

# The Part-Time Times

A newsletter for Ontario community college part-time and sessional employees and friends

## Part-timers and sessionals win hard-fought victory at Queen's Park

*Liberals introduce Bill 90 to recognize bargaining rights*

Ontario college workers made history this week.

On Tuesday, June 10, the Liberal government at Queen's Park introduced a bill which, if passed, will formally recognize their right to join a union and take part in collective bargaining.

"There is no question that the introduction of Bill 90 is a victory for every part-timer and sessional at every community college," said Roger Couvrette, president of the organization of part-timers and sessionals (OPSECAAT).

"I think it is important to emphasize that this bill did not come about because of a sudden burst of generosity on the part of the colleges or the government," he said. "It came about because for the last three years part-timers and sessionals have fought hard to make their case to their co-workers, to politicians, to the news media, and to anybody else who would listen.

"Congratulations are due to everyone who has been part of the campaign to date."

If it becomes law, Bill 90 will create two new bargaining units: one for part-time support staff, and one for part-time and sessional faculty. If 35 per cent of the workers in either group say they want to join a union, the Ontario Labour Relations Board will order



OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas briefs part-timers' president Roger Couvrette after meeting with colleges minister John Milloy June 10.

a vote. If more than 50 per cent of the workers vote to unionize, they unionize.

"Working with OPSEU, we will do everything in our power to see that our rights are recognized in law," Couvrette said. "The day is coming soon when those rights will be recognized in reality as well."

Bill 90 will not become law this month. Debate in

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the Legislature will be followed by committee hearings, possibly over the summer. The earliest the new law could be in force is sometime after the Legislature returns to work this fall.

In the meantime, OPSEU is pursuing its case at the Ontario Labour Relations Board. On April 14, after thousands of workers at all 24 colleges had signed union cards, the union asked the Board to order representation votes for part-time support staff and part-time and sessional faculty. The Board declined to do so.

“We were aware when we made our applications that we were asking the OLRB to make a decision where there were some legal uncertainties, which the new law will remove,” said Warren (Smokey) Thomas, president of OPSEU. “After our request for a quick vote was turned down, we urged the government to recognize the democratic wishes of thousands of workers to be part of our union by allowing us to hold a quick vote as soon as the legislation becomes law.

“We are very disappointed that that provision is not in the law, and we will continue to fight to see that it is,” he said. “If I were a college part-timer I would not appreciate being told to wait even one minute longer to exercise my right to collective bargaining – especially when I know that right is a protected right under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

“We will continue to press our case at the Labour Relations Board, just as we will continue to press it in the Legislature,” he said.

Roger Couvrette called on the colleges to end their behind-the-scenes opposition to union rights for

## OPSECAAT meeting all set for June 14

The name is long, but here goes: The Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, known as OPSECAAT, will hold its Annual General Meeting in Toronto this Saturday, June 14.

More than 50 delegates have registered for the meeting, which starts at 10:00 a.m. at the OPSEU Regional Office at 31 Wellesley St. E. All college part-timers and sessionals are invited to observe.

part-timers and sessionals.

“For 32 years, part-time and sessional college workers have been second-class citizens living in an atmosphere of fear and intimidation,” he said. “The new legislation signals the beginning of the end for the old era. Instead of fighting a rearguard action against union rights, the colleges should join with us in building a new workplace environment, one that respects part-time and sessional workers, rather than disparages us and our efforts.

“But with or without their help, we will exercise our rights, and we will move forward.”

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**For full information about the OPSEU drive to win union rights for part-timers and sessionals at Ontario’s community colleges, visit [www.collegeworkers.org](http://www.collegeworkers.org) or call 1-866-811-7274.**

*The Part-Time Times is authorized for distribution by Roger Couvrette, president of the Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (OPSECAAT), and Warren (Smokey) Thomas, president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.*

