

## **News Conference**

*Introduction of OPSECAAT executive and organizing drive–*

*Remarks by Leah Casselman, Jan 31, 2007*

*President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union*

**Check against delivery**

Hello everyone and thank you for attending today. I'm Leah Casselman, president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

This is one of the largest and most exciting campaigns I've been involved in.

With me is Roger Couvrette, president of the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology: OPSECAAT. Roger is a part-time teacher at Algonquin College in Ottawa.

Along with Roger, is Candy Lindsay, Vice President of OPSECAAT. Candy is a support staff member at Fleming College in Peterborough. Also Veronica Pinnock, secretary-treasurer of the association, support staff at Seneca College.

Roger, Candy and Veronica are leading one of the largest labour organizing drives in the recent history of this country.

At OPSEU, we represent full-time faculty and support staff at Ontario's 24 community colleges. The college part-

timers --virtually alone among employees in Ontario -- are excluded by law from joining a union and participating in collective bargaining.

Ontario colleges have taken full advantage of this special loophole. There are now 17,000 Part-time and Sessional employees -- almost one thousand per college - but only 15,000 full-time employees.

Most part-time workers have no job security, no benefits, no pension, and are paid poorly and inconsistently.

No other employer in the province has the ability to exploit its workforce in the way the Ontario college system can.

We're here to ask Dalton McGuinty to change the law excluding college part-timers from organizing and bargaining like any other workers. All it takes is one stroke of a pen.

When the International Labour Organization in Geneva tells the province of Ontario its colleges are not living up to world labour standards, we know we have a problem.

Last fall, the ILO said this about the colleges: "(we fail) to see any reason why the principles on the basic rights of association and collective bargaining afforded to all workers should not also apply to part-time employees."

Further, the ILO called on the McGuinty government “to rapidly take legislative measures, in consultation with the social partners, to ensure that academic and part-time support staff in applied arts and technology fully enjoy the rights to organize and bargain collectively, as any other workers.”

As any other workers.

Premier, this discrimination must end now.

OPSECAAT, has been formed to act like a ‘union in waiting’ for these workers. OPSECAAT is signing up members this winter in every college. OPSEU members are a key part of this drive.

And both OPSECAAT and OPSEU will continue to put pressure on Premier McGuinty and his Ministers until they change the law.

We have with us today a total of 7618 petitions and 4,000 signed postcards.

We have also received copies of more than a thousand e-mail messages to the government, all sent in the past 2 1/2 weeks, in response to the ILO decision. These messages of support have come from workers in 27 countries,

including Pakistan, Russia, Indonesia, South Africa, Korea, Bangladesh, Central African Republic, and China.

The solidarity for these workers is worldwide.

That is what happens when the Ontario government breaks international law.

Premier, there is no excuse. This Colleges Collective Bargaining act, that denies these workers their rights, must be changed now.

I'll turn the floor over to Roger, Candy and Veronica.