

Local 237 FAQs March 2026

This set of FAQs have been created based on the helpful feedback and questions from Faculty, Counsellors and Librarians of Local 237. This feedback was gathered from our survey shared earlier this month, and reflects information obtained from the past few months since the first waves of layoffs in 2025.

Additionally, based on recent activities related to the end of the 90 day layoff period, people have had questions about EI and LOU. We have captured some things below and others will be addressed at our **Townhall on March 26th 6-7:30 pm (check your email.)** Alternatively, you may get support from visiting our office at Doon campus. Office times will be posted on our Instagram page <https://www.instagram.com/local237comms/#> and sent via email.

Table of Contents

Local 237 FAQs March 2026.....	1
1. Severance, EI, and Pension.....	1
2. Recall List, Bumping, and Future Layoffs.....	1
3. Leadership, Funding, and Accountability.....	2
4. Full-Time vs Part-Time Loading and Program Cuts.....	3
5. Grievances and Arbitration: Status and Process.....	3
6. How the Union Will Advocate Strategically.....	4
7. Feeling Heard and Supported by the Union.....	4

1. Severance, EI, and Pension

Q: When should I opt for severance?

- If you opt for severance, you can do so anytime. However, the language in the Collective Agreement is that the employee may give the College written election of severance up to 120 calendar days after termination of the notice period, i.e. the last day of employment. You also may also notify the college of your decision earlier than the last day of employment.

Q: How is severance calculated and when will it be paid?

- Severance is calculated based on all types of continuous service (PT, SL, PL, FT) with Conestoga College, using the formula in the Collective Agreement

(e.g., weeks or months per year of service). Continuous service is defined by the College for all service not having a break greater than 13 weeks.

- The College has indicated that severance is paid in a lump sum, typically within 30 days after members formally notify the College that they are electing severance (not while they remain on the Recall List). You must decide to choose Severance no later than 120 days after your actual lay-off date.

Q: How does severance interact with EI and CAAT pension?

- Under the temporary EI measures, separation earnings (including severance) will not be deducted from EI if your EI claim start date falls during the temporary-measures period (e.g., March 2026). https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/ei/ei-list/reports/digest/chapter-5/moneys-paid-layoff-separation.html#a5_12_6.
- Severance is generally treated as employment income for tax and CAAT-pension purposes, so it may affect:
 - **Pension contributions** (whether you get credited service or have to make up contributions), and
 - **RRSP/RRIF spillover** if you exceed contribution limits.
- Members should consult a tax or financial advisor or CAAT's member services for personalized pension/tax advice; OPSEU can provide a brief explainer sheet but cannot give individual tax or pension counseling.

2. Recall List, Bumping, and Future Layoffs

Q: What does it realistically mean to stay on the recall list?

- Staying on the two-year recall list means you are entitled to be offered any comparable full-time position that becomes available during that period, in accordance with seniority and bumping rules in the Collective Agreement.
- “Realistic” expectations:
 - As long as the college continues to shrink FT-loaded positions, the number of recall-eligible openings may be limited.
 - OPSEU expects to monitor and track all recall-eligible openings and challenge any decision that bypasses a senior lay-off-list member.

Q: How does bumping/seniority work?

- If a senior member is laid off, they can bump into an equivalent position held by a member with lesser seniority, provided they have equivalent competency,

skills and experience. These would be involuntary transfers, which if refused by the one bumping, would result in their being laid off. The final decisions for these are totally in control of the College.

- The local and its members have created templates and guidance to help members document their Layoff Reports and seniority-based bumping claims so these can be used in grievances or arbitration.

Q: Are more layoffs expected?

- The College has announced multiple rounds of layoffs and program/school consolidations, and OPSEU has publicly expressed concern that further cuts are likely unless provincial funding and enrollment trends change.
- Within the CESC, any information shared with the Union is under strict confidentiality, until it becomes public. However, in having advanced knowledge, we can advocate for our members as well as be prepared for eventual outcomes created by management decisions.

3. Leadership, Funding, and Accountability

Q: What is happening with leadership and the president?

- The former president's leadership has been widely criticized by members and unions for the timing, scale, and communication of the layoffs. Past actions by both Locals may have contributed to the retirement of President Tibbits, but the Interim President is apparently not in a position to make any major changes to the plans implemented under the past President.
- An executive search firm has begun the process of finding a new College President, as well as a new CFO, but this could take many months, till possibly near the end of the calendar year.
- OPSEU and local leaders continue to call for government intervention and injection of adequate funding for all post secondary education.

Q: How will OPSEU and your local leadership hold the college and government accountable?

- OPSEU and our local plans to:
 - Publicly track and report on layoffs, recall usage, and PT-loading at the program level. But only publicly available data can be used, where there is anything provided under strict confidentiality.
 - Advocate with the provincial government and MPPs for stable college funding that protects full-time positions.

- Use grievances, arbitration, and political pressure together, not just as legal tools but as part of a broader accountability strategy.
- The Interim President at Conestoga College has accepted a proposal to have regular meetings between both Local Presidents and to include top College Executives, which provides an open forum for all major stakeholders.

