

# COLLOQUIUM

Volume 10, Issue 1 , 2019

Newsletter of the Academic Union, Local 352  
Editors: Liz Mathewson & George Fogarasi

## Welcome Back, Tom !



It's great to see somebody with Tom Phillips' front-line teaching experience at Fleming in the role of Vice President Academic Experience.

As faculty continue to exercise Academic Freedom, and as we continue our struggle for collegial governance, it's good to have somebody in a senior leadership role who has experienced these in practice not only in the university setting but actually at Fleming College.

# Don't Take Our Work Away

Faculty recently participated in survey related to our experiences within the role of program or subject coordinator. Within the survey a new support staff position, the Student Navigator was introduced. Many faculty surmise there is a plan to take away faculty (coordinator) work to give it to a new support staff position, the Student Navigator

Across the college, we hear a resounding **no** to de-skilling the professors role and narrowing our scope of practice. And a resounding **yes** to allowing us to continue doing what we do best, supporting students inside and outside of the classroom.

Years ago, we conducted a detailed coordinator model survey. At that time, 57% of faculty would consider being a coordinator again. 17% would not, and 22% would with changes.

The claim that "faculty don't want to do this work" or "don't want to work with students" is spurious nonsense.

Again and again, faculty express how much the coordinator role means to them and to students. Again and again, the union brings this to the table where all too often we hear an anecdote of a faculty member who does not want to coordinate (and, thus, it's time to farm this work out to others).

Working with students, our programs and colleagues is what we are hired to do. It is at the heart of what we do.

Thank you for taking the time to complete the recent survey where we are confident the message will be clear, coordinator work is faculty work, and we LIKE it!

## Teaching in Snitch Line Times

The American website Professor Watchlist posts videos and reports from students about professors they find “discriminate against conservative students and advance leftist propaganda.” [Similar tactics](#) are used in Hungary, Brazil and Germany. Professors have been targeted, and there have been death threats.

So much for freedom of speech.

This is not a foreign issue. Last year, the Toronto Sun published an article entitled “Prepare Your Kids for Left Wing Campus Bias.”

The provincial government set up a snitch line for parents to report teachers contravening sex education guidelines.

**A Dutch political party has created a hotline for students to report professors. They are soliciting videos and reports of a left-wing bias. Many see it as a political stunt, one that fits an insidious narrative that diversity-positive educators are somehow enemies of the people.**

The Ontario government quickly decreed that colleges and universities enact a free speech policy. The free speech guidelines are a ridiculous solution in search of a problem. The union (and management) have been waiting for months for guidance about what is allowable free speech and what is hate speech.

Populism feeds on victimization, distracting us from the real causes of economic dislocation. Populism turns on marginalized groups and, ignoring the real elite, it makes an “elite” out of anyone with an education and a union job. Critical thinking becomes indoctrination. A class about fairness and human possibility becomes something to surreptitiously record and upload to a hotline.

We have academic freedom. We have—snitch lines notwithstanding—free speech.

As faculty, it’s important to keep practicing and teaching critical thinking. As a union, we need to keep forging connections with progressive organizations fighting for fairness for non-unionized workers. It is imperative to dispel the false (and effective) red herring of “elitism.”

## Exercising Academic Freedom

Kevin MacKay L240 & Martin Devitt L242 Reprinted from March *Faculty Voice*

Academic freedom, found under Article 13 of the collective agreement, focuses on the freedom to teach, to question (“inquire, investigate and pursue”), and speak out about academic issues without fear of reprisal. With regards to our right to speak out, we can break it down to speaking out within our college community, say, at a meeting (intramural) or in a more public context, as in giving an interview with a local paper (extramural).

Academic freedom is a broad and complex right that post-secondary faculty across the world exercise. It defines what it means to be an academic...In practice, academic freedom can be exercised through:

### 1. Protected Speech

- a. Academic freedom means that faculty can speak out about academic issues without fear of reprisal. This is known as “protected speech,” and it is supported by some of the strongest case law related to academic freedom.
- b. Protected speech can include making statements critical about your employer.
- c. This speech can be internal to the college, such as sending critical letters to management (even including the college president).
- d. This speech can also be external to the college, such as publishing a letter in the local newspaper or in another public forum.
- e. Academic freedom protects speech as long as the speech is: factual (i.e., based on truth, research and evidence) ; not hate speech (i.e., does not violate the Ontario Human Rights Code); academic (i.e., is professional, reasonable, etc.)
- f. Protected speech can be used to point out the academic impact of poor management decisions concerning staffing, program management, academic policies, workloads, etc.
- g. Protected speech is made more powerful if faculty in a given area come together to make collective statements about issues of common concern.

