

it's about Support

February 10, 2005



Bargaining news for OPSEU members in CAAT support Issue 1

New team ready to begin taking your priorities to the table

It seems like only yesterday we were getting ready for negotiations for our 2003 round. Here we are starting all over again. On Sept. 11-12, 2004 about 100 delegates, alternates and observers from all the college locals met to start the 2005 round of bargaining.

We discussed what worked and what didn't work during the last round, challenges and opportunities facing us and tactics for this round. We also elected our 2005 bargaining team.

The delegates unanimously agreed that member mobilizers worked well in 2003. Locals want this to happen again and the team is committed to making it happen.

Also, the concept of focused bargaining was discussed. This means a new way of doing things. The first change was putting the Colleges Compensation and Appointments Council (formerly Council of Regents) on notice that we intend to stick by the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act on timelines. We will give notice to bargain and then start meeting within the allotted timeframe under the Act.

The second change you have seen is the bargaining survey. Many felt that the old survey was cumbersome and time-consuming. The new survey was shorter, more to the point, and carried over main issues from the previous round that we did not achieve.

The third change is the makeup of the team. There are four new team members, Christine Legault, Claude Lacelle, Julie Helps, and Marg Rae making a new look for the team (see page 3). Two of the new members were mobilizers in the 2003 round of bargaining.

The fourth change was at the local level. In preparation for the 2005 demand set, locals were asked to focus their local demands around the issues identified in the bargaining survey.

At demand set, Dec. 11-12, 2004 we continued with that theme to identify those demands to go forward to the table. The team will then take those demands and focus them, so that the numbers of demands that go to the table are more manageable and the team can drive the agenda by staying focused on priority issues. This will prevent the management team from "picking and choosing" what they wish to address.

This round of bargaining we are committed to building and improving on our past achievements. Each team member has been assigned specific colleges (see page 3). If you have any questions or comments don't hesitate to contact them through our email address.

In solidarity,

Your bargaining team

Authorized by:

Leah Casselman, President

“The Union’s never done anything for me”

By Rick Nemisz

A fair statement? I can tell you that it is not unique to the members of Local 353, from any college support staff local, or any OPSEU member.

With thanks to Rod Bemister, a friend, a fellow Union activist and chair of our Bargaining Team, I obtained a copy of our Collective Agreement from 1970. Since it is normally the union side of the bargaining table that is searching for improvements to our wages, benefits, job security and language for our members, I wanted to compare what we had to what we now have.

- In 1970, wages ranged from \$1.74 / hr. to \$4.83 / hr.; 35 years later they range from \$15.74 / hr. (I used PB 5 since no one at Durham is below PB 5) to \$34.53 / hr. That’s not bad: between a 715 per cent and 906 per cent pay increase, I believe the union got that for me; I don’t believe the employer graciously handed it over.
- In 1970 our annual incremental increases (moving through the pay grid) could be withheld, subject to satisfactory performance of duties; our six month probationary period could be extended by an additional six months by the college.
- In 1970 we had the same holidays except for two holidays as specified by the college, but you were expected to be at work between Boxing Day and New Years Day. We now have that week off.
- In 1970 we were allotted two weeks vacation after one year of service, three weeks after three years service and four weeks after twenty years of continuous service. Check out Article 11 of our current agreement; not only do we receive vacation days quicker but we also receive additional days for each year of service, and two more weeks vacation.
- In 1970 an employee could apply for a maternity leave; if it was not practical for the college, the employee would be terminated, but be given preferential treatment for future vacancies. No Supplementary Benefit Plan, no parental leave, no seniority, and simply “preferential” treatment if you wanted to return to work. Remember, it was union activists who worked hard and lobbied to change the 17 weeks into a year’s leave of absence.
- In 1970 we could be granted a leave of absence without loss of pay to attend the funeral of a parent, spouse, child, brother or sister. Our current Article 12.5 is a greatly expanded version of this.
- In 1970 there was no personal leave with pay, (Article 12.2), no citizenship leave (Article 12.7), no parental leave (Article 12.3.2), no adoption leave (Article 12.3.2), and no prepaid leave plan (Article 12.8).
- In 1970 there was no bumping process. If it was determined that a classification required one less person, then the one with the lowest seniority was laid off. They were not given an opportunity to “bump” into another classification.
- In 1970 our benefits included \$2,000 life insurance, for which we had to pay 25 per cent of the premiums; OHIP coverage, for which we had to pay 25 per cent of the premiums and Workmen’s Compensation (as it was then known, before unions pointed out that women also work). There were no sick days (short term disability plan); there was no long term disability plan except if you qualified for Workmen’s Compensation. There was no extended health plan, which includes the 85 per cent reimbursement of prescribed drugs, equipment, paramedical services such as speech therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, osteopaths, chiropractors, chiropractors, podiatrists, naturopaths or masseurs. There was no vision care, there was no hearing care and there was no dental plan. Let’s not forget that the college pays 100 per cent of the premiums for everything except long term disability, vision and hearing where they pay 75 per cent of the premiums.

There have been a number of other improvements in our collective agreement in those 35 years. Our agreement has gone from a 23-page, 3 ½” x 5 ½” document to the 143-page 5 ½” x 8 ½” document we have today.

