

The Part-Time Times

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

The votes are in the box

Getting them counted is the next challenge

After three weeks of steady, sometimes heavy, voting, part-time and sessional college faculty have cast their ballots on whether they want OPSEU as their bargaining agent.

Voting in Toronto this week netted more than 1,100 votes, pushing the total turnout since Jan. 19 to 3,544 voters.

But the challenge now is to have those votes counted, says Roger Couvrette, president of the organization of part-timers and sessionals (OPSECAAT).

“The colleges have already asked the Ontario Labour Relations Board to deny our application for certification outright,” said Couvrette. “They want the ballot boxes to remain sealed and they don’t want the votes to be counted.”

“The next stage in this struggle is to get those boxes open.”

Most people who hear that the vote won’t automatically be counted are stunned by the news, Couvrette said.

“It really is outrageous,” he said. “In the last five weeks the colleges themselves have been actively urging part-timers and sessionals to get out and vote, while at the Labour Relations Board their lawyers have argued against counting those same votes.”

“The disrespect they are demonstrating towards their part-time workers is shameful,” Couvrette said.



Getting the message out at Humber College, Feb. 2.

Back row: Brian Luckett, treasurer, OPSEU Local 616 (North Bay); Jim Mitchell, president, Local 616; Orville Getz, OPSEU Local 562 president (Humber faculty). **Front row:** Stephanie Gunter, part-time faculty, Lambton College; Lynne Helwig, OPSEU Local 110 staff; Maureen Wall, Local 562 (Humber faculty); Martha Josephian, OPSEU Organizing Representative.

“It risks poisoning the college work environment for years to come. You’d think some college presidents would be concerned about this and voicing their concerns.”

The first opportunity to discuss counting the votes will be at a Labour Relations Officer meeting set for

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Votes

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March 24. The union will be pushing to have the ballot boxes opened and the votes counted as soon as possible.

OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas says it may be time for colleges minister John Milloy to put his foot down with the colleges.

“In October, the McGuinty

government changed the law to allow collective bargaining by part-time and sessional college faculty, and we believe the results of the vote will prove that they want to exercise that right,” Thomas said.

“The colleges should quit wasting taxpayers’ money on a fight they’ve already lost, and the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities should tell them so in the

plainest language possible.”

Watch the next edition of the *Part-Time Times* for more details on the ongoing campaign for bargaining rights for college part-timers and sessionals.



Vote problems at Seneca, George Brown

The vote did not go smoothly at two Toronto colleges this week.

At Seneca College, the Labour Relations Officer arrived at the Markham campus an hour and 15 minutes late on Feb. 4, leaving several voters frustrated and angry after trekking across the city to the polling station. While the vote time was extended by 30 minutes, this did not help voters who had arrived on time but had to leave before voting began.

Meanwhile, at Seneca’s Newnham Campus, college management stationed security guards outside

the polling place, which may have been intended to intimidate voters, said OPSEU organizer Bill Howes. Howes protested to the Labour Relations Officer and the guards were removed.

Seneca human resources people also tried to chase OPSEU scrutineers from the hallways but backed down after Howes challenged them.

“I basically told them that the colleges are public property and that we had a right to be there,” said Howes. “Secondly, we have freedom of speech in this country and we have the right to approach people to encourage them to vote, and to encourage them to vote yes.”

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Pulling the vote at Seneca: OPSEU organizers on campus Feb. 4 are (back row, left to right): Brian Lockett, OPSEU Local 616, North Bay; Rod Bemister, President, OPSEU Local 561 (Support staff – Seneca); Jim Mitchell, Local 616; J-L Roy, OPSEU Local 617 (Sudbury); Mike Bisailon, OPSEU organizer; (front row) Candy Lindsay, vice-president, OPSECAAT; Sabrina DeGirolamo, part-time faculty, Seneca; Brenda Wall, OPSEU Campaigns Officer; and (seated); Bill Howes, OPSEU organizer.

Support staff campaign set for reboot



The end of the certification vote for part-time and sessional faculty will re-start the card-signing campaign for part-time college support staff, says Candy Lindsay, vice-president of the organization of part-timers and sessionals (OPSECAAT).

“Obviously we have put a lot of energy in the last three weeks into the faculty

vote, but now that it’s over we’re going to be directing a lot of that energy into signing up support staff,” said Lindsay, who works part-time as support staff at Fleming College in Peterborough. “Our commitment to those workers has not changed. We hope to be able to apply to have OPSEU represent them as soon as possible.”

Problems

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Meanwhile, at George Brown, college management tore down VOTE YES posters from union bulletin boards. They also tore down posters from Student Association bulletin boards, even though the SA had authorized and stamped them.

The vote location at George

Brown’s St. James location was also very hard to find.

“At the St. James campus, we had asked for a room in the main building near the main entrance, but the college refused,” said OPSEU organizer Brenda Wall.

“To get to the vote location at 290 Adelaide St. E., you had to enter at 200 King St. E., find your way through a maze to get to the back of the building, cross the road, and walk down an alley beside 300

Adelaide to get to the building behind it where the voting was taking place.

“It was not an easy place to find, especially for people who came out to vote from other colleges.”

Despite the difficulties, both locations had solid vote turnouts. Over the week, 283 people voted at Humber College, 210 at Centennial, 355 at Seneca, and 260 at George Brown.

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 (Smockey) Thomas, president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

www.opseu.org