### 2. Evaluation methods

- a. Academic freedom includes the freedom to teach. This involves choosing what evaluation methods are used. There is already a process in the collective agreement under Workload, Article 11, specifically Articles 11.01 E2 and 11.01 E3, for faculty input into evaluation methods. Academic freedom bolsters a faculty member’s judgment under 11.01 E3. Conflicts over evaluation can thus take place through the Workload Monitoring Group (WMG) process, with academic freedom as a support, or as an Article 32 grievance, grieving Article 13.

## **Continued: Exercising Academic Freedom**

### **3. Course materials**

- a. There is also strong case law to support a professor's right to choose their own course materials.
- b. In a conflict between faculty and management over what textbook or other course material is to be used, an Article 13 grievance should be filed with a high likelihood of success.
- c. However, the rationale being used by a faculty member to use or not use a given resource must be academic in nature. As always, strong arguments have a better chance of winning.

### **4. Grade changes**

- a. An increasing concern in the colleges sees managers changing faculty grades for no academic reason and against the professional judgment of faculty.
- b. Academic freedom supports the right of faculty to assign grades and for having the academic judgment of professors stand.
- c. This means that managers cannot change faculty grades in an arbitrary manner.
- d. Grade changes should occur through an academically justifiable procedure, such as a formal grade appeal process.
- e. College administrations have also created policies whereby an administrator may grant a supplemental evaluation to a student after final grades have been entered. This is superfluous to the grade appeal process and should be monitored so that it is not applied in an arbitrary manner.

### **5. Method of delivery**

- a. Academic freedom is an exercised right that faculty should not be afraid to debate and discuss with colleagues and managers. This is especially true when considering method of delivery. When faculty have academically sound reasons for specific methods of delivery, bring it forth in meetings with your manager.
- b. For example, direction from a manager requiring that an evaluation must be given online may be within the purview of academic freedom.
- c. As with other academic freedom issues, faculty will argue that a manager's decision violates Article 13 if the decision overrides a faculty member's sound academic judgment in a manner that is arbitrary or in bad faith.

## Continued: Exercising Academic Freedom

### Moving Forward

Academic freedom is not just for university-educated professors teaching in university-style courses and programs. It applies equally to faculty in the trades and in other applied and occupational programs. The core principle is the same: The faculty member teaching – whether sociology, nursing, plumbing or massage therapy – is the expert in their respective field. Their expertise is the bedrock of quality in post-secondary education and needs to be respected.

Article 13 will only be strong to the extent that we are willing to use it. Faculty should be actively and creatively trying to look for ways to utilize and expand our academic freedom. This article is by no means an exhaustive list of how academic freedom applies to our members. For instance, academic freedom can also be utilized by counsellors and librarians. This will be the subject of a further article.

Academic freedom involves changing the culture of college education – away from a manager-centred model focused on corporate priorities, and toward a faculty- and student-centred model focused on the quality and integrity of education.

### **We don't have academic freedom unless we exercise it!**

So let's continue to talk about these issues and scenarios, bring them to the attention of our colleagues and union stewards, and finally bring them forward as grievances. If we don't defend our academic rights, it's not just our working conditions that suffer – it's the quality of our students' education that worsens!



[Wall Street Bonuses](#) Are 3 X the Earnings of ALL Full-Time American Workers Making Minimum Wage

## Let's Talk SWFs

As educators, we deliver content with professionalism. This extends to how we talk to our students day in and day out. After all, we're teaching adults here, and they deserve fair treatment.

One scenario comes to mind: before a test or major assignment, faculty tell the students what content to study, the format of the assessment, and the marking rubric. These pieces are crucial for our students to succeed. And the transparency of this delivery is key for our adult learners.

So it comes as a surprise when, in the delivery of our SWFs, transparency is taken off the table and instead, faculty are left scratching their heads at workloads that are, seemingly, precariously offered.

Some faculty are given full development time while others are loaded up with teaching. Some faculty are offered what they had requested while others are teaching courses never taught before.

