

**Unit 2 Job Security Proposals – Introductory Presentation**  
**CUPE 3903 Bargaining Team, November 6, 2017**

Job security and employment stability are **priorities** for our membership.

Unit 2 bargaining **survey**: "Job security is an important goal in bargaining." Over **96%** of U2 members agreed, strongly agreed or said it's a strike issue.

The nature of Unit 2 work is precarity. That is the reality. That is the problem. Our members submit blanket applications each year with no real job security, even if they have taught at York for years or even decades. Not just 20 or 30 years, but even over 40 years! Anyone can look at our seniority list that is posted online.

From year to year and even term to term, our members don't know if they will be teaching, they don't know what they will be teaching. It is not unusual for appointments to occur in late August or September for the fall term. We are bumped around from course to course, often having to prepare new courses and not having the opportunity to re-teach courses in subsequent years. Our teaching conditions are student learning conditions, and these are not ideal for anyone.

Our members never know if they should be looking for or taking work at another university or another workplace. While waiting for contract work at York that may or may not come, should one sign that contract from another university in another city? But then what happens if you are lucky enough to get work at York. You're commuting between different campuses in different cities, sometimes on the same day. Imagine the stress in this. Imagine the implications for prep time. Imagine the implications for trying to be available to students. It's hard to meet a student at York to discuss their work, if you are busy teaching elsewhere or commuting to another workplace. To repeat, our teaching conditions are student learning conditions, and these are not ideal for anyone.

Let's be clear. Unit 2 members are excellent teachers, academic and scholars. The problem is that York and other universities have shifted from hiring full-time tenured faculty to relying on precarious, contract workers, contract faculty. This needs to change. And there is growing pressure for it to change.

Our members do an excellent job teaching York students. But they do so under conditions that are extremely trying, difficult and stressful. We do not receive sufficient support, resources or respect. Our contributions to York are neither sufficiently recognized nor appreciated. Our members are asking for respect, job security and employment stability.

Now is the time to address the problem of precarious academic labour.

In 2015, the Ontario government launched the **Changing Workplaces Review**. It issued its final report in May of these year. This review both reflects and reinforces the growing attention paid to issues such as precarious labour.

**Ontario Minister of Labour, Kevin Flynn**, told the media in May of this year before the report came out that "You can't justify treating that part-time worker any differently than a full-time worker."

"If someone is doing what any average person would construe as a doing a full-time job ... that's not a contractor," Flynn says. "That may be somebody posing as a contractor." As the Toronto Star reported,

“Too many companies now disguise regular employees as independent contractors or part-timers to avoid paying them full wages and benefits.” [May 13, 2017: Ontario plans big boost to minimum wage, update of labour laws: Cohn].

The resulting **Bill 148: the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act**, Includes provisions around equal pay for equal work. The legislation, if passed, will ensure that part-time and contract workers are paid equally to full-time employees when performing the same job for the same employer.

On June 1, 2017, the Ontario Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development, **Deb Matthews**, who is also the Deputy Premier of Ontario, sent a **letter to University Executive Heads**, College Presidents and the Ontario University Workers Coordinating Committee, among others addressing the relationship between Bill 148 and the post-secondary system in Ontario.

In that letter she made some interesting comments, “Our economy must be inclusive and share the benefits of growth widely, and we are taking action to make this the reality for everyone from traditional salaried employees to those working on part-time contracts.”

Furthermore, “I am excited about what this will mean for all parts of Ontario’s economy, including our postsecondary education sector.”

“I am committed to ensuring fair employment.”

“I am eager to engage you in a conversation about faculty renewal at our colleges and universities”

“It is ...imperative that we look for creative ways to build pathways for Ontarians to enjoy fair employment as educators in our postsecondary sector”

Clearly, this sounds like a good time for a bold and “creative” proposal on conversion. But we will come back to that.

Another crucial development that makes this the time to act on job security for contract faculty is the current **Ontario College Faculty Strike**

The college faculty strike involving over 12,000 workers and impacting 500,000 students is focusing unprecedented attention on the issue of precarious contract work at Ontario’s colleges. It’s useful to look at some examples from the mass media.

Oct 16: CBC headline: “Why Ontario college faculty members are on strike”

A full-time college faculty member quoted: “We have a fantastic group of contract staff, but they put in long hours that they’re not paid for and they’re doing the same work we’re doing.”

