

NEWS RELEASE / COMMUNIQUÉ

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OPSEU has solution to avoid province-wide College strike

TORONTO – The union representing faculty members at 24 Ontario colleges has proposed a solution to avert a potential province-wide strike.

Today, the union announced a strike deadline of February 11, 2010 if the parties cannot reach a settlement on a new collective agreement.

However, Ted Montgomery, chair of the OPSEU bargaining team for the faculty, says that the union is willing to send all outstanding issues to binding arbitration if a settlement cannot be reached. If that happens, a strike can be avoided.

“First and foremost, we want to reach a negotiated settlement,” Montgomery said. “If the Colleges won’t bargain that, we are willing to send all our outstanding issues to binding arbitration. The Colleges, however, must agree.”

Montgomery says that while issues surrounding workload and academic freedom are of paramount importance, the union is also taking into account the impact on students if there is a strike.

“We have a solution if the Colleges are serious about addressing our issues,” Montgomery said. “If they don’t want to negotiate in good faith or use the arbitration process, then it will be clear whose interests they are putting first...and it isn’t the students’.”

OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas says that while he is ready to back his members with the full weight of the union, a strike is not in everyone’s best interest.

“Even the Premier wants these negotiations resolved so that the education of Ontario students isn’t compromised,” Thomas said. “Our members are serious about backing their demands, but I believe that a solution can be reached. It’s up to the Colleges now.”

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