

The Part-Time Times

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

Colleges veto vote count

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– Roger Couvrette, president, Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (OPSECAAT)



It's time to count the votes!

Algonquin College part-timer Caron Fitzpatrick cast the first vote (of 3,544) on Jan. 19 as part-time and sessional college faculty began three weeks of voting on whether or not to join OPSEU. “The colleges are insulting all of us by opposing the vote count,” Fitzpatrick said last week. “Unfortunately, it’s just the kind of arrogance we’ve come to expect from them.” Seen here with her is OPSECAAT President Roger Couvrette.

Part-time and sessional faculty at Ontario community colleges still don’t know the result of their recent union certification vote, and there’s only one reason why.

“The colleges don’t want the votes to be counted, and they’re doing everything they can think of to prevent them from being counted,” says Roger Couvrette, president of the Organization of Part-Time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology. “We are calling on them to drop their objections to opening the ballot boxes and let democracy prevail.”

Over 3,500 people voted at 24 community colleges in balloting from Jan. 19 to Feb. 5 to determine if part-time and sessional faculty want OPSEU to represent them in bargaining with

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the colleges.

In a Feb. 6 letter to part-timers and sessionals, college boss Don Sinclair suggested that it was the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) that was keeping the ballot boxes sealed and the votes uncounted. But Couvrette called Sinclair's suggestion "dishonest."

"If it weren't for the legal objections of college lawyers, the OLRB would be counting the votes right now," Couvrette said. "When the OLRB ordered the vote on Jan. 6, it stated clearly that the votes would be counted if the parties agreed."

"The colleges do not agree," he said. "They have been fighting against our organizing drive from the very start, and this current example of stonewalling is only the most recent of many."

Sinclair's official title is Executive Director of the Colleges Compensation and Appointments Council. In an effort to break the logjam, Couvrette phoned him personally on Thursday, Feb. 10.

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were syntactically tortured and concluded: 'The short answer is no.'"

Couvrette slammed the colleges for "flagrant hypocrisy" in refusing to count the votes.

"For five weeks, the colleges were urging us to vote, knowing full well that they were opposing those votes ever being counted," he said. "It's the absolute height of arrogance and a stunning display of disrespect towards part-timers and sessionals."

"All this does is demonstrate, once again, why we need a union."

OPSECAAT and OPSEU have launched a media offensive to get the votes counted.

"When I tell reporters that we don't know if the votes are going

to be counted, they can't believe it," Couvrette said. "They say things like, 'That's crazy.' The colleges' opposition defies all common sense and every principle of democracy."

An intensive lobby campaign is also on the union's agenda.

"Clearly, we need to put pressure on the colleges to smarten up, and one important way to do that is through the politicians who pay for them," he said. "We'll be delivering our message to MPPs and the Minister and asking for their immediate assistance."

Lawyers for OPSEU and the colleges will be in the same room March 31 for a meeting with Labour Relations Officers involved in the vote.



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

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