

LOCAL MATTERS



News & Information from OPSEU/SEFPO Local 352

Fleming College Academic Employees - Fall 2026 - Issue 2

FROM THE PRESIDENT

If there is a common theme to this edition of Local Matters, it is having a voice in the decisions that affect us.

There is a lot happening at Fleming right now. The merger with St. Lawrence continues to move forward, preparations for our next round of bargaining are underway, and our part-time faculty colleagues are working toward their first Collective Agreement. Each will have an impact on our members and reinforces the importance of being informed and involved.

After several months of work, I'm pleased to report that we have finally made some important progress on the merger. A Minutes of Settlement has been signed establishing a joint task force and giving the four affected OPSEU/SEFPO Locals a seat at the table. It has taken longer than I would have liked, and valuable time has already passed, but we can now turn our attention to representing our members as the new College takes shape. There is more about the agreement and what happens next on the following page.

At the same time, preparations have begun for bargaining. Our current Collective Agreement expires next September, and faculty across the province will soon begin identifying the issues they want addressed in the next agreement. Here at Fleming, members will help determine the ten priorities Local 352 sends forward. If there is something in our Collective Agreement you think needs to change, now is the time to tell us.

Finally, we need your help connecting with our part-time faculty colleagues. They are an important part of our academic team and our Local, but our ability to communicate directly with them remains limited. With their own demand-setting process underway, we want to make sure every part-time faculty member has the opportunity to participate and be heard.

Whether it is the merger, bargaining, or building a stronger Local, our ability to represent members depends on hearing from the people we represent. Please read, participate, ask questions and, perhaps most importantly, tell us what you think.

In Solidarity,
Michael Benedict
President, OPSEU/SEFPO Local 352

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NEED UNION SUPPORT?



Have a question, concern, or just not sure who to ask? Your Local 352 stewards are here to help.

Email: president@flemingfacultyunion.com

When possible, we encourage members to contact the Local using a personal, non-Fleming email account.

Not sure who your steward is? Contact us and we'll connect you.

FLEMING - ST. LAWRENCE MERGER

What we know - and what we don't

A VOICE AT THE TABLE

As the merger of Fleming and St. Lawrence continues to move forward, your Local, our sister support local, and our counterparts at SLC have continued to push for meaningful involvement in the process. I'm pleased to report that we have finally made some important progress. A Minutes of Settlement has now been signed that will establish a joint task force and give the affected Locals a seat at the table for merger discussions.

The Colleges have recently introduced surveys to gather input, and we encourage members to participate. At the same time, we don't believe meaningful employee engagement is satisfied by a three-question survey when two questions simply ask which College you are affiliated with and how. Meaningful engagement requires discussion, questions, answers and an ongoing exchange of information.

Getting to this point has taken much longer than we had hoped. Early in the process there was disagreement about how the merger should be addressed under our Collective Agreements. Merger-related grievances were filed and discussions began about establishing a forum where the four affected OPSEU/SEFPO locals could sit down with the Colleges and discuss the merger and its impact on our members. Those discussions were not always easy. The Colleges attached conditions to establishing the task force, including withdrawal of the merger grievances, while the Union was reluctant to give up those protections without being satisfied that a meaningful process would replace them. We have now worked through those differences and reached an agreement that will allow the task force to move forward. It has taken longer than I would have liked, and valuable time has already passed while merger planning continues, but we can finally move beyond discussions about how we will participate and begin the much more important work of representing our members as the new College takes shape.

WHY THE DELAY MATTERS

The frustration has never simply been that this process has taken a long time. The merger has continued to move forward while we worked to secure a meaningful place in the discussions.

Decisions are being considered about the structure and operation of a new institution that will span communities from Cornwall through Peterborough and into the Kawarthas. Those decisions have the potential to affect our campuses, programs, workloads, employment and ultimately the students and communities we serve.

We recognize that not every decision belongs at a union-management table. At the same time, our members have decades of experience delivering education across these campuses, and the four affected locals represent employees who will ultimately be responsible for making the new institution work.

