

# Un Employed

March 13, 2006

News & Views of OPSEU Local 558 Striking Workers

Volume 3, Number 1

## Political pressure will settle strike

On March 7, faculty, counsellors and librarians at Centennial College and across the province began the third strike in college history. Despite management's efforts to spin this strike as a salary dispute, those on the front lines know it is about quality. We are bargaining for smaller class sizes and more full time faculty so that every student can get more time, attention and feedback. This is the hallmark of successful college education.

The Rae Commission reported that "Today our standard of living and consequently our quality of life depend on people having access to education that is on par with the best in the world." Dalton McGuinty, following up on Rae's recommendations, has expressed

his belief that education is the foundation of Ontario's future as a modern economy. McGuinty and Minister Chris Bentley have made it clear that the quality of education our students receive will determine how competitive and successful we are in the global economy. In fact, McGuinty has already put millions of dollars into the Quality Improvement Fund for postsecondary education. Some of this money must go into addressing escalating teacher-student ratios.

We need to force the McGuinty government to live up to the public values it has expressed. The "sardine can model" of forcing as many students as possible into a teacher's day is not the solution.

### Picketing & Politics

Picketing is the backbone of any strike. It keeps the issues visible to the public. It shows the college that business can't continue as usual. It prevents management from continuing classes on exploited part-time labour.

But we also need to remember that our second task in this strike is to apply political pressure on the government to force the management team to reach a settlement that supports quality education improvements. The pressure is on. The message is getting out. We just need to keep it up.

Here are some actions you can take as part of your strike duties:

- Write your MPP
- Write letters to the editor
- Participate on call-in shows
- Attend Queen's Park rally March 16
- Make an appointment to meet with your MPP
- Check the website regularly for daily updates on potential political action: [www.opseu558.org](http://www.opseu558.org)



*Mass picketing slows down Continuing Education classes at Progress Campus*

## Strike Payday: Wed & Friday

Striking workers will receive their OPSEU pay on Wednesdays and the local top up on Friday. Cheques will be distributed by picket captains at your regular shift. If there are any problems (and there may be as we get up and running) please call Strike Headquarters @ 416.289.8817. ✉

## Letters to the Hon. Mary Ann Chambers

I am following up with a phone discussion I had today with one of your staff. I relayed to her my outrage as a Scarborough Centennial faculty, with your political decision to carry on with a youth fair this Saturday at Centennial College. This Saturday could be a shining opportunity for you to show political leadership by canceling the event, and by urging Scarborough youth to demand that the Rae report on quality education be taken seriously.

I teach hundreds of Scarborough youth each year. Last semester alone, I taught 240 individuals and knew most if not all by name. I taught them in 5 classes a week, in crowded classrooms where my theory lectures (which took in 50 students per class in Fall 2004), took in up to 54 in Fall 2005. With these numbers crammed into small classes, it is extremely difficult to manage classroom behaviour, let alone provide interactive, participatory and practical college-based pedagogy. I teach social work students, and in practice labs where students role play crisis intervention, counseling and suicide risk assessment, I now teach up to 35 per lab. When I went to school, my lab classes of this nature were filled at 10.

I understand that many Scarborough youth (and many of my students) have overcome great obstacles to be at college, and continue to struggle against marginalization, poverty, and racism just to stay in school and make better futures for themselves. It is ESSENTIAL that "at risk" youth who are in school, make a connection with faculty and gain validation and some sense of a meaningful personal relationship with post-secondary education. Students need faculty who care about them, and encourage them to stay in school, and meet with them and check in with them and give

them extra recognition and attention when needed. I can guarantee you that personal connections I (and fellow faculty) have made with students have prevented drop-out in countless cases. I've had students tell me this directly.

Sincerely, Karen D'Alessio

Dear Minister Chambers,

I understand that you will host a function on March 11 at the HP Campus of Centennial College. I urge you to cancel this function out of respect for faculty's legal strike to get a fair work contract that ensures quality education for Scarborough students.

As a Minister and the sitting MPP for the area around the HP Campus, and someone who is well respected by your community and constituents, I also urge you to leverage whatever power you have as a Cabinet member to hasten a fair settlement.

One of the most important faculty demands is that Ontario colleges hire more full-time faculty to ensure a stable teaching and learning environment, and stop the sweat-shop labour practices where part-time faculty are hired on short contracts at a pitiful hourly wages even while they carry full course loads. These colleagues, many of whom are women with young families, work without any security and benefits. It is not by accident that large numbers of these faculty are new Canadians with amazing skills and qualifications, but who must face many years of underemployment and low wages with very little hope of becoming full-time. This fact is very personal and sensitive to me as a Jamaican Canadian full-time faculty who continues to witness the marginalization and abuse of many underprivileged Ontario workers. Their struggle is your struggle and my struggle. I feel certain that you can identify. I look forward to your decision to cancel your Saturday function.

Sincerely, Denvil Buchanan. ✉

**Rally at Dundas Square  
March 16, 11am  
Remember to sign in with a  
Centennial Picket Captain.**