Article 11.02 of the Collective Agreements states,

*Prior to the establishment of a total workload for any teacher the supervisor shall discuss the proposed workload with the teacher and complete the SWF to be provided by the college.*

Like our students, we're adults. Talk to us. Have the conversation. Build goodwill and trust. We're all in this together.



## **This Is Our Time**

by Nancy Rishor

Spring has officially sprung (albeit a chilly one!) and with it brings new beginnings, optimism and hope. Fleming is well poised for change, and with the soon-to-be finalized Strategic Plan, our members are ready for a new chapter.

Four years earlier, many employees considered early retirement, feeling lackluster and depleted with the status quo. Recently, there's a new surge of energy. The darker days of winter and uncertainty behind us, I too, sense a subtle yet perceptible shift in the air.

One morning on my commute to work, a thought occurred to me: Fleming College has the potential to be the best college in Canada. A tall order, perhaps. But why not?

This is our time to think about Fleming on a grand scale. What Fleming needs is a new model of excellence. We need to build accountability, innovation and performance to teach, guide and graduate students to build better lives.

We need to transform this college, but let's not let our past hold us back. Let's forge a new path with our Strategic Plan and show what can be done in a rural college, in a global college market, with exceptional and innovative programming and people.

The Strategic Plan will transform Fleming College.

With its large-scale transformational changes, the framework of the Plan will allow us to achieve a new vision for our members. By setting a high standard of educational excellence, broadening our community partnerships, harnessing the talents of staff and faculty, and embracing technological innovations, Fleming College can, and will, be great again.

"The future's so bright. This is our time." – the Eden Project

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efTEqGz863k>



## The SNC-Lavalin scandal: A golden opportunity to drain the privatization swamp

Warren Smokey Thomas

The he-said-she-said coverage of the SNC-Lavalin scandal is compelling political theatre. But if Canadians look beyond the daily drama of Justin Trudeau's clumsy cover-up, we can seize a golden opportunity to make our lives meaningfully better.

Better hospitals, highways, and schools. Lower debt and lower taxes for working people. All of this can be ours if we recognize that the SNC-Lavalin scandal isn't just a story about federal Liberal infighting - it's actually the tragic tale of what we lose when we vote for politicians who are mired in the privatization swamp.

SNC-Lavalin is a major player in this story, but it's not the only one. EllisDon. Carillion. Serco. For years, these corporations and many others like them have been corrupting our politicians and pushing deeper and deeper into the public sphere, robbing us of tax revenue, driving up our debt, and cheating us of the quality services and infrastructure that we paid for with our own hard-earned dollars.

Now, I'm not suggesting that construction companies shouldn't build our hospitals and our highways. That's exactly the way it used to be. However when construction was done, we maintained ownership, accountability and control. If revenues flowed from the project, we got to keep those, too.

The trouble began when the companies hired to do the construction work started pushing greedily for more. They didn't just want millions of our dollars to build hospitals and highways, they wanted billions of our dollars to manage or outright own them.

Thanks to a public inquiry on corruption in government contracting in Quebec, we now know that SNC made its grab for those billions with cozy relationships, illegal campaign contributions, secret deals, and outright bribery and fraud.

And as the scandal spreads to Ottawa, we're seeing just how successful SNC has been. From Trudeau on down, the federal Liberals - and even the top bosses in the civil service -- are trying as hard as they can to sweep this corruption under the rug.

But remember: this is NOT just a story about the federal Liberals. SNC had ties to the Harper Conservatives. Nor is this just a story about SNC.



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**Continued:**  
**The SNC-Lavalin scandal: A golden opportunity to drain the privatization swamp**

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Here in Ontario, the construction giant EllisDon has for more than three decades had intensely incestuous relationships with provincial politicians.

EllisDon founder Donald Smith was president and chief fundraiser for the provincial Liberals. Smith's wife, Joan, was a cabinet minister in David Peterson's government. Smith's son, Geoff, was chair of the Ontario Liberal Fund.

Geoff has been a particularly aggressive privatization booster and EllisDon has reaped the rewards, getting hundreds of millions of public dollars in dozens of privatization deals from the McGuinty and Wynne governments.

What's the problem with that? For starters, this: the Auditor General found in 2015 that the people of Ontario had been overcharged by more than \$8 billion for privatized construction projects.

