**UOITFA Solidarity Statement with PSAC 555 and OPSEU 353**

The UOIT Faculty Association (UOITFA) at Ontario Tech University stands in solidarity with PSAC 555. Together, the UOITFA and PSAC 555 represent the majority of Faculty, Instructors, Lecturers and Researchers at the university. This marks the first time both unions have been in conciliation with Ontario Tech simultaneously, one of the final stages in negotiations before a potential strike or lockout. Both unions have been pushing for meaningful improvements to working and learning conditions at Ontario Tech, and the fact they both find themselves in conciliation highlights the University administration’s refusal to respect its staff and prioritize high-quality education for its students.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and intensified numerous challenges faced by members of our university community. Faculty and lecturers have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic to maintain high-quality education that puts students first. As a result, many at Ontario Tech are experiencing burnout and the deterioration of work-life balance as a result of overwhelming workloads, an ongoing lack of teaching and research support, and, for those working contracts, a lack of job security. These conditions remain, despite almost a decade of university budget surpluses. This status quo cannot continue. Faculty working conditions need to be addressed to improve student learning conditions at the university.

Ontario Tech University has the second highest student-to-faculty ratio in Canada for undergraduate universities, according to Maclean’s magazine most recent rankings, and class sizes have continued to increase over the last five years. Larger classes and higher student-to-faculty ratios mean higher faculty workloads, less time for direct one-on-one interaction between faculty and students, and less time for high-quality research.

With Ontario Tech President Steven Murphy’s recent renewal, we demand that he provide the direction needed to prioritize high-quality education here at Ontario Tech and end the uncertainty that comes with all faculty and instructors being in conciliation. Our students have had enough unpredictability over the last two years and our community needs a leader that is willing to prioritize the educational mission of the University. We urge President Murphy to provide leadership and ensure fair workloads that support teaching and research, equitable compensation, and job security.

The UOITFA and PSAC 555 also stand in solidarity with our colleagues at Durham College who are represented by OPSEU 353, as they have recently begun a work-to-rule campaign. It is important now more than ever that we come together to ensure that our university and college administrations prioritize exceptional post-secondary education in the Durham Region. We believe that a robust public sector, including strong post-secondary institutions that prioritize faculty’s working conditions and students’ learning conditions, is vital to the region’s economic recovery from this pandemic.