I have had the privilege of representing the members of this local and the province-wide support staff on several bargaining teams in the early 1990s and most recently in 2003, and was re-elected to the team entering negotiations now. All of these changes were not given to us by the employer; your bargaining teams had to argue, make representation, research and provide documentation to achieve these goals, so yes the Union did do this on your behalf.

An excerpt from a local newsletter article by Rick Nemisz (Local 353 and member of this year’s Bargaining Team).

It is amazing reading through the list of benefits we have acquired through the efforts of the previous bargaining teams. Your new bargaining team will strive to carry on this great work and add to the growing list.

Meet your Bargaining Team.....



Rod has worked at Seneca College since 1988 where he began as a security guard. He works now in the English Language Institute as a technician. He has been vice-president of his local for four years and is currently president of the largest support local in the college system. Rod is chair of the provincial Employee Employer Relations Committee and a member of the Classification Review Committee. This is Rod's third round of negotiations.

Rod Bemister, Local 561, Chair, Technician, Seneca College



Christine has worked at George Brown College for 22 years. She has been chief steward for the past year and the classification steward for three years. Christine is a member of the Joint Classification Committee. She hopes support staff will gain their rightful place in the colleges as an integral part of the college system as a result of this round.

Christine Legault, Local 557, Vice Chair, SSO Atypical, George Brown College



Claude has worked at Algonquin College as a Registered Respiratory Therapist and Respiratory Care Practitioner for 30-plus years. Claude has been involved with the union for about 12 years. He has represented the local on the College Academic Council for five years, and also the Occupational Health and Safety Committee. Claude has been chief steward for the last six years. He is vice chair of the Joint Classification Committee.

Claude Lacelle, Local 418, Technologist Atypical, Algonquin College



Julie has worked at Durham College for seven years as a training consultant with Job Connect. She is chief steward of her local and writer/editor of the local's newsletter. Julie was one of the provincial mobilizers at Durham during the last round of negotiations. She is a member of the provincial Joint Classification Committee and is the vice chair of the provincial Employee Employer Relations Committee. Julie hopes to bring a new perspective and a new energy to this round of negotiations.

Julie Helps, Local 353, SSO Atypical, Durham College



Richard has been employed at Confederation College for 14 years. He has been chief steward and is now local president. Richard served on the two previous bargaining teams and brings experience from the Grievance Scheduling Committee, Joint Classification Committee and Employee/Employer Relations Committee. Prior to being involved with OPSEU Richard was an activist with the Brotherhood of Railway Airlines and Steamship Clerks. He was actively involved in health and safety and a member of the bargaining team.

Richard Belleau, Local 731, Skilled Trades Worker Confederation College

Meet the team (continued)



Marg has worked at Fanshawe for five years. She is the chief steward at her local. Marg also sits on the Union College Committee and Employment Stability Committee at Fanshawe, as well as being elected to the provincial Employee Employer Relations Committee for the first time. This is Marg's first round of negotiations and believes that her experience as chief steward will serve her well during this round.

Marg Rae, Local 109, Technologist B, Computer, Fanshawe College



Rick started at Durham in 1976 and became involved with his local in 1977. After the strike in 1979, he became the local president and has held the position for 25 years. Rick served on the bargaining team 1989-1997 and is again on the 2003 team. He is looking forward to bringing his experience to this round. Rick has worked on the Joint Insurance Committee, Grievance Scheduling Committee and Employee Employer Relations Committee.

Rick Nemisz, Local 353, General Maintenance, Worker, Durham College



Brian Gould started his career as a public servant in 1972 as a "chain man" on a survey crew with the Department of Highways. He was an OPSEU activist, president of Local 536 and a member of his Ministry Employee Relations Committee. Brian became an OPSEU negotiator in 1990, and has worked with bargaining teams in the Ontario Public Service, broader public service and CAAT Support. "An important piece in the bargaining process is knowing that the members are behind the whole team, all the way," he says.

Brian Gould, OPSEU Staff Negotiator

Your bargaining team

Rod Bemister, Chair; Local 561 Seneca College
Christine Legault, Vice-Chair, Local 557 George Brown College
Claude Lacelle, Local 416, Algonquin College
Julie Helps, Local 351 Durham College
Marg Rae, Local 109, Fanshawe College
Richard Belleau, Local 731, Confederation College
Rick Nemisz, Local 351, Durham College
EERC members
Rod Bemister, Chair; Local 561 Seneca College
Julie Helps, Local 351 Durham College
Christine Legault, Vice-Chair, Local 557 George Brown College
Marg Rae, Local 109, Fanshawe College
Rick Nemisz, Local 351, Durham College

Bargaining Team Members and their assigned Colleges

Rod Bemister – Conestoga, Mohawk, Niagara and Seneca
Christine Legault – Sheridan, George Brown, Humber
Julie Helps – Durham, Loyalist, Sir Sandford Fleming
Claude Lacelle – Algonquin, Canadore, La Cite
Rick Nemisz – St. Lawrence(s), Georgian, Centennial
Marg Rae – Fanshawe, Lambton, St. Clair
Richard Belleau– Confederation, Northern, Sault, Boreal, Cambrian
Contact the bargaining team at: bargaining@rogers.com