

The Part-Time Times

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

OPSEU applies for part-time support vote

On Thursday, July 23, OPSEU applied to the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) asking for a certification vote of Ontario's college part-time support workers.

The filing is the culmination of months of card-signing across the province. Due to the extraordinary work of OPSEU member and staff organizers, and the enthusiastic support of the employees, enough cards have been signed to apply for the vote.

"This has been a long time coming," said Candy Lindsay, one of the lead organizers of the campaign. "After nearly four years of working towards getting the legislation in place that would allow the vote, we are one step closer to getting these workers a democratic voice in the workplace."

The legislation, which finally came into effect in the fall of 2008, gave part-time college workers the legal right to unionize. However, the legislation was also very specific on which members would be part of any newly-formed bargaining unit.

"The law says that those who are eligible to vote are any employees working 24 hours a week or less, any Appendix D employees (in the event that they revert back to part-time status), Work Study Students working less than 24 hours, students working 24 hours or less and staff working on non-recurring projects," Lindsay said. "This vote could be a life-changing event



Signing cards at Algonquin College: Eileen Wesley, J.L. Roy, Mike Bisailon, Candy Lindsay and Martha Josephian

for these workers, workers that the law has ignored for over 30 years."

In its filing, OPSEU has asked that the vote take place beginning the week of Sept. 21. Before that happens, the employer will have an opportunity to respond to the union's application.

In the meantime, Lindsay says, it is important for workers to show their support.

"This campaign has always been about the legal right to have a choice," she said. "The signed cards have got us to the point where we can ask for a vote. The next big step is to get everyone out to cast a ballot."

More information on the vote will be available once the employer's response is received.

Vote count for part-time academics still blocked by the employer

In a direct attack on the democratic rights of college workers, the employer continues to block the counting of votes cast by academic part-timers at Ontario's colleges.

Ballots have still not been counted in the vote that was held back in February. The employer continues to rely on an argument that OPSEU did not have the 35 per cent of membership cards signed to allow the vote to happen. In February, the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB)

ordered the colleges to provide the union with start dates, end dates, and employment status for all part-timers and sessionals. The colleges provided only some of the information, and continue to stall and delay providing any evidence to support their argument.

OPSEU has now demanded that the employer provide this information by July 24, 2009. Failing that, we will petition the OLRB to order the colleges to disclose their numbers.

Why vote for OPSEU? The reasons are clear

Collective bargaining will give part-timers the capacity to address inequities:

- Lower pay: Part-time support staff and students are paid less and get no benefits for doing the same work as full-time support staff
- No job security from semester to semester
- Lack of respect for the contribution part-timers make to the quality of students' education and the college system

Improved working conditions for part-time support staff mean better education for our students. Trained, experienced staff are more likely to stay with the college if their own needs are being met.

Remember:

- Confidentiality is assured – no one will ever know how you voted.
- No union dues apply until you and your co-workers approve a first collective agreement.

It's the right thing to do – for yourself, for the thousands of other part-time support staff, and for students.

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 Warren (Smokey) Thomas, president, Ontario Public Service Employees Union. www.opseu.org