Add the billions we lost on the sell-off of Highway 407 (which is now partly owned by SNC), the billion we lost in the gas plant scandal and the billions we're losing because of the Hydro One sell-off, and a clear pattern emerges. Privatization is robbing us of our own wealth.

Imagine what we could do if all those billions hadn't been taken from us.

Imagine the help we could provide children with autism. Imagine streets and sidewalks that are plowed and classrooms that aren't overcrowded. Imagine the repayments we could be making on our debt.

But sadly, the privatization swamp has grown so large we've come to accept it.

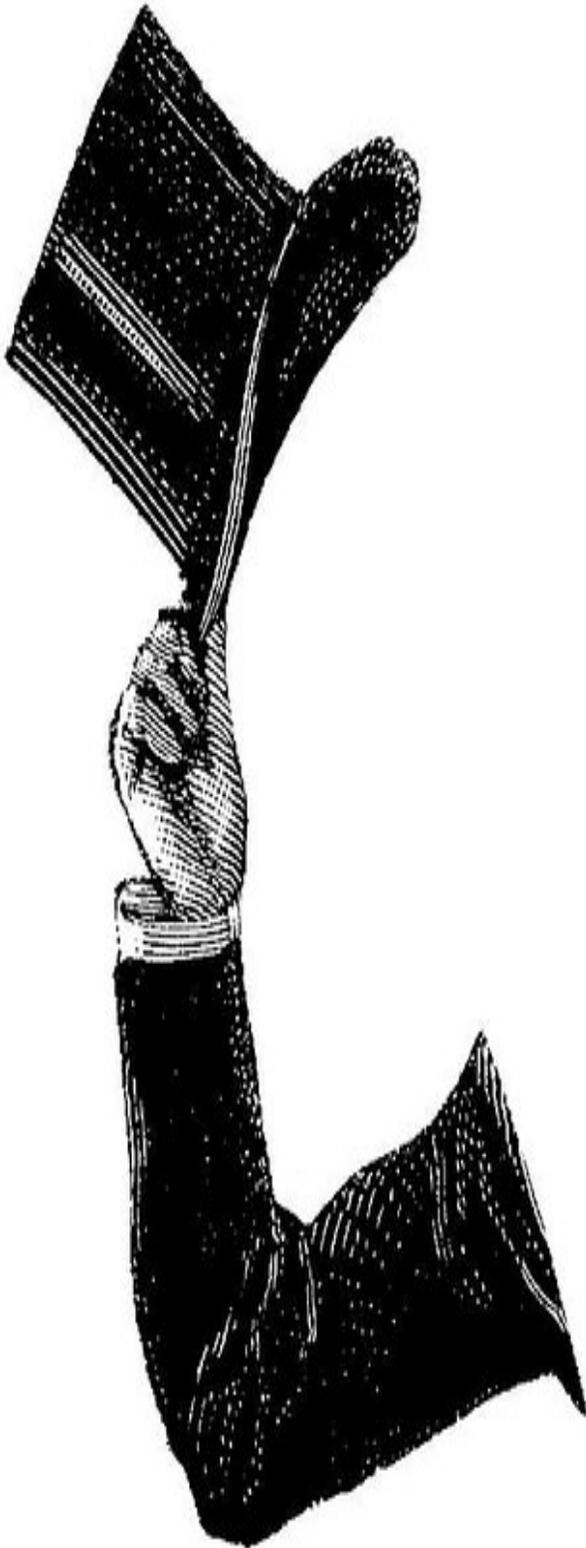
As Doug Ford prepares to open the floodgates on health care privatization, I've heard too many people meekly say: "there's already some privatization in health care, so what's the point of fighting more?"

That's like saying "there's already an inch of water in the basement, so what's the point of fixing the leak in the foundation?"

The longer we ignore the leak, the farther the rot will spread.

Likewise, the longer we allow the privatization industry to corrupt our politicians, the more money that will be taken away from you, your family and your community.

But the SNC scandal is a golden opportunity for change. During the next federal and provincial elections, let's turn this he-said-she-said story into a we-said story: we said no more corrupt privatization. We would be all better off for it.



## **Thank You Fleming**

A tip of the collegial hat to Fleming College for doing the right thing and offering the incentive to employees who already submitted their retirement notice before the incentive was offered.

Noted and appreciated!