

# I believe in

# FAIRNESS

## for part-time college workers!

A progress report on the OPSEU campaign to win union rights for Ontario college part-timers • April 2006

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person hired was being paid more than me. ber. I got a call from one college on Sept. 3 e? How comfortable are you talking in given the sense that we are begging for ing in January?” And then we’re not called he first day of classes and was told “Come was told, “Go ahead. We don’t know if we en teaching part time for 18 years and longer. • I’ve been teaching for three he course starts and told what I’m teaching. ek. I share a computer and there is no desk the college should trump the outside if we’re not capable? • I’m a Library

## An exploited underclass

Ontario colleges exploit over 16,000 part-time workers, both faculty and support staff, as a source of cheap labour.

Part-timers are paid less than full-timers. They have no job security. They have few or no benefits. Sometimes they even have to work for free.

How can the colleges treat them this way? Easy. **Ontario is the only province in Canada where it is against the law for college part-timers to join a union.** Without union rights, part-timers can’t bargain a better deal for themselves. **Part-timers have no say** in how the colleges treat them.

OPSEU believes college part-timers have the same democratic rights as everyone else. That’s why we’ve launched a major campaign to change the law.

This report outlines our progress to date.



# Campaign launch

The campaign began in the spring of 2005 with the launch of a petition and the distribution of posters and buttons. Four members of the OPSEU CAAT Divisional Executives (Mary Ann White, Fernand Begin, Betty Cree and Jean Fordyce) were designated by their executives to work on the campaign.

The first focus groups were held at Fanshawe, Algonquin/La Cité, and St. Clair Colleges. In June, a presentation was made to the Executive Board. The campaign had a significant presence at the conventions of both the Canadian Labour Congress and the Ontario Federation of Labour. Delegates to the OFL campaign passed a resolution supporting the campaign.

The public launch of the campaign was during the week of October 24, 2005. It was timed to coincide with Fair Employment Week, a North-America-wide week of action to call attention to the plight of contingent and part-time workers at colleges and universities. The launch generated news coverage across the province.

## Complaint to the International Labour Organization

On the international front, the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) made a complaint to the International Labour Organization, asking the United Nations agency to find the province of Ontario in violation of the ILO core conventions of the right to organize and to bargain collectively.

The ILO officially received the National Union's complaint on June 7, 2005. The complaint was dealt with at the next meeting of the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association in November 2005. At that time, it was noted that the Committee had not received a response from the government of Canada (Ontario) to the complaint and had asked the government to respond as soon as possible.

The ILO will be considering the National Union complaint against the Ontario government in June of this year.

## Private member's bill at the Ontario Legislature

In October, Rosario Marchese, NDP Critic for colleges and universities, tabled a private member's bill which, if enacted, would delete the clauses in the current *Colleges Collective Bargaining Act* that exclude part-timers from union membership.

# What is college management saying?

The CAAT Academic Divisional Executive asked at a recent EERC meeting for a written position from the College Compensation and Appointments Council on the status of part-time faculty. In a letter dated January 20, 2006, the Council wrote:

*“We would note that Part Time Faculty have always had the freedom to associate together in voluntary organizations, although we are not aware that any such part time association exists”.*

## Our campaign in the colleges

During the fall and early winter, focus group meetings continued at colleges across the province. To date, we have met with part-time faculty at 20 colleges, and with part-time support staff at 17 colleges. Additional meetings are planned. The focus group meetings have the following goals:

- to create a buzz at the colleges;
- to provide us with information about working conditions and issues for part-timers; and
- to build our network of part-timers in the colleges.

As a first step, we are creating part time committees at each college. These committees will:

- connect part timers with each other and with our members;
- provide an opportunity for part-timers to talk about their issues; and
- involve CAAT locals and part-timers in actions and activities.

## Building the network

A survey has been developed for distribution to part-timers through the steward structure of our locals. The survey can also be completed on-line. The survey has provided us with useful information, as well as with contact information for part-timers so we can communicate with them directly. Part-timers have been encouraged to share their experiences and stories, and these are being published on the campaign website at [www.collegeworkers.org](http://www.collegeworkers.org).

Our main vehicle for communicating with part-timers is our newsletter, *The Part-Time Times*. *The Part-Time Times* has been circulated to all our part-time contacts, as well as to every CAAT member for which we have an e-mail address. We will also be developing a monthly issue sheet on topics of interest to part-timers.

# Lobbying

The goal of our campaign is to change the law so that part-time college workers have the right to union representation and the right to bargain collectively.

Part-timers' rights are not on the government's legislative agenda. Last July, the Director of the Postsecondary Education Division of the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, wrote that: *"While this is a large and complex issue, I've not heard demands from the part-time workers themselves, or from the college boards, who are their employers. Nor was the issue raised by the Rae Report."*

TCU Minister Chris Bentley refuses to even acknowledge the existence of part-timers in the college system.

For their part, the colleges say it's a legislative issue. *"As the bargaining rights in the college sector are statutorily determined, it is a matter that is strictly within the purview of the Legislature,"* the Colleges Compensation and Appointments Council has stated.

It is critical that we begin to influence individual MPPs, particularly Cabinet Ministers and members of the Liberal Caucus. We've asked locals to put together MPP lobby teams that include part-time and full-time constituents. Locals may ask their Executive Board Members and local labour councils to help with the lobby.

The next phase of the external campaign includes:

- A request to OFL affiliate presidents, asking them to send letters of support for our campaign to Minister Chris Bentley.
- Actions specifically targeted at Chris Bentley, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. This will include solidarity pickets at the minister's London constituency office, as well as media opportunities in the London area.
- The development of an article for student newspapers, and a brochure targeted at students. These will be provided to locals, which will be asked to arrange meetings with newly elected student councils and student newspaper editorial boards to discuss the campaign from the perspective of *"Our working conditions are students' learning conditions."*

## Summer campaign: in the community

The summer is a perfect time to educate, inform and engage community members in our campaign. Stay tuned for the following:

- A community based postcard campaign will be launched. Displays will be at a variety of community events, including farmers' markets, festivals, shopping centres, etc., as well as events attended by local MPPs.
- Planning will take place for local labour day events across the province.
- Planning will take place for "welcome back" events at each college in September.

# Get involved!

For more information about the campaign and to find out how you can get involved, visit our website at [www.collegeworkers.org](http://www.collegeworkers.org)



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