

# The Part-Time Times

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

## A big victory for part-time workers

### Government announces intent to change law

Your hard work has paid off!

College workers across Ontario celebrated in August after a government announcement bringing rights for part-time workers a giant step nearer reality.

Colleges Minister Chris Bentley said Aug. 30 that the McGuinty government intended to recognize the rights of part-time college workers to bargain collectively.

It was an incredible step forward for part-time workers who have worked so hard just to be treated, as the International Labour Organization put it “as any other workers.”

OPSECAAT President Roger Couvrette and many executive members had spent most of the summer traveling in a colourful minivan, meeting on an impromptu basis with Liberal politicians to bring



OPSECAAT President Roger Couvrette: “College workers made it happen. This is all about quality education in the colleges.”

Photo: Brian Willer

attention to the work situation of part-time college workers. Many Liberal MPPs and other candidates had expressed support, as did the Ontario NDP.

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), including its 15,000 full-time academic and support staff, and the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of

Applied Arts and Technology (OPSECAAT) welcomed this as a huge victory.

But part-timers and all college workers do not have these rights yet. The government announcement included a full review of bargaining in the colleges.

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ORGANISATION DES EMPLOYÉS À TEMPS PARTIEL ET DE SESSION DES COLLEGES D'ARTS APPLIQUES ET DE TECHNOLOGIE

OPSECAAT

ORGANIZATION OF PART-TIME AND SESSIONAL EMPLOYEES OF THE COLLEGES OF APPLIED ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY



PLEASE POST AND SHARE WITH PART-TIME WORKERS

# Labour Day a victory celebration for OPSECAAT members

## Big day across Ontario

Labour Day in Ontario was a chance for college workers across Ontario to celebrate their recent victory, as the fight for recognition nears its conclusion.

OPSECAAT members participated in many parades this Sept. 3, including those in Ottawa, Oshawa and Toronto, where President Roger Couvrette, Vice-President Candy Lindsay and Secretary-Treasurer Yvette Munro had a chance to celebrate recent events with labour allies.

## Solidarity was incredible

“It was an incredible feeling of solidarity,” said Couvrette, who attended the Ottawa Labour Day events. “This Labour Day was truly a day to celebrate labour's struggles and victories, not only in the past, but also in the present and future.”

“Part-time college workers have fought and may soon win the hard-won rights that most Canadians take for granted, the right to join a union and bargain collectively, for the betterment of their wages and working conditions,” said Couvrette.

“This was achieved through the hard work of thousands of part-time workers throughout the college system, who dared to take a risk and stand up for fairness.”

## Last step will be a big one

Couvrette said the last step, that of organizing and certifying OPSEU as the bargaining unit for part-time workers, would be a big one. “While this day was tremendous, we have lots more work to do.”



Canadian Labour Congress President Ken Georgetti, OPSECAAT Secretary-Treasurer Yvette Munro, and John Cartwright, President, Toronto and York Region Labour Council, on Labour Day, celebrating victory for part-time college workers. Photo: Patrick Lewars



Oshawa Mayor John Gray, OPSEU First Vice-President/ Treasurer Patty Rout and Jim Freeman, President of the Durham Labour Council, joined OPSECAAT Vice-President Candy Lindsay (centre right) in celebrating the decision by the McGuinty government to recognize the rights of part-time college workers to bargain collectively at a Labour Day event in Oshawa.

# Letter from OPSECAAT President Roger Couvrette

**Dear Part-time college worker:**

We have come a long way in a short time.

Less than a year ago (Nov. 2006) the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (OPSECAAT) was formed with its mission to obtain the right for part-time college workers to bargain collectively.

In that same month, the International Labour Organization (ILO) asked the Ontario government to move rapidly to *“take legislative measures to ensure that academic and part-time support staff in colleges of applied arts and technology in Ontario fully enjoy the rights to organize and bargain collectively, as any other workers.”*

We moved especially decisively and quickly when in June the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that the right to bargain collectively was included in the freedom of association provision of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom.

By the beginning of July we had a van emblazoned with the slogan “Respect the Charter!” and we were going to government announcements in all parts of Ontario and speaking to MPPs, cabinet ministers, and Premier McGuinty himself, with the message that the Supreme Court decision had to be respected when it came to part-time college workers.

Two months after the OPSECAAT “Respect the Charter!” van hit the road and less than three months after the Supreme Court decision, the McGuinty government announced that it would amend the offending legislation and give part-time college workers the right to bargain collectively early in 2008.

Much has been accomplished. But much remains to be done.

We must now get organized so that we can actually exercise that right and – as soon as humanly possible – meet the employer at the negotiating table. With the ongoing commitment and support of the Ontario Public Services Employees Union (OPSEU), we shall see this struggle through to its ultimate conclusion: a collective agreement for part-time college workers.

Stay involved.



Roger Couvrette  
President, OPSECAAT



Ottawa and District Labour Council President Sean McKenny raises the arm of OPSECAAT President Roger Couvrette in a victory salute to celebrate the government's recognition of the right of part-time college workers to bargain collectively at the Labour Day parade in Ottawa. Photo Sandra Carlson.



Toronto: OPSECAAT members march on Queen Street in the Labour Day parade.

## Conference postponed

As a result of the government's announcement, the Quality Education Conference set for September will be postponed until Oct. 27, 2007.

Please contact [chiltz@opseu.org](mailto:chiltz@opseu.org) or [bwall@opseu.org](mailto:bwall@opseu.org) for further information.

## Organizing drive continues

Gaining the right to join a union is one thing. We need to go one step further: joining a union so we can enjoy our rights. OPSEU will be stepping up its organizing drive in the colleges. Stay tuned for more information!

# One more step along the road to fairness

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Kevin Whitaker, Chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, the College Relations Commission and the Education Relations Commission, has been appointed to conduct a broad-based review of the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act (CCBA). "The review will examine the current Act and whether it enables Ontario's colleges to meet their mandate, to respond to changing needs of students, employers and their local communities, and to establish and maintain good labour relations," the government announcement said.



OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas called the government's announcement a victory for fairness and quality education.

OPSEU and OPSECAAT declared this a win. "College workers spoke out for education quality and fairness, and the government listened," OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas said. "This will benefit all workers in the colleges, and the students, by creating a better environment to both work and learn."

"We are going to take this as a promise by this government to improve education in Ontario," Thomas said.

OPSECAAT President Roger Couvrette said months of hard work by college workers across the province was coming to fruition. "My appreciation goes out to this government for recognizing the need to provide fairness for workers and quality education for students."

"This announcement comes because college workers worked hard and made it clear this was an issue of education quality in our colleges," Couvrette said.

Last year, the Geneva-based International Labour Organization ruled that Ontario's Colleges Collective Bargaining Act (CCBA) should be changed to allow part-time staff employed by the 24 Ontario colleges to join a union and engage in collective bargaining.

As well, in June 2007, a Supreme Court of Canada ruling that collective bargaining rights are protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms gave a boost to the workers' cause.

Ontario is still the only province that bars most part-time including sessional staff in colleges from joining a union. But at least now these important rights have moved closer to being a reality.



Authorized for distribution by:

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