

The Part-Time Times

A newsletter for Ontario community college part-time and sessional employees and friends

Labour Board orders vote for part-time and sessional faculty



Three-week voting period starts Jan. 19

Part-time faculty at Ontario's community colleges are finally getting their say.

Late in the evening of Tuesday, Jan. 6, the Ontario Labour Relations Board ordered a union representation vote to let 9,000 part-timers and sessionals at 24 colleges decide if they want to become OPSEU members.

"We have worked so hard for so long to get to this day that it's hard to believe it has finally arrived," said Warren (Smokey) Thomas, president of OPSEU. "Our job now is to work even harder to get out the vote so part-time and sessional faculty can become part of our great union and take part in collective bargaining to improve their wages and working conditions."

The Labour Board ordered the vote after OPSEU filed an application for certification on Dec. 2, 2008. To back its application, the union presented the Board with over 5,000 union cards signed by college faculty.

"At every college I've visited over the last two years, I have been overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of part-timers and the depth of their desire to take their future into their own hands," said Roger Couvrette, president of the organization of part-timers and

sessionals (OPSECAAT). "I urge each and every part-timer and each and every sessional to get out and vote YES to joining OPSEU."

Voting will take place over a three-week period from Jan. 19 to Feb. 5, 2009. Labour Relations Officer from the Board will supervise the ballot boxes. Voting will take place at 58 locations on college campuses.

"In many cases the ballot boxes will only be in a certain location for a few hours," said Couvrette, "so if you have been or currently are a part-time or sessional faculty member it is very important to figure out where and when you are going to vote.

"I encourage you to go directly to our web site at www.collegeworkers.org and look at the list of vote times and locations. Then mark your date, time, and place on your personal calendar.

"So many people have worked so hard for this opportunity. We cannot afford to waste it."

Since the McGuinty government's changes to the *Colleges Collective Bargaining Act* last October, all part-time and sessional faculty are grouped into a single province-wide bargaining unit. This means that voters may vote at any location in the province.

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La Cité and Algonquin activists gathered in Ottawa Jan. 6 to plan for the certification vote for part-time and sessional college faculty. From left to right: Benoit Dupuis (full-time faculty, La Cité), Mariette Blanchette (part-time faculty, La Cité), Candy Lindsay (Vice-President, Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology [OPSECAAT]), Maryanne Jackson-Hughes (part-time faculty, Algonquin), Claude Lacelle (retired full-time support staff, Algonquin), Roger Couvrette (President, OPSECAAT), Barb Linds (retired OPSEU campaigns officer and lead for colleges in eastern Ontario), Caron Fitzpatrick (part-time faculty, Algonquin), Fernand Begin (member of OPSEU's full-time faculty divisional executive), Jack Wilson (full-time faculty, Algonquin), Pierre St-Gelais (full-time faculty, La Cité).

“You do not have to vote at the college where you work,” Couvrette said. “If you work at Seneca but live near Humber, you can vote at Humber, and so on.

“The main thing is to be sure to vote.”

OPSEU organizers will be working hard to communicate with voters over the next four weeks, said OPSEU President Thomas.

“Voter contact is key for all of us who want to see this organizing drive succeed,” he said. “Part-time and sessional faculty often spend very little time on campus, so I am calling on all OPSEU members who work in the college system to go the extra mile to reach out to them. This means wearing our VOTE YES buttons and stickers, putting up our VOTE YES posters, and answering any questions part-timers and sessionals may have.”

The OPSEU campaign web site at

www.collegeworkers.org has complete information about the vote and the union, as well as a listing of vote times and locations across the province. Vote materials have already been shipped to OPSEU regional offices and organizers around Ontario.

For full information about the OPSEU drive to win union rights for part-timers and sessionals at Ontario’s community colleges, visit www.collegeworkers.org or call 1-866-811-7274.

The Part-Time Times is authorized for distribution by Roger Couvrette, president of the Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (OPSECAAT), and Warren (Smokey) Thomas, president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.