

The Part-Time Times

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

2008 will be breakthrough year for college workers: OPSEU president

Part-time and sessional workers at Ontario's community colleges will make history this year, the president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) says.

"The year 2008 will be a breakthrough year for college part-timers and sessionals," says Warren (Smokey) Thomas. "This is the year they win the right – and the ability – to take part in collective bargaining to improve their wages and working conditions."

In October 2007, OPSEU launched the largest union organizing drive in Ontario history, aiming to sign up a majority of the more than 12,500 part-timers and sessionals at 24 community colleges. For decades, these workers had been excluded by law from collective bargaining.

But in June 2007, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that collective bargaining is a protected right under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Then in August 2007, the McGuinty government announced its intention to formally recognize collective bargaining rights for part-timers and sessionals. The government appointed Kevin Whitaker, chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, to review the legislation and make recommendations for change. Whitaker's report is due for release at the end of January.

In the meantime, OPSEU's organizing drive continues.

"Success in collective bargaining depends on strong support from college part-timers and sessionals," said Thomas. "We will keep signing people up at every college until we reach the critical



mass we need."

Full information on the organizing drive, and how to sign an OPSEU union card today, is available online at www.collegeworkers.org or by calling the OPSEU hotline at 1-866-811-7274.

Ad campaign gets the message out

But Humber College nixes washroom ads for OPSEU organizing drive

Today is the first day of an OPSEU ad campaign to promote the union's organizing drive for part-timers and sessionals at Ontario community colleges.

Transit shelter ads on campuses and nearby streets will appear at all 24 colleges except for Loyalist College in Belleville, where a billboard ad will

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Ad campaign

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appear on Wallbridge-Loyalist Road. Washroom ads will also appear at several large colleges, but not at Humber College in Toronto. At Humber, the college has refused, without explanation, to allow the washroom ads.

“The purpose of our ads is very simple,” says Roger Couvrette, a part-time faculty member at Centennial College who is also president of the provincial organization of part-timers and sessionals. “We want to let part-timers and sessionals know that the organizing drive is on, and we want them to know how to find out more by visiting our web site or calling our hotline.

“The idea that the administration at Humber would censor this kind of communication is outrageous, especially at a college that is famous for its excellent journalism program. Humber College should be a leader in the protection and promotion of free speech, not a self-appointed censor.”

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– Roger Couvrette, President,
Organization of Part-time and Sessional
Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts
and Technology (OPSECAAT)

Couvrette says the union is reconsidering its approach to washroom advertising at Humber.

“Obviously certain ads are more acceptable at Humber than others,” he said. “We may have to order some blue condoms that say, ‘It’s time!’”



Order your free desk clock

The smallest billboard for OPSEU’s college organizing campaign stands just 5 cm tall. It’s a digital desk clock, and if you work for an Ontario community college, it’s also free. To order yours, visit <http://www.opseu.org/caat/parttime/deskclock.htm>.

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).