

Not a single day longer than necessary

Sisters. Brothers.

As I mentioned at the hospitality suite last night, I consider you my extended family and this weekend for me is a kind of family reunion. I feel like I've been adopted. And I've even heard that over the next few months you're going to do the paperwork to make it legal.

"Not a single day longer than necessary." That's my slogan this morning, which I will explain in a moment.

You know, we've come a long way in a very short period of time.

Let me review three important dates with you, all within the last six months.

June 8. The Supreme Court of Canada rules that the right to bargain collectively is included in the freedom of association provision of the Canadian charter of rights and freedoms and any government which interferes with that right violates the charter.

August 30. The McGuinty government announces that it intends to amend the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, and related legislation, in order to recognize the right of part-time college workers to bargain collectively.

September 20. The board of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union votes unanimously to launch a drive to sign up part-time college workers into OPSEU, kicking off the largest recruitment campaign in the history of the labour movement in Ontario.

A long way. A short period of time.

You know, brothers and sisters, when we began this struggle, our slogan was "I Believe in Fairness." I believe in fairness for part-time college workers.

Today, I've got a different slogan: "Not a single day longer than necessary."

When a part-time college worker tells me that after three years of work he asked for a raise in pay and consequently wasn't rehired, I think: "Not a single day longer than necessary."

Now, please join me in the slogan part. I want to hear some voices. I want to hear Jean, and Betty and Denise Near. I want to hear Bob Holder and Floren Prozyk, Marilou, Rob Bemister and Jan Strickland. I want to hear **all** your voices. Are you ready? Here we go:

When I'm told by a part-time college worker that after 17 years on the job, management passed her by and hired a friend to fill an identical full-time position, I think: "Not a single day longer than necessary."

When I'm standing in a classroom, first at Algonquin and now at Centennial, and I know that I am being used, used as a source of cheap labour, and I know that thousands of sisters and brothers, part-time college faculty and support staff, are being used, used as a source of cheap and disposable labour, and I start getting angry, I calm myself down with the thought: "Not a single day longer than necessary."

And given that a growing army of unorganized part-time support staff increasingly undermines your ability to achieve workplace goals at the bargaining table, there is certainly another reason to say: "Not a single day longer than necessary."

Sisters and brothers, you and I, we can be proud of what we have already achieved in this campaign.

But much work remains to be done.

I would ask you to join with me and an incredible OPSEU campaign team to make sure that every part-time college worker, every part-time college worker at every college, every part-time college worker on every campus of every college, is given a card to sign so that she or he can join you as a member in good standing of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

This is such an important campaign. And I will tell you what you already know: it cannot succeed without your support and your work. Your support and your work recruiting your part-time brothers and sisters into your union at your college and your campus and all of this over the next very few months.

The time is now, sisters and brothers. We must be firm in our resolve that the exploitation of part-time workers is finally coming to an end and – are you ready? – will continue in our colleges for how much longer?

"Not a single day longer than necessary."

Sisters and brothers, thank you.