

The Part-Time Times

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

Whitaker calls for immediate union rights for part-timers and sessionals

The man responsible for coming up with a way to extend union rights to Ontario college part-timers and sessionals has delivered his recommendations to the Ontario government.

In a 103-page report, Kevin Whitaker says part-timers and sessionals should have the ability to join a union and take part in collective bargaining.

“The majority of college employees are now part time,” Whitaker wrote in his report to John Milloy, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. “There is no justification for excluding these employees from collective bargaining. Part-time employees should be immediately granted the right to unionize.”

The exclusion of part-timers and sessionals from collective bargaining is “most likely” contrary to the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Whitaker wrote.



Part-time college worker president Roger Couvrette and OPSEU Local 417 chief steward Mary Ann White (St. Lawrence College – Academic) at a campaign news conference in Brockville Tuesday.

In their presentations to Whitaker, college management supported extension of bargaining rights to part-timers and sessionals as well.

Whitaker recommends the creation of two new bargaining units – one for part-time and sessional faculty, and one for part-time support staff who work 24 hours a week or less.

For each bargaining unit, he says, a union seeking to represent the workers should be required to show that at least 35 per cent of them have signed a union application card. Once 35 per cent have signed a card, the union would be eligible to hold a certification vote. If 50 per cent plus one of those voting support the union, the union would then be legally certified as the bargaining agent for the whole group.

“Mr. Whitaker emphasized that ‘the first and foremost goal’ of his report is to facilitate the right of part-time and sessional workers to unionize,” said Roger Couvrette, president of the provincial organization of part-timers and sessionals (OPSECAAT) and a driving force behind the OPSEU campaign. “We will be looking for confirmation from Minister Milloy and the McGuinty government that Whitaker’s recommendations in this regard will be fully implemented and respected.”

Whitaker’s report also recommends that the *Colleges Collective Bargaining Act* be changed to “formally acknowledge the legitimacy of voluntary recognition agreements.”

“I think this is a significant and positive

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recommendation,” said Couvrette. “If the union can demonstrate that it has the support of the workers then agreement between the employer and the union should be all that’s required to allow collective bargaining to start.”

OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas also voiced his support for the recommendations related to part-time and sessional organizing rights.

“The exploitation of these workers has got to stop, and unionization is the first step toward stopping it,” he said. “We want to see the rights of part-timers and sessionals to unionize passed into law without delay.”

The OPSEU president reserved further comment on Whitaker’s recommendations, some of which involve sweeping changes to the *Colleges Collective Bargaining Act*. Those changes would affect more than 16,000 full-time and partial-load workers currently represented by the union.

“The CCBA is a complex piece of legislation with a complicated history,” he said. “We have serious concerns about some of Mr. Whitaker’s recommendations. In the days ahead we will be

consulting with elected members in our CAAT-Academic and CAAT-Support divisions. We’ll put forward a complete analysis and a strategy once that consultation is complete.

“For the moment, though, the most important thing is to continue our organizing drive, to keep reaching out to part-timers and sessionals, and demonstrate that OPSEU has their support.

“That is job one for the next couple of months, and we can’t forget it,” he said. “Whitaker’s recommendations are a great leap forward for part-timers and sessionals.”

The full report of the Whitaker review is available online at <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/ccba/CollegesReportFeb08.pdf>.

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 (OPSEU).



For full information about the OPSEU drive to win union rights for part-timers and sessionals at Ontario’s community colleges, just visit or call!

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