

Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)



**Part-timers a Pool of Exploited, Expendable
Labour**

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One teacher's story

Laurence Daw found life as a part-time instructor at one of Ontario's colleges to be a living nightmare.

Part-time faculty at the colleges are not paid any set amount. The colleges can pay them whatever they want to. Even if scheduled classroom time is limited by law, the instructor can work unlimited hours in such tasks as preparing courses and marking. Daw says that at many times of the year his pay was about the minimum wage, or even less. And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

Ontario's colleges have two workforces: they have full-time faculty and support groups that can bargain collectively for their wages, benefits and working conditions, and they have the part-time ghetto, overworked, underpaid and without job security, consisting of the majority of academic and support workers in the colleges.

In Laurence Daw's case, now before the Ontario Human Rights Commission, he alleges the College started forcing him out and harassing him after he revealed a mental health problem to the administration. He says it is a case of discrimination based on disability.

Fanshawe's union, OPSEU, had no way of protecting him. Because of the college labour law, itself discriminatory, Daw and other college part timers cannot join a union. They cannot have access to union benefits, the workload formula, pensions, or other employment rights.

They are a pool of expendable, exploited labour in each of Ontario's 24 colleges.

"With the amount of prep time and marking we do, at some times of the year part-timers are making less than a dollar an hour," says Daw, who is currently working in a call centre making barely above minimum wage and having no opportunity to use his true skills or qualifications.

Further, he says, "when I revealed a disability to them I was forced to have a meeting with the dean and the chair, and it was an abusive meeting." He says his psychiatrist has indicated he is capable of teaching a full-load. Students consistently gave him superior evaluations for his courses. He has a PhD in English and has taught at the University of Western Ontario, and has numerous academic papers and publications to his credit.

Yet, when he applied to teach full-time he was turned down in favour of candidate who was, in Daw's opinion, less qualified and less experienced. Because Laurence is not a member of the union, he could not even grieve the decision. He says the deans have absolute power over the part timers and nepotism is rampant.

Without a grievance procedure or a fair system for adjudicating human rights at Fanshawe, "the college did nothing." Daw was forced to go to the OHRC. He has been waiting a year for his case to be heard.

But Daw says the part-timers' situation is not only bad for part-timers. It's bad for full-time faculty because it undermines their bargaining position. Colleges can load up on part-timers to weaken the union's position.

Clearly, it's bad for students as well. Part-timers might not even have a desk or a place to meet with students for individual assistance, as a full-timer might. Part-timers are also asked to teach courses they are not qualified for, says Daw. In his department, he says there was a mathematics teacher and a sociology teacher teaching a course on "Love Literature," a course more suited, in his view, to the skills of a teacher with a PhD in literature.

Access is also a problem. "Clearly the students can't come and see us when they need to," he said. "I have interviewed students in the halls. Or three part-timers share one desk. We can't even sit down and work. We have no workload formula (as full-timers do)."

"Education quality has plummeted. It's the students who suffer."

He says qualified part-timers are systematically kept out of contention for full-time positions. "They know because we understand how the system works, we would come in and demand accountability which is what they are most afraid of."

Laurence Daw is pursuing this situation with his MPP, Deb Matthews, London. Meanwhile, the exploitation of the expendable workforce in the colleges continues, and education quality keeps declining.

Part-time Support staff employees

Stories from the front- line

Carrie is an early childhood education worker at a community college. She works from 6 to 8:30 a.m., goes home, and then comes back to work from 3:30 to 6:30 p.m. When a full-time job became available, Carrie applied but was not hired. "My supervisor said that she would have difficulty finding another person to work the split shift."

Paul was hired to replace a union worker on Sick Leave. After 2 years, the College determined that the permanent worker will not be returning, and laid Paul off in order to fill the position with another, displaced worker. Six months later, another caretaker position at that same campus became vacant. Paul was not told of this position, although he phoned regularly to ask if positions were available and had made it known to his former Supervisor and Employee Relations that he wished to return to work as soon as possible. The son of another Caretaker under the same Supervisor was hired to fill the new vacancy.

Sara was a Youth job consultant. After almost one year in a temporary position, Sara had to take a leave to have a baby. She made it clear that she wished to return, but was told she had no right to return, as it was a contract position. Another temporary worker was hired to replace her. The job was posted as a permanent position, but nobody contacted Sara and offered her a chance to apply.

Rosa is a Clerical Worker. She has worked for almost every department at the College, and in many departments she has been called back several times. She fills in for vacations, sick leaves, etc. She is always available at short notice to help where she is needed and has been working this way for over five years. Every time Rosa applies for a full-time position, she is told that she does not have the required skills.

Sayyid is a Computer Technician. He was hired to assist in the computer lab at one campus in the mornings, and at another campus in the afternoons. The Union claimed that, because he was working 35 hours a week, this should be a full-time, bargaining unit position. The supervisors checked their budgets and then told Sayyid he was no longer needed at the second campus. His hours (and wages) were cut in half.

Paula works part-time on paper, but in reality, she works a surplus of 40 hours per week. She has been doing so for almost ten years, in different capacities, and in her current position for five years. Paula is now pregnant. She asked her supervisor about making her position permanent and was told to forget it, because the budget wasn't there. When Paula asked more questions she was

told, by her supervisor, that if she fought it, they would have to lay-off one of her co-workers.

On a notice informing all campus staff of a year-end Holiday Party, workers were told that, because of budget constraints, part-time employees would not be invited. However, they could come if they paid for their own meal.