Data can be requested and direct feedback is provided to the Executive, to share the impacts and present concerns given to us by all our colleagues most directly.

However, to retain transparency and candid sharing, strict confidentiality must be maintained by all involved.

4. Full-Time vs Part-Time Loading and Program Cuts

Q: What does “full-time vs part-time loading” mean for my future?

- Many programs are now relying more heavily on part-time and contract faculty instead of full-time positions, increasing job precarity and, in some cases, reducing course availability.
- OPSEU and the local is compiling data on how many FT-loaded positions have been eliminated versus how many PT-loaded sections have been added in each school/program, and will make this public to support advocacy and bargaining. The College is only focusing on financials and citing “economic viability”, in a rush to achieve the lowest cost operational model, without consideration or weighting of any other factors whatsoever.

Q: How likely is it that more programs will be cut?

- The College has already suspended or restructured several programs; the Union expects that further cuts are on the table if enrollment and funding do not improve.
- OPSEU will push back through public reports, member mobilization, and provincial-level advocacy whenever program-closure or school-restructuring decisions are proposed.

5. Grievances and Arbitration: Status and Process

Q: How many grievances and arbitrations are outstanding?

- OPSEU and its locals have launched numerous grievances contesting the layoff decisions, including the pattern of layoffs and whether the College followed seniority, bumping, and recall rules.

- A subset of those grievances has already been referred to arbitration, and others are being prepared or are in the early stages of the grievance process.
- They number in the hundreds, plus all those being initiated at other Colleges.

Q: Where is my case in the process?

- The local will provide a simplified, visual “status chart” (e.g., “Step 1: Filed”, “Step 2: College Response”, “Step 3: Arbitration Scheduled”) that members can use to understand where their grievance is, along with approximate timelines.
- Members who submitted a Layoff Report and grievance form to the Union can expect a timely update (generally within 10–15 days depending upon the CA articles) after each major stage.

6. How OPSEU Will Advocate Strategically

Q: How will the union be more than just “managing grievances”?

- OPSEU and the local aims to:
 - Track and report on layoffs, recall, and PT-loading in a transparent, data-driven way.
 - Coordinate with Local 238 (support staff) and provincial-level OPSEU/SEFPO to escalate pressure on the College and government.
 - Use public campaigns, media, and political advocacy as tools alongside the grievance process.
- The goal is to move from reactive case-handling to proactive, visible strategy that members can see and participate in.
- Working with whatever tools or opportunities become available, like the Interim Presidents’ Executive Forum, being consulted by the Executive Search firm, supporting the CSI in their concerns about OSAP changes, along with other Labour Councils.

7. Feeling Heard and Supported by the Union

Q: Why do some members feel they’re not getting responses or clear information?

- The volume of layoffs, grievances, and questions has created a significant workload for the Union, and some members report that only about half their emails are answered promptly or at all.

- We endeavour to reply to all messages, but due to the impacts of the last few months, we have had to prioritize responses by time deadlines and the critical nature of the concerns for our colleagues.

Q: How will the local improve communication and support?

The local commits to the following practical changes:

- **Centralized information hub**
 - A single, clearly labelled “Layoff Support” page on the Local 237 site, with:
 - All key documents (layoff notices, CA excerpts, grievance forms, severance templates).
 - A calendar of deadlines (vote dates, 120-day severance windows, arbitration timelines).
- **More human contact, not just email**
 - During this high volume grievance period, we will offer weekly online drop-in sessions where members can ask questions in real time. As well as provide physical office hours at the Doon Union Office, Rm 1E01.

Stage of the process	Key action for the member	Approx. timing / note
Layoff noticed & union intake	Receive layoff notice and contact Local 237; download and complete Layoff Grievance Form, Layoff Report, and LOU template.	Starts when layoff notice is received.
Layoff-basis meeting requested	Email HR + Carolyn Galvin requesting a meeting under Section 27.05(vii) to discuss the basis of the layoff selection.	HR must respond within 3 calendar days.
Layoff-basis meeting held	Attend meeting with HR; gather notes and any documentation explaining the layoff criteria.	Meeting occurs within the 90-day retraining period.

Formal grievance filed	Within 7 days of an inadequate response, submit the formal grievance form to HR with supporting documents (Layoff Report, meeting notes, etc.).	If not already done, union helps refine wording.
Grievance meeting	HR arranges a grievance meeting (within 15 days of receiving the grievance) with member, steward, and union rep.	This meeting is the main oral presentation of the case.
HR written response	HR issues a written response to the grievance within 15 days of the meeting.	If grievance is denied, Union decides whether to arbitrate.
Refer to arbitration	Union has 15 days to refer unresolved grievances to grievance arbitration under Article 32 of the Collective Agreement.	OPSEU assigns a Grievance Officer or law firm.
Arbitration hearing scheduled	Hearing date set; member prepares evidence and may be asked to testify.	Timing varies; often several months.
Arbitration decision	Arbitrator issues a written decision (may uphold, modify, or deny the grievance).	Decision is final and binding.