



Via Email

January 25, 2017

The Honourable Deb Matthews
Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development/Minister Responsible for Digital
Government/Deputy Premier
3rd Floor, Mowat Block
900 Bay Street
Toronto, Ontario M7A 1N3

Dear Minister Matthews,

I'm writing in my role as the chair of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)'s College Support Divisional Executive. We represent the more than 10,000 unionized support staff that work each day in Ontario's colleges, supporting the education of hundreds of thousands of students.

It is for the sake of those students that I am writing to share our concerns about the plans put forward by the colleges through the Executive Compensation Program.

The consultations under way, or recently completed, at colleges across the province include proposals which, if accepted, would lead to massive increases in the salaries of top executives. These increases will do nothing to improve the institutions or their ability to perform their role in educating the next generation. Instead, they will drain resources from frontline staff and classrooms, and negatively affect our students.

Those advocating for these increases point to the public sector wage freezes that have been in place for a number of years to make the case that wage hikes are necessary. A closer look, however, suggests that these institutions have already been finding ways around these freezes through position changes, reorganizations, the creation of new titles, and other dubious means. Meanwhile, the total number of administrators at colleges has continued to balloon, increasing by 77 per cent since 2002-03.

In the context of a college system that continues to receive the lowest per-student funding of any province, we are highly uncomfortable with the priorities that are suggested by the levels of compensation proposed here. These are proposals designed to enrich a few at the very top, while making things worse for the large majority of staff, faculty and students.

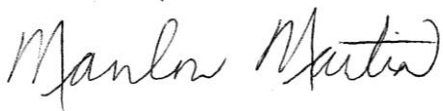
We don't believe that further enriching executives through pay increases subsidized by frontline cuts is in the best interest of students, or of Ontarians.

These executives already receive annual salaries that far exceed those of the staff who keep the colleges running. Yet while these colleges seem eager to propose as much as 54-per-cent wage increases for well-compensated presidents, they continue to oppose attempts to organize for fair wages and equal treatment by part-time and contract staff who struggle by on wages below the poverty line.

In addition, the timing of this entire process, with consultations at most colleges quietly posted to college websites during December exams and closing the first week that classes returned in January, is highly suspect. It suggests an attempt by colleges to follow the letter but avoid the spirit of your government's new executive compensation rules by ensuring as little public awareness and involvement in this consultation as possible.

We ask that your office act to ensure a real consultation that takes into consideration the views of all groups affected at colleges across Ontario, including students, staff, faculty, and community members. Only in this way can we best allocate the limited funds available to ensure the right outcome for the students we all serve.

Sincerely,



Marilou Martin

Chair, CAAT-Support Divisional Executive, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

- C: Chairs, Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, Board of Governors
- Liz Sandals, President of the Treasury Board
- Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union
- CAAT-Support Local Presidents, Ontario Public Service Employees Union