Toronto Star column on October 16: “College strikes a symptom of broken business model”

“Increasingly, students and teachers are in the same boat, facing a precarious future with limited career prospects or job security. Imagine you are lecturing your class on labour economics, describing tomorrow’s workforce that remains on contract year after year, at the mercy of unpredictable schedules because employers demand unlimited flexibility.

At a community college, that lecturer isn't reading from a case study on precarious employment. He or she is telling their own life story on the job, in the classroom."

"[York University](#) is also grappling with this outdated piecework model, which prompted bitter strikes by part-timers demanding greater job security in 2015. The dirty little secret of higher education is that working conditions have hit rock bottom."

Globe and Mail

Oct 16: "Lower levels of pay and poor job security for part-time professors are two of the key issues that have led to a walkout by college faculty."

Oct 22: CBC Headline: "Ontario college strike spotlights 'new norm' of precarious labour in academia"

"A strike by Ontario's college teachers is shedding light on a trend in higher education that some say is 'shrouded in secrecy' and needs public attention."

"Precarious work is a trend in the labour market in Canada in general, but it's not necessarily associated with the ivory towers of the country's post-secondary institutions. Universities and colleges, however, are increasingly putting faculty on short-term contracts instead of hiring them for full-time, permanent jobs."

"contract faculty say they face multiple disadvantages over tenured teaching staff, including:

- Little notice to prepare courses.

- Insufficient office space

- Limited or no support for research and other professional development opportunities.

- Restricted involvement with the school community (they can't sit on committees, for example, that help shape the school environment).

"Then there's the 'constant grinding level of stress and worry' hanging over contract faculty," explained a contract faculty member at Wilfrid Laurier University, and that can impact students.

"I think there is something desperately wrong with the public institutions that were intended for the public good to be able to fly under the radar as temp agencies — because that's what they've become," said a contract faculty member at Wilfrid Laurier university.

Globe and Mail

Oct 25: headline "Ontario college students join striking faculty at Toronto rally"

Toronto Star Oct 30 column by Charles Pascal

"how part-timers are used and treated is at the crux of the logjam — the consequence of the gross overuse of part-time employees represented by the union who now outnumber full-timers at most colleges."

“too many of our post-secondary institutions need a major rebalancing in favour of more permanent full-time faculty who are provided support to stay current and carry a long-term commitment to the health of their institutions.”

Globe and Mail: Nov 1

“the conflict has highlighted the long-running and growing tension over the high number of part-time instructors.”

Nov 4, CBC Headline: “Job security the 'big thing' for striking Ontario college faculty struggling with contract work”

Finally, it's worth highlighting the remarkable article written by 4 college students from 4 different colleges, published in the Toronto Star on Oct 26: entitled “College students and striking faculty face same challenges with precarious work”

“We are students at four Ontario colleges and our faculty are on strike. We are keen to get back to class, but we do not want to return to our studies until fairness is achieved for college faculty. We understand that our instructors' working conditions impact the quality of our education.”

“We know the reality of precarious work...We are fighting for the same things that our faculty are standing up for in this strike.”

“Delivering quality education is difficult when you're working from one four-month contract to the next ... and aren't given adequate time to prepare for the courses you're teaching. Yet these are the working conditions of contract instructors at our colleges, who now make up more than 70 per cent of all faculty.”

“Making matters worse, faculty working on short-term contracts are not being paid fairly. As full-time faculty positions have been eliminated, the number of administrative positions at Ontario colleges has increased by more than 77 per cent between 2002 and 2015.”

“At the heart of this strike is the need for our colleges to commit to quality education. This means committing to the faculty and staff that deliver our education and teach our classes.”

“We understand that our faculty are better placed to support and mentor us when they have full-time positions and are treated with respect. We've heard that just-in-time scheduling can leave our instructors with as little as one day's notice to prepare a course. Many of our instructors do not have offices or phone numbers and others share desks with several colleagues. This makes it more difficult for them to be available to students. When courses are done their contracts also finish, leaving many instructors unreachable to students seeking feedback or reference letters.”

“When our colleges rely on contract workers, it's not good for students or faculty.”

Now, this coverage has been focused on the issue of precarious work in the college system but people have been making the connection with the same issue in the universities.

UWO Gazette October 26 “Contract staff at universities have similar concerns as striking college faculty”

There has also been solid coverage and discussion in the Exalibur.

**The Walrus: Nov 2. Article entitled - Ontario College Educators Are on Strike for Their Students:** We don't need more salary boosts for administrators. We need increased resources for instructors and their classrooms

"One key issue for strikers ... is the ... refusal to hire full-time professors. While student enrolment in Ontario colleges doubled between 1989 and 2004, full-time faculty numbers fell by 22 percent during the same period, to the point that today full-timers make up only one-third of the entire college academic staff."

