

In Canada today, about 22 per cent of workers pay their bills with part-time jobs.

A typical part-time worker earns less than a full-timer doing the same job. Only a few part-timers have health benefits. A pension plan is a dream for most.

Some part-timers are “casuals,” but there’s nothing casual about part-time life. Many part-timers race between two or three jobs just to put food on the table. Family life suffers.

The people on these pages are part-timers who don’t accept the status quo. They don’t accept second-class citizenship.

**They’re part-time workers, but full-time fighters.**

## *Part-time workers, full-time fighters!* *Grassroots activists stand up for precarious workers*

by Randy Robinson

*“There’s always  
the concern for  
hours”* Rain Loftus,  
Store 393, Liquor Control  
Board of Ontario, London  
President, Local 163

**“The** lousy thing about the LCBO is you’re guaranteed no hours,” says Rain Loftus, a part-time liquor store worker in London. “You can work anywhere from 40 hours to zero.”

By any measure, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario is a big, rich employer. The LCBO pours \$1 billion a year in profits into government coffers, not counting the taxes drinkers pay on booze.

But all that cash doesn’t stop the LCBO from trying to keep its workers poor. Of the 5,400 OPSEU members at the LCBO, at least 56 per cent are casual employees. They have no health benefits and no guarantee of hours.

“Whenever there’s a crunch in the budget, it’s always the casual hours they come after,” Loftus says. “It creates an atmosphere of fear. People won’t fight things that come along for fear of being transferred or seeing their hours reduced.”

The bad atmosphere hasn’t stopped Loftus. As president of



Photo: S. Martin, Canapress

Local 163, he represents workers at over 30 London liquor stores.

“I decided I’m going to do what I can to step up and help my co-workers,” he said.

He’s not alone. In June 2005, LCBO employees joined OPSEU.

“Since we’ve joined OPSEU, we’ve got a lot more stewards,” says Loftus. “The employer is seeing the education we’re getting with OPSEU, and the professionalism.”

Members have noticed their new union, too, says Loftus.

“When they noticed OPSEU was during contract negotiations last year, when they received more information than they ever had before,” he said. “And now if somebody has, for example, a Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) claim, they’ve seen dramatically increased service

— they can call OPSEU direct any time.

“We’ve been able to clean up a lot of grievances a lot quicker and we don’t have the backlog that we had previously.”

Loftus sits on the OPSEU committee working to get benefit coverage for casual workers at the LCBO. But with the low pay casuals earn, no employee-paid plan is likely to provide all the coverage members want, he cautions.

“My message to the employer is, if you want to keep good casuals around, then maybe you want to step up — why not be a leader instead?”

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For more information visit <http://www.opseu.org/lbed/index.htm>



Photo: S. Lake, Canapress

*“A lot of my members live below the poverty line”*

*Grace Mungal, Community Living Mississauga President, OPSEU Local 251*

Community Living Mississauga, the top pay rate is \$15.20 an hour. Part-timers work eight to 32 hours per week.

Grace Mungal, president of Local 251, works eight hours a week.

“I’m seeing a tremendous growth in the number of part-timers, but they’re being treated as second-class citizens,” Mungal says. “What really concerns me is that they are new immigrants, they are women of colour, they are victimized.

“Half of them work two to three jobs. A lot of my members live below the poverty line.”

This year, Local 251 fought back. With strong support from

full-timers, a seven-week strike won new scheduling rules that gave part-timers some control over their working lives. But a bid for benefits for part-timers did not succeed.

“I still and truly will always believe that we as part-time workers have to engage in this battle to win benefits,” says Mungal. “And we have to join forces to increase our wages, because the effect on people’s families of working two and three part-time jobs is terrible. It affects your families, your spouse, your children.

“We need to continue in our battle, we need to continue pushing. If employers want to insist on part-time workers, then we must demand the same sort of salary and the same sort of benefits that full-time workers get.”

For more information visit <http://www.opseu.org/bps/development/splash.htm>

**It’s** a struggle to survive.

The part-time workers who care for people with developmental disabilities are among the lowest-paid workers in the public sector. Many are just plain poor.

