

More than 10,000 full-time college support staff on strike across Ontario: “We’re fighting for the future of student support.”

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 11th, 2025

Toronto, ON – As of 12:01 a.m. on September 11th, more than 10,000 full-time college support staff, represented by OPSEU/SEFPO, are on strike across Ontario’s 24 public colleges. Picket lines will go up on campuses across the province starting early Thursday morning.

The union says that the colleges’ bargaining agent walked away from the table with remaining proposals unanswered – leaving the union alone at the table for six hours up until the deadline.

“We’ve lost 10,000 jobs across the system this year alone, and more than 650 programs in every community across the province,” said Christine Kelsey, Chair of the College Support Full-Time Bargaining Team, an assistive technologist at Algonquin College who has supported students with disabilities for nearly two decades. “With our colleges plunged into chaos, job security is key to stabilizing the system – because the future of our work is the future of student support.”

“It’s unconscionable that we’ve yet to see any goodwill from the employer to protect frontline jobs that support students in our communities. We’re seeing library technologists eliminated at colleges only to be replaced by vending machines just weeks later – what’s next?” added Kelsey.

“College full-time support workers are standing up like never before. And we know our communities will stand with us, because this fight is also about access to local, public education in our backyards,” said JP Hornick, President of OPSEU/SEFPO. “Support staff aren’t alone – they have the support of the 200,000 public sector workers we represent and thousands of labour and community allies who are ready to fight shoulder to shoulder for a public college system we can be proud of.”

Earlier this week, OPSEU/SEFPO released [a new report](#) on Ford’s [controversial Skills Development Fund](#) (SDF), now [under investigation by the Auditor General](#). The union contends that the SDF is a \$2.5 billion “black box” without financial oversight that is being used to subsidize a privatized career training system. Meanwhile, public colleges that serve local communities have been defunded in real time.

“We’ve lost culinary and hospitality programs in underserved, northern, and rural regions where those are dominant employment sectors, while multi-million dollar awards go to just a handful of hospitality giants,” said Hornick. “It’s stealing resources from our backyards: more than half of projects receiving SDF funding this year alone are private companies and providers based in the wealthy GTA.”

Recent probes this week into one such SDF recipient, Scale Hospitality Group, have drawn scrutiny to a \$11.1 million investment released despite a [poor-scoring application](#). Curious connections to the lobbying firm of [scandal-embroiled Amin Massoudi](#), chair of Ford's 2022 electoral campaign, “have shades of the Greenbelt all over again,” remarks Hornick.

“It’s no longer a question of *if* there is money. It’s a question of where it’s going. As this fight heats up, there are going to be a lot of questions Ontario taxpayers need answered – especially as jobs disappear and options for students shrink before our eyes.”

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The **Ontario Public Sector Employees Union** (OPSEU/SEFPO) represents 200,000 public sector workers in Ontario, including more than 45,000 college support staff and faculty at all 24 of Ontario’s public colleges.

Full-time college support staff represent members in over 150 job classifications: including staff in disability services; library technologists; student success coordinators; facilities and trades staff; co-op placement coordinators; staff in the registrar to financial aid offices; employment services; IT services; food services and student workers; and so much more.

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