

# Un Employed

March 20, 2006

News & Views of OPSEU Local 558 Striking Workers

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## Talks resume today at 9:30

Contract talks between OPSEU and Ontario's colleges resume today at 9:30 a.m.

The news comes after management and the union met on Friday with Chris Bentley, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

"We hope that the colleges got the message from the minister, and we remain optimistic that they'll put a serious and reasonable offer on the table," said OPSEU bargaining team chair Ted Montgomery.

"If there's no new offer, then obviously they haven't got the message yet, and even greater government involvement will have to be brought to bear."

The union was prepared to resume talks on Friday, but management proposed Monday.

Settlement will depend on the colleges tabling an offer that addresses the outstanding concerns about the continuing erosion of the college system.

## Thousands rally in support of quality education

On Thursday, five thousand striking teachers, librarians, counsellors and their supporters converged on downtown to stand up for quality education. The rally began at Yonge-Dundas Square and continued up Bay St. to the high-rise headquarters of the Ministry of Training, College, and Universities.

The rally, which brought in bus loads of strikers from across the province, was an important step in demonstrating the resolve of college faculty to fight for improvements to the college system.

"This week it is crucial for us to continue getting our message out," said Local 558 strike director Eileen Burrows. "The colleges will be looking for any sign that our resolve to achieve our bargaining goals is diminishing."

## Political pressure

For ongoing political action ideas, check out the Local 558 website: [www.opseu558.org](http://www.opseu558.org)



*5000 striking faculty and their supporters delivered a message of quality education at Thursday's rally downtown.*

## MPP walks with picketers



Peter Tabuns, the NDP MPP for Toronto-Danforth, brought coffee and a message of encouragement to strikers at East York Campus on Friday.

## A letter to Ann Buller

Ann,

I received a copy of the memo you are sending to the faculty on strike. It was shared with the Local 558 Executive.

We noted your concern for the safety of our picketers. As I am sure you are aware, there have been many unsafe incidents on the evening pickets.

To ensure safety, it is our request that all evening Continuing Education classes be cancelled for the duration of the strike.

Thank you,  
Jacques O'Sullivan

## Why I am on strike

I am on strike because I can no longer provide my students with the kind of learning they need for today's workplace.

I'm on strike because many courses I teach have been cut from four hours a week to two hours a week in the classroom, yet the workplace is demanding more, not less, from our graduates.

I'm on strike because we are down to 5 full-time faculty in my department, from 14 full-time faculty ten years ago, yet our student enrolment has increased.

I'm on strike because our part-time teachers are used and abused; they are paid part-time wages but are expected to perform full-time jobs. They criss-cross the city, teaching at different colleges to try to earn enough to pay the rent on their basement apartments. Some have taught part-time for 10 years or more years, hoping for the day when they'll be made permanent so that they can provide continuity and contribute to the integrity of college programs.

I'm on strike because more and more students are being crammed into labs, and walls between classrooms are removed to accommodate 80 or more students.

I'm on strike because the college accepts many international students, without providing adequate supports, because they are a good source of revenue.

I'm on strike because over the last few years, there has been a steady decline in funding and an erosion of standards.

Our students deserve better.

Carolyn Whittaker  
Centennial College faculty, Toronto

