

# Contract support staff ratify first OSPEU contract after 14 years

**Druv Sareen**  
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Part-time support staff across Ontario's 24 colleges voted on Feb. 21 to ratify a deal between the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and the College Employer Council (CEC).

This deal is the first regarding part-time support staff on campuses. Under this deal, part-time support staff will see a 3 per cent pay increase over two years, seniority, consideration for full-time openings and a shift premium.

Part-time support staff include those who work a maximum of 24 hours per week. Support staff work for academic services like the registrar's office and financial aid.

OPSEU described its 14-year struggle to organize the 20,000 part-timers, about half who are students, as the largest in Canadian labour history.

CEO of the CEC Don Sinclair anticipated the deal to be ratified at the Feb 21 vote.

"I think it achieves a number of objectives for the union and also achieves a number of objectives for the colleges" Sinclair said. "It will provide a consistent terms and



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Part-time support staff have joined the Ontario Public Service Employees Union after 14 year battle. A majority of members are students.

conditions of employment over the 24 entities."

He views the deal positively. The deal took 40 days of bargaining over nine months to reach, Sinclair said.

"It also will maintain our regional flexibility to maintain services for students and also also maintain those job opportunities for students," he said. "I think overall it was a win-win."

The bargaining team, however,

viewed the process differently.

"The CEC wants to keep everybody in the dark," said Duncan McFarlane, vice-chair of the bargaining team and from Algonquin College in Ottawa. "That's my opinion."

"The CEC, they don't want to give us rights," he said. "They want the status quo. That was probably something that we heard every single time we met with them."

Humber's Local 563 Vice-President Bill Townsend has his own issues with the deal.

"I think that there's some serious deficiencies in the language and that there's some stuff that they should look at again, but to do so they're going to have to go back to the bargaining table," Townsend said.

Marlee Greig, a Humber contract support staff, said they believe the deal doesn't address the right issues

facing campuses.

"The union contract does not address the fact that en mass, post-secondary institutions are only hiring part-time workers," Greig said.

"They're hiring all these administrative people who make really good money, and they are good jobs, but they aren't hiring people to be in classrooms with students."

## Pay-What-You-Can soup bar's future is uncertain as province rejigs funding

**Patrick Simpson**  
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Dave Hunsburger used a ladle to pour hot soup into a bowl for a student at Humber College's LinX Lounge soup bar, something he does hundreds of times a week.

It's a Pay-What-You-Can service that provides an alternative to the higher priced campus cafeterias and restaurants. And with about 54 per cent of Humber students needing grants to attend school, it's an affordable option for lunch.

The program — supported by IGNITE that has so far fed about 4,200 people since it opened in the LinX Lounge last fall — remains unclear. The Doug Ford provincial government announced last month it intends to make a number of cuts to post-secondary school funding — including the elimination of free tuition for students coming from low-income families.

And some student union fees — which help fund the soup bar — would be optional.

Ford stated in a fundraising email to party members that the government needs their help to battle radical student unions. "I think we all know what kind of crazy Marxist nonsense student unions get up to. So, we fixed that. Student union fees are now opt-in," the email read.

The proposed cuts to student fees

won't immediately affect the running of the soup bar, it's future isn't clear.

Hunsburger said while he hadn't heard of the cuts that could affect the operation of the soup bar, he said the program will continue to be in place for the rest of this year.

He said if Humber is forced to make the cut that may impact students' lives.

"My fear would be that we can't do this anymore and people would not be eating lunch properly and it would impact real people's lives," he said.

However, Hunsburger said that the program will find a way to keep the soup bar going.

The option of having a cheaper alternative at lunch benefits many students, said Hunsburger, one of the managers of the bar. He said the goal of the soup bar is to feed as many people as possible.

He's been volunteering at the soup bar since it opened and has been a volunteer at the bar's founding company, Feed it Forward, for about two years.

While the soup bar services about 200 people during the two days a week they're open, Hunsburger they've had some trouble creating enough awareness among the larger part of Humber's North campus.

"We're in a lovely area, the LinX Lounge, but it is out of the way," he



PATRICK SIMPSON

Feed It Forward volunteer Dave Hunsburger serves up a hot lunch to a student at the LinX Lounge Soup Bar.

said.

"So I think they're [IGNITE] trying to improve the signage and I think a couple weeks ago they gave away soup over by the IGNITE office to try and publicize the fact that we exist," Hunsburger said.

He said in the future they're thinking of expanding the nonprofit business and possibly start servicing up soup lunches more than two days a week.

Evan Lam, a first-year Recreation and Leisure Services student, said the proposed provincial cuts would affect him because the soup bar is a cheap alternative to the more ex-

pensive food on campus.

"I think it would affect me because sometimes I personally don't like eating on campus because the food is really expensive," Lam said.

Regina Alcantara, a second-year Behavioral Science student, goes to the soup bar twice a month and said the bar helps out people who are in need.

"Some people they can't afford lunch and it just helps them get some nutrition," she said.

Valentina Palacio, a second-year General Arts and Science student, said while she doesn't use it much anymore, she counted on the ser-

vice on it as a free lunch last semester.

"I don't use it as much anymore but last semester it would have affected me because I counted on having a free lunch or a \$2 lunch," Palacio said.

Hunsburger said the program would remain. Somehow.

"If push came to shove we want this to continue," he said. "We would somehow do what needs to be done to make sure that we don't go away because of some silly cuts."

"I would give assurance to the people that rely on us for lunch, we're going to be there," he said.