

The Part-Time Times

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

OPSEU campaign takes London by storm

Visiting college bigwigs get the message as union stops buses

If anyone in London did not know that part-time and sessional college workers are signing OPSEU union cards, they know now.

A series of recent media events publicized the union organizing drive all over the London area. A Feb. 7 news conference with Roger Couvrette, president of the provincial organization of part-timers and sessionals (OPSECAAT), was covered on A-Channel, CBC Radio, and private radio. A Feb. 10 event attracted more media, including the London *Free Press*. A Monday morning news conference with OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas hit the airwaves and print media as well.

“The sole reason we are driving around Ontario in our blue bus is to make sure every part-timer and every sessional working at a community college knows about our campaign,” said Couvrette, who has been in the news somewhere almost constantly since launching the media campaign



The bus stops here: OPSEU leaders braved icy winds to greet college leaders from across Ontario outside Fanshawe College last Sunday



Jan. 22. “I feel very confident that our message is getting through wherever we visit.

“We’ll keep rolling till we get the job done,” he said.

The keystone event in London happened Sunday night, when OPSEU supporters braved frigid temperatures to talk to delegates to the annual meeting of Colleges Ontario, the colleges’ lobbying arm. The delegates, who included college governors, presidents, and human resources bigwigs, were greeted warmly as they stepped off shuttle buses to attend a banquet at Fanshawe College.

The OPSEU contingent had to stop the buses first.

“I have to say the conference delegates were very cordial, except for maybe five or six per bus,” said

Continued on page 2

London

From page 1

Fleming College part-timer Candy Lindsay. “We told them we wanted them to support union rights for part-timers and sessionals, and most of them said they did.”

The event would not have worked without the commitment of local union leaders, Couvrette said. Paddy Musson, a full-time professor at Fanshawe and chair of OPSEU’s College Academic division, and Marg Rae, president of OPSEU Local 109 (Support – Fanshawe) were on hand, as were OPSEU Executive Board Members Ron Elliot and Laurie Brown.

“I particularly want to commend Frank Green, our lead organizer for southwestern Ontario,” said Couvrette. “Frank really knows how to turn people into action, and action into news.”



London freezing! Dave Kerr, president of the St. Thomas and District Labour Council (left) with André Savoie, Treasurer/Chief Steward of OPSEU Local 109 (Support – Fanshawe) and Fran Borsellino, OPSEU Supervisor of Organizing



Full-time support staff put union rights for part-timers on the bargaining table

Union rights for part-time support staff are now officially on the bargaining table.

At the first meeting of the 2008 round of contract talks between the colleges and OPSEU, the bargaining team for full-time support staff has called on the colleges to agree to “voluntary recognition” of OPSEU as the bargaining agent for part-timers.

“The colleges have already stated that they expressly support the extension of collective bargaining rights to part-timers, so we’ve told them it’s time to back up their words with action and recognize us as the part-timers’ bargaining agent,” said Rod Bemister, chair of the OPSEU bargaining team for full-time support staff at all 24 colleges. “We agree wholeheartedly with Kevin Whitaker, chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, when he said last week that ‘there is no justification for excluding these employees from collective bargaining.’”

The OPSEU collective agreement for full-time support staff expires Aug. 31, 2008. Bargaining is scheduled to continue for several months.

In the meantime, OPSEU’s campaign to sign up part-timers and sessionals to the union continues.

“In the next couple of months, we aim to demonstrate conclusively that part-time and sessional employees at Ontario’s colleges want our union to represent them,” OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas told a news conference Feb. 11. “In our view, that’s the only thing that matters. After that, collective bargaining should begin right away.”

The OPSEU collective agreement for full-time academic staff expires Aug. 31, 2009.

If it's Tuesday, it must be Georgian...

Bus tour keeps rolling

A couple of hundred part-time and full-time staff at Georgian College stopped by to visit the OPSEU "It's time!" bus as it rolled into Barrie on Tuesday, Feb. 12.

The bus was parked outside the main entrance to Georgian as part of the ongoing drive to recruit part-timers to join OPSEU. Despite the bitter cold recruiters received a warm welcome as they served up pizza and sausages. Regis Yaworski, lead organizer for Georgian College, said a lot of membership cards were signed over the lunch period.

"Anytime the bus shows up with Candy and Roger, it signals a special moment in our membership drive and people get pretty excited," said Yaworski. "It's also great to see Executive Board Members like Claire Rowett and Doris Middleton show up to lend their support."

As at other

colleges, the campaign is on track and meeting its targets at Georgian.

"We still have a lot of work to do," said Roger Couvrette, president of the part-timers and sessionals organization (OPSECAAT), "but we're not afraid of hard work, especially given the enthusiasm for the our organizing drive from college to college.

"The response is just great."

The blue bus heads east next week.



Drumming up support at Georgian College: OPSEU Local 349 (Georgian – Support) vice-president Denise Near, OPSECAAT president Roger Couvrette, OPSECAAT vice-president Candy Lindsay, OPSEU retiree Bill Henry, OPSEU Executive Board Member Claire Rowett, part-time organizer Christine Nugent, OPSEU Local 350 (Georgian – Academic) vice-president Mary O'Farrell-Bowers, OPSEU Executive Board Member Doris Middleton, and OPSEU part-time campaign organizer Regis Yaworski.

St. Clair College:

All quiet on the western front

While some colleges have tried to put roadblocks in the way of OPSEU's part-timer organizing drive, that's not a problem at St. Clair College in southwestern Ontario.

College management there has been "very understanding of and cooperative with the process

we're involved in, and we appreciate that," OPSEU Local 138 president Bernie Nawrocki (St. Clair – Academic) told the St. Clair student newspaper, *The Saint*.

The Saint published an extensive feature on the OPSEU organizing drive in its Feb. 1 issue.

College interference helps union, top college official says

Ontario colleges that interfere with OPSEU's drive to organize part-timers and sessionals are just helping the union get more publicity, says Don Sinclair, Executive Director of the College Compensation and Appointments Council (the Council).

"It is anticipated that OPSEU will continue to mount pressure both for political purposes and in an effort to raise the profile of their card signing campaign," Sinclair wrote to college presidents Jan. 24. "We would recommend that if the local union chooses to engage in information pickets, that such conduct be accommodated provided it is not unduly disruptive to normal operations.

"Unnecessary confrontation will simply provide OPSEU with further media opportunities," he said.

Sinclair also cautioned college presidents about threatening employees' job security during the organizing drive.

"It is also important that you ensure that managers who are discussing this organizing drive with their employees do not imply in any way that an employee's job security could be in jeopardy as a result of signing a card," he wrote in the confidential memo. "This is illegal and such comments could lead to unnecessary litigation."

The Council has provided college officials with a Q&A document to help them answer questions from

the news media. Here's one example:

***Question:** OPSEU has said the part-time employees receive poor wages. Is this true?*

***Answer:** No, Ontario colleges pay competitive rates to part-time employees. On average, part-time faculty are paid \$40 an hour. Part-time support on average are paid more than \$17 per hour.*

It's a pretty strange answer considering that faculty are not paid at all for prep time, evaluation time, or helping students outside of class. And as far as paying "competitive rates," the only meaningful comparison is to the rates paid to full-timers under the OPSEU collective agreements – and part-timers receive only a fraction of those rates.

Plus there is also the matter of non-pay issues like benefits, pensions, job security....

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 (OPSEU).

For full information about the OPSEU drive to win union rights for part-timers and sessionals at Ontario's community colleges, just visit or call!

www.collegeworkers.org
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