrictions are followed by serious budget restrictions, these members may lose their right to return to their jobs, something we could possibly protect with an agreement. We should always aim to raise the standards for the most vulnerable members of our group.

What Should We Do?

Please attend your General Membership Meeting and let us know! Meetings will take place across the province and we will let you know the results after Wednesday afternoon. The decision will be made based on a majority of those voting. If we send a delegation, and a tentative agreement is reached or within reach, the delegation will consult with all members through their local presidents, again, for approval before signing. It will be a quick turn-around, but you will get a final say.

In Solidarity,
Janice Hagan, Chair,
College Support Staff Divisional Executive