In Ontario, about two-thirds of workers in developmental services are part-time. At



Toronto Mayor David Miller supports Fairness for part-time college workers campaign with members of OPSEU Women’s Caucus at the 2006 Labour Day Parade. Photo: Emily Visser



Photo: OPSEU file

*“Government should be doing something”*

*Roger Couvrette, Algonquin College, Ottawa  
Candy Lindsay, Sir Sandford Fleming College, Peterborough*

**Roger** Couvrette teaches English and critical thinking at Algonquin College in Ottawa. Candy Lindsay helps students with learning disabilities at Sir Sandford Fleming College in Peterborough.

Couvrette and Lindsay are college workers, but they’re not

OPSEU members. Why? Because it’s against the law.

Under the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act, it is illegal for part-time faculty and support staff at community colleges in Ontario to unionize.

So when Couvrette and Lindsay found out OPSEU was

hiring 13 mobilizers to campaign to change the law, they jumped at the chance. They spent July and August travelling to local fairs and festivals, talking to the public and drumming up support.

“Public response was really good,” says Lindsay. “People are interested because of what they’re going through themselves, having to work two or three jobs, so their family is being affected, and their health care is being affected because they have no benefits.”

Women seem keenest to talk about part-time work, she says.

"A lot of women are affected by the whole issue of part-time work. For example, they can't afford childcare. This is a big women's issue, and it needs to be put on the government's agenda."

Roger Couvrette agrees. "When I was growing up everyone had a job all their lives, but it's a different world now," he says.

"There's a recognition now that more and more people are working part-time, and that government should be doing something to support part-time workers."

"There's an increasing reliance on part-time workers, and now we're realizing that comes with some responsibilities for us as a society."

But change won't happen on its own, Couvrette stresses.

"Until you mobilize, and until

you just say no, they're going to keep doing it to you."

That's the message OPSEU is taking to 16,000 college part-timers this fall.

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**For more information on the OPSEU campaign for the rights of part-time college workers, visit <http://www.collegeworkers.org>.**

## All rise! Court workers make gains

Helen Haggith,  
Windsor Court House  
Steward, Local 154

**Behind** the elegant façades of Ontario's courthouses, court workers have been an exploited underclass for decades.

"I never knew from one week to the next whether I was going to have two hours or 36," says Helen Haggith, a court reporter in Windsor and a steward in Local 154. "We were required to be on call five days a week, and they would call us at 7:00 in the morning.

The old ways are about to change. This fall, some 1,100 court recorders, clerks, monitors, interpreters and court service workers will be converted to a new job category called "Flexible Part Time." FPT workers will receive, on a pro-rated basis, all the advantages enjoyed by permanent full-time workers.

"It's going to give us a guaranteed minimum salary each and every year, it's going to give us benefits, it's going to give us sick leave, it's giving us paid vacation, and it's also getting us the opportunity for overtime, which in Windsor we haven't seen since 2003," says Haggith, who is helping to implement the plan



Photo: D. Janisse, Canapress

in her local. "It's also providing us with job security through our continuous service dates, because they're recognizing our real original start dates.

"We have people with 25 years of service, and they're finally going to be recognized," she says.

Flexible Part Time was born in the public service strike of 2002.

"People finally got so angry that they knew they had to show solidarity," says Shelley McCormick, a 20-year veteran of the courts and a steward with Local 526 in Toronto. "People were wearing buttons, putting up posters in offices, coming to union meetings, reading the literature.

"And the judges were behind us," McCormick says. "They'd

said for years that we were being treated unfairly."

The strike forced the employer to discuss better jobs for court part-timers. In 2004, a pilot project tested the FPT plan, and in 2005 the OPSEU bargaining team got it into the new contract.

"This is an amazing deal," says McCormick. "I never thought I'd see this."

"Personally, I didn't have a whole lot of hope that it was going to get into the collective agreement, because it's so good for us," Haggith says with a smile. "How many part-time jobs do you know where you get benefits?"

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**For more information visit: <http://www.opseu.org.ops/merc/attorneygeneralappendix25.htm>**