With the task force now established, that experience will finally have a meaningful place in the conversation.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

With the Minutes of Settlement now signed and the task force established, the next step is to begin the joint discussions we have been working toward.

Getting a seat at the table does not mean that we will agree with every decision, nor does it give the Union control over the merger. It does, however, create an opportunity to raise concerns early, ask questions, identify unintended consequences and advocate for our members before decisions are finalized.

We will continue to share information with members as we are able. There will inevitably be portions of these discussions that cannot immediately be made public, but our goal is to keep members informed about the issues that affect them and to seek your input as the process moves forward.

After several months spent trying to get to the table, we finally have a chair. Now the real work begins.

BARGAINING 2027

Preparing for what comes next

IT STARTS WITH YOU

Our current Collective Agreement expires on September 30, 2027. While that may still sound like a long way off, the work of preparing for the next round of bargaining has already begun.

One of the first and most important steps is demand setting, where members identify the issues they want our provincial bargaining team to take to the table.

FIRST STEP: COMPLETE THE SURVEY

The provincial demand-setting survey is open now and **closes October 9**.

If you haven't completed it yet, please take the time to do so. The survey is a bit lengthy so please set aside approximately 15 minutes. The results we receive from the survey will form the basis of our discussions at Fleming's local demand-setting meetings later this month.

In other words, the survey is not just collecting information provincially. Your responses will help determine what we discuss here at Fleming.

NEXT STEP: LOCAL DEMAND SETTING

During the week of **October 26**, registered members covered by our current Collective Agreement will be invited to virtual demand-setting meetings. Separate virtual meetings will also be held for registered members of our part-time faculty unit.

Using the survey results as our starting point, members will discuss the issues identified and determine which are most important to us locally. From those discussions, Fleming will identify its top 10 bargaining demands to send forward as part of the provincial demand-setting process.

This is our opportunity to make sure the priorities coming from Fleming reflect what our members actually want addressed in the next Collective Agreement.

PART-TIME FACULTY

Working toward a first agreement

TWO BARGAINING TABLES - ONE LOCAL

Although our faculty groups are currently bargaining under separate processes, we are all part of Local 352.

For our full-time and partial-load faculty, this is an opportunity to help shape the next Collective Agreement.

For our part-time faculty, this is an opportunity to help shape their first.

In both cases, the principle is the same: **the priorities at the bargaining table should come from the faculty who will live and work under the agreements being negotiated.**

HEALTH & SAFETY

Your workplace. Your rights.

THE INTERNAL RESPONSIBILITY SYSTEM

Ontario's health and safety system is built on the Internal Responsibility System (IRS). At its simplest, the IRS means that everyone in the workplace has a role in keeping it safe.

Employers and supervisors have significant responsibilities, but workers also play an important role by identifying hazards, raising concerns and participating in solutions.

Your union and your joint health and safety committees are an important part of the system, but health and safety isn't something we simply hand off to a committee or department.

See something? Say something. A strong IRS depends on hazards being identified early, concerns being raised, and those concerns being taken seriously.

PART-TIME FACULTY

We need you

ARE YOU REGISTERED?

Part-time faculty are an important part of Local 352 and are currently negotiating their first Collective Agreement.

Because that agreement has not yet been ratified, union dues are not currently being deducted. More importantly, we don't automatically have the contact information we need to keep all of our PT faculty informed and involved.

Registration allows the Local to communicate directly with you about bargaining, meetings, votes and other important union matters. With demand-setting meetings approaching, it is particularly important that we are able to reach you.

If you're a part-time faculty member and aren't sure whether you're registered, please contact us or visit <https://opseu.org/> to register.

And to our FT and PL members: please help spread the word to your part-time colleagues. We want every faculty member to have the opportunity to participate and be heard.

GRIEVANCE DESK

What your Local is working on

UPDATES AND PROGRESS

Since our last edition, one grievance has been resolved through mediation at arbitration and two others were resolved internally at the grievance meeting stage. Three matters have been referred to arbitration and two new grievances have been filed. Unfortunately, the list of cases awaiting arbitration dates across the College sector continues to grow, meaning significant delays remain for members whose matters cannot be resolved internally.