"What has the administration done with all that tuition money? Hire more college administrators."  
"And not only are the numbers of administrators increasing, so are their salaries."

Let's connect this back to **Bill 148: the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act**

**Globe and Mail**

**Bill 148 addresses striking Ontario college teachers' demands: minister  
October 16, 2017**

Some of the changes to working conditions that are being demanded by striking college instructors would be ushered in when Bill 148 is passed, says Deb Matthews, the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development.

"Part-time workers need to get paid [the same rate] as full-time workers for the same work, so you can't discriminate against part-time workers. [Colleges] know that the legislation ... will apply," Ms. Matthews said. The government will consider whether it will need to increase funding to help colleges and universities meet the equal pay provisions, she added.

Now, Let's return to York U and look at the **University Academic Plan 2015-2020**

"We have begun to make strides again towards **strengthening faculty complement by recovering the post-2008 decline in full-time faculty** that resulted in the context of prevailing global economic crises."

The Academic Plan describes "**social justice**" as a "defining value" of York University.

"York is socially responsible, and committed to the pursuit of social justice and equity issues to continuously challenge and transform society's understanding and existing norms through civic, scientific and cultural actions." York needs to try and live up to that rhetoric.

"**Academic quality** has been the overriding imperative for York over the last five years and it must continue to be so in everything we do for the next five years. An institutional commitment to the importance of research and teaching excellence and to the inseparability of the two aspects of our mandate as part of our culture of excellence is key, as is attracting and retaining the highest quality faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students."

"Central to those efforts is increasing the full-time faculty complement (including supporting efforts to improve the **conversion of contractual appointments to the tenure-stream**) and improving student / faculty ratios."

“Factors that will need to be considered in our efforts to advance the White Paper over the next five years include:

**the imperative of addressing the significant reliance on contract labour in the postsecondary education sector, including maintaining as a top priority increasing the full-time faculty complement and seeking opportunities to support contract faculty colleagues.”**

### **CUPE 3903 Proposes Multiple Approaches to Job Security and Employment Stabilization**

We are presenting multiple proposals to address the issue of Unit 2 job security. Our 2014-2017 Collective Agreement included three important programs for which we have proposals.

The **Conversion or Affirmative Action Program**, which was established in our 1987-1989 Collective Agreement shifts experienced and qualified Unit 2 members into full-time faculty positions in YUFA. These are long-serving members of the York community. They are long-term employees, committed to teaching at York and they deserve to be treated as full-time employees. They deserve to be full-time employees with job security. Since 2002, those conversions into full-time faculty positions have all been into tenure-track positions. Since 1988, this has been an extremely successful program for York University. The success rate of Unit 2 members receiving conversions in actually obtaining tenure has been extremely high and those members have been excellent full-time faculty. However, the program has been far too limited in scope and has not kept up with the growing number of experienced Unit 2 members that have entered the Conversion pool. We need and our members are insisting upon a more serious Conversion Program.

The **Long-Service Teaching Appointment (LSTA) Program** was established in the 2008-2011 Collective agreement. It provides for multi-year appointments for experienced Unit 2 members to stabilize their work and offer some modest short-term job security and salary top-up. Like Conversions, we feel that the number of LSTAs are too low, insufficient and too arbitrary in their allocation. Experienced Unit 2 members with a demonstrated teaching record at York deserve to have their employment stabilized. The conversion and LSTA programs should not be simply lottery systems for the chosen few, they need to become generalized job security measures for Unit 2.

Then we have the **Continuing Sessional Standing Program or CSSP** which was established in our last Collective Agreement. The CSSP is an important program in that it includes mid and relatively low seniority members. It has served as an early posting period which is somewhat useful, but despite our hopes it has done little to stabilize the work of our members. Therefore, it needs to be improved to meet the needs of our members.

Finally, we are proposing to bring back the **Special Renewable Contracts** which were introduced in the 1999-2000 Collective Agreement and existed until 2005. This would offer job security to high seniority Unit 2 members who have contributed years of teaching to York University.

Now is the time for us to seriously tackle precarious academic labour at York and develop real job security. We can't wait. The issue is in the spotlight. The provincial government is talking about improving the status of part-time faculty and hiring more full-time faculty. York is talking about increased full-time hires. York is developing a new campus in Markham. CUPE 3903 can't wait to deal these things in the future. We need to address them now, in this context. The time is now.