

Un Employed

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News & Views of OPSEU Local 558 Striking Workers

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Striking faculty member injured on picket line

Yesterday, John Stammers, long time accounting professor at Centennial College was seriously injured on the picket line during the early morning shift at Progress campus. He was taken to Sunnybrook hospital where he is being cared for in the Critical Care Unit .

While details are still emerging, it appears as if John was struck by a vehicle running the Progress picket line. The police are investigating.

Over the course of the strike, John has expressed a deep commitment to the issues of quality community college education and the goals that faculty are attempting to accomplish in this strike.

The picketing at Progress, and across the college, is continuing in solidarity with John. Please send your thoughts and best wishes for a speedy recovery to John and his family. The Local 558 headquarters has been receiving numerous calls from the bargaining team and locals across the province sending their thoughts and prayers.

The incident has been extremely difficult for all Centennial faculty and especially the other picketers on John's shift.

"I think that what John would want us to do is to carry on with the best pickets possible, and to remain firm on achieving the goals we have set out before us," said Eileen Burrows, local 558 strike director.

During the strike, we continue to have access to our Employee Assistance Plan provided by Warren Shepell. If you would like to talk to a counsellor, call 1-800-387-4765. ☹



Casselman to picket tonight at Progress Campus

OPSEU president Leah Casselman will be picketing with Centennial College's striking professors, counsellors and librarians at Progress campus tonight at 6pm. Casselman's visit demonstrates the solidarity of other OPSEU members with the striking community college workers.

"I am appalled at the utter failure of the colleges to bargain education quality that has resulted in the current strike at 24 Ontario community colleges," Casselman recently wrote to Dalton McGuinty.

Casselman is calling on the Premier to direct the colleges to begin bargaining in good faith.

"We want smaller classes and more faculty so every college student can have more time, more attention, and more feedback." ☹

Local 558 requests closure of Con. Ed. Buller threatens picketing injunction

As teachers, librarians and counselors begin their third week on strike, Centennial continues to keep Continuing Education up and running. Unlike the presidents of some other colleges, such as Durham, Niagara, and Georgian, Buller has refused to postpone evening classes until after the strike. As a result, students are forced to cross picket lines, often only to face internal chaos with delayed part-time instructors, missing students and confusion as to which teachers are on strike.

Picket Coordinator Jacques O'Sullivan formally requested on behalf of local 558 last week that, as at some other colleges, Continuing Education be shut down. The local received no response to the request. We did, though, receive a call from OPSEU's lawyers who had received a call from Centennial's lawyers late on Friday threatening an injunction against

picketing. Rather than talk amicably with the local union first about possible procedures to reduce wait times, Buller had her lawyers call OPSEU directly. In fact, this threatened injunction is the first anywhere in the college system during this strike.

Buller's response

Throughout the strike, Buller has attempted to represent herself as a more caring president. For example, in her recent letter mailed to Centennial faculty at home, she says that she will not participate in ACAATO's communication strategy and that decisions about semester completion will only be finalized when faculty return to the classroom. While faculty welcome these gestures, we believe that Buller needs to take a strong stand on Continuing Education.

"If Buller really cares about the safety of picketers, and in working towards a constructive post-strike relationship, she will shut down Continuing Education, not use her legal team to threaten an injunction" said Jacques O'Sullivan, the picket coordinator for local 558.

"We've seen increased numbers of security officers on the picket lines, but they have been more interested in putting check marks on their clip boards than in doing anything to assist in the safety of striking workers," O'Sullivan continued.

It appears as if security guards have been collecting data to use in a potential injunction. In negotiations with College lawyers, local 558 has agreed to reduce wait times for cars to 2 minutes at college entrances, with no more than an aggregate wait of 20 minutes. ☹



Local 559 president Larry Goldin pickets in solidarity with striking faculty members at the student residence.