

The Part-Time Times

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

Stop employer interference in union drive, OPSEU president tells colleges minister

The message from OPSEU president Warren (Smokey) Thomas to Ontario colleges minister John Milloy could not have been clearer.

“Please instruct the colleges, in no uncertain terms, to stop interfering with the OPSEU organizing drive.”

In a letter sent Jan. 18, Thomas told Milloy, the Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities, that several Ontario colleges are actively working to stop college part-timers and sessionals from finding out about the OPSEU campaign to help them unionize.

Thomas cited a number of areas where the colleges were misbehaving:

- Some colleges have written to employees with the obvious intention of discouraging them from signing union cards. In some cases, these letters have been mailed to workers’ homes – which some may view as intimidating.
- Some colleges have banned all forms of display advertising, such as posters, on college campuses.
- Some college managers are telling workers that unionization will lead to program cuts – a veiled threat.
- Some colleges are trying to prevent representatives of the union from holding private conversations on college premises with individuals during their breaks.

“If workers in the past had waited for permission from the boss to join unions, they would still be waiting today.... We’re not waiting. We’re talking to our co-workers about what collective bargaining can do for us all, and we will continue to do so.”

*– Roger Couvrette,
OPSECAAT*



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This interference is “a clear violation of Section 2 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which, as you know, guarantees freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of peaceful assembly,” Thomas wrote to Milloy.

“The colleges are not independent bodies, Thomas wrote. “They are agents of the provincial government, pure and simple.

Continued on page 2

“From the point of view of citizens and taxpayers, accountability for the actions of the colleges lies with government.”

The full text of Thomas’s letter is online at <http://www.opseu.org/caat/parttime/pdf/MilloyletterJan1808.pdf>.

While not all the colleges are sticking their noses into the organizing drive, some are clearly working hard to censor it at every turn.

Last week, Fanshawe College in London removed paid washroom ads promoting the campaign. In Toronto, Seneca College is taking OPSEU washroom ads down this week.

The union’s response to the employer’s actions begins today at Algonquin College in Ottawa. The union will hold an all-day picket

and news conference there to inform college workers about the organizing drive and to protest Algonquin’s attempts to shut down the campaign.

Roger Couvrette, president of the provincial organization of part-timers and sessionals (OPSECAAT), will attend the event.

“We intend to talk to college workers about their right to join a union, it’s as simple as that,” said Couvrette. “If workers in the past had waited for permission from the boss to join unions, they would still be waiting today.

“We’re not waiting,” he said. “We’re talking to our co-workers about what collective bargaining can do for us all, and we will continue to do so.”



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).

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