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**Ontario full-time college support staff reach tentative agreement after nearly five weeks of strike action**

**Toronto, ON –** After nearly five weeks on strike, full-time college support staff, represented by OPSEU/SEFPO, have reached a tentative agreement for more than 10,000 workers across all 24 Ontario colleges.

“After months of intensive negotiations with an incredibly difficult employer, the gains made in this agreement would not have been possible without members holding strong these last weeks,” said Christine Kelsey, chair of the union’s bargaining team. “We had no choice but to fight back amidst a plan to privatize public education, as well as 10,000 job losses and over 650 program cuts across the system.”

Picket lines will come down today, and the details of the tentative settlement will be presented to members this afternoon. Support staff are scheduled to return to work Thursday, October 16.

“Full-time college support staff took on a tremendous fight, and I’m incredibly proud of our members for getting us to this moment,” said JP Hornick, President of OPSEU/SEFPO.  “Now, we need to keep building on that momentum and show Ontario what is possible when working people stand together.”

“We’ve won more than a contract,” added Kelsey. “After being out in our communities, day after day, the public now understands that our college system is being deliberately defunded as part of the collateral of Ford’s devastating privatization agenda.”

Corporate college audits, commissioned by the Ford government at a cost of $15 million, paint an alarming vision for Ontario’s colleges – including plans for further cutbacks, [automation, outsourcing, and mergers](https://www.thestar.com/news/gta/outsource-automate-and-merge-reports-reveal-what-kind-of-ontario-college-job-losses-and-program/article_f53b7698-4903-4d77-8020-a4a84273c571.html).

OPSEU/SEFPO was [early to sound the alarm](https://opseu.org/news/opseu-sefpo-sounds-alarm-on-accelerated-agenda-to-gut-public-education-through-fords-2-5-billion-unaccountable-spending-spree-via-the-skills-development-fund/279352/) over the Ford government’s misuse of the Skills Development Fund (SDF) for multi-million dollar corporate handouts, including to companies delivering private, low-quality training without measurable outcomes. It’s money, the union says, that could keep college campuses, services, and programs open and staffed.

In fact, nearly half a billion dollars went to lower ranked applicants – by the union’s projections, enough to have prevented college cuts to programs and staff for over a year while the system adjusted to international student drop-offs and stabilized.

Recent reports have [linked SDF recipients to lobby firms](https://www.thetrillium.ca/news/politics/clients-of-lobby-firms-connected-to-premier-his-nephew-given-tens-of-millions-in-training-funds-11312462) connected to everyone from [Amin Massoudi](https://www.ctvnews.ca/toronto/politics/queens-park/article/something-doesnt-smell-right-100-million-in-skills-development-fund-grants-traced-to-lobbyists-with-ties-to-ontario-premier/) (who chaired Ford’s 2022 re-election campaign), to Progressive Conservative Party president Michael Diamond (who directed Ford’s successful 2018 leadership bid), and even Michael Ford, the Premier’s nephew.

“We’re going to keep exposing Ford’s web of corporate buddies and corrupt backroom deals,” said Hornick. “We know we’ll find more the longer we look into the connections between SDF recipients, Ford’s cabinet, and even college presidents. This fight is about the future of public education, and it’s just beginning.”

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OPSEU/SEFPO represents more than 50,000 college workers, including full-time and part-time support staff and faculty, at all 24 Ontario public colleges, with campuses in more than 200 communities.

Photo and video highlights from the strike can be [downloaded for use here](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1xX9uMFGK627F88quVl_-hTjIIcSEVnwG?usp=sharing). For more information about bargaining, visit [collegesupportft.org](http://collegesupportft.org).

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