

# The Part-Time Times

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

## Part-time workers form association to improve working conditions

Workers representing 16,000 part-time faculty and support staff have taken the first step towards forming a union to bargain for better working conditions in the colleges.

Representatives from Ontario's 24 colleges met Nov. 17-19 to form the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (OPSECAAT).

Members elected a 10-person executive (five from faculty, five from support).

Roger Couvrette, a part-time teacher at Algonquin College in Ottawa, was elected the organization's first president. He slammed the Ontario government for allowing "third-world working conditions to persist in Ontario colleges" as a result of legislation banning these workers from joining a union.

"The 16,000 part-time college workers in Ontario's community colleges are a source of cheap labour. We have no job security. Our working conditions are abysmal. We have no benefits," he said.

OPSECAAT will begin a membership drive early in 2007, and plans a political campaign to change the current law.

### Geneva-based ILO asks Ontario government to change law

The Geneva-based International Labour Organization (ILO) ruled in November against the Ontario government for excluding part-time Ontario college employees from union activity.

The ILO ruled in response to a request from



OPSECAAT elected its new executive (one missing from photo) Nov. 19.

the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), OPSEU's national affiliate. NUPGE called on the ILO to investigate Ontario's Colleges Collective Bargaining Act (CCBA), which denies most part-time staff employed by the 24 Ontario colleges the right to join a union and engage in collective bargaining.

OPSEU President Leah Casselman called on Premier Dalton McGuinty to immediately right this historic wrong. "The Ontario government's position is indefensible, they know it and it's time for the government to finally do the right thing."

[www.collegeworkers.org](http://www.collegeworkers.org)

PLEASE POST AND SHARE WITH PART-TIME WORKERS

### McGuinty must act rapidly

"I strongly urge McGuinty to heed the ILO, and immediately introduce amendments to the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act to ensure part-time college employees may join a union like all other workers."

The ILO decision read, in part: "...the Committee fails to see any reason why the principles on the basic rights of association and collective bargaining afforded to all workers should not also apply to part-time employees."

It said that "...all workers, without distinction whatsoever, whether they are employed on a

permanent basis, for a fixed-term or as contract employees, should have the right to establish and join organizations of their own choosing," and requested that "the Government rapidly take legislative measures, in consultation with the social partners, to ensure that academic and part-time support staff in applied arts and technology fully enjoy the rights to organize and bargain collectively, as any other workers."

## Letters to the Times

### OPSEU member dissects Ministry rationale

*The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities was invited to present its side to the International Labour Organization. A member comments on the three-page letter from an Assistant Deputy Minister at MCTU.*

I've never read such a poorly thought out and flawed argument as the one the government and MTCU tried to present. It obviously never occurred to them to compare part-time college workers to groups like part-time public school, high school and university employees?

They argue colleges need to hire part timers because "College programmes and activities are required to be responsive to the immediate and frequently changing needs of employers and the workforce." Somehow, according to the MTCU, that also means they don't want to be or they shouldn't be part of the bargaining unit! Those are two separate issues and one really has no connection to the other.

They top it off with a statement like: "The ability of colleges to offer the current number and range of the courses would be jeopardized without access to a pool of individuals willing to provide such part-time services to colleges." Fair enough... try providing them with better wages, benefits and working conditions and you might even attract more and better qualified part timers!

This next statement falls under the category

"Motherhood and Apple Pie": "MTCU recognizes the connection between the current college bargaining unit definitions and the ability of the colleges to attract and retain the part-time academic and support staff who ensure that the colleges can fully meet their mandate. The MTCU believes that it must give priority to the needs of the province and to take all reasonable steps to provide the support that will facilitate the continuance of a viable, high-quality college system that can meet its complex mandate."

How dare we jeopardize such a "high-quality college system" by asking for basic rights for part-time college employees?

*Al Rivet, President  
Local 658, Canadore College*

### Thirteen years, and still part-time at Fleming College

Dr. Tony Tilly, President  
Sir Sandford Fleming College

Dear Dr. Tilly:

As I reach my thirteenth year of employment at Fleming College, I am compelled to speak out about...the unfair treatment of Fleming's part-time workers.

Every day, these employees go to work, often performing the same duties as their full-time peers, usually for considerably less pay. (P)art-time workers have no support system within the college, nor do they have any protection should they choose

to voice their concerns about this or any other issue. Fortunately, Betty Cree and the local union have spoken out on behalf of part-time workers. Thanks to Betty, some changes for part-time workers have already been realized.

I am one of those part-time workers...I always give more than my job requires of me—not because I have to but because I want to. The students with whom I work are always my priority, and I genuinely care about their academic success. Regardless of my commitment to my job or to my students, I am constantly reminded of my part-time status, especially in relation to my full-time co-workers. Only recently, and again thanks to the local union shaming the department into it, was I, along with my part-time co-workers, included in any department gatherings.... Prior to these very recent events, however, I was consciously excluded from all other retreats, meetings, and workshops, including the annual department Christmas party.

In October 2003, when I was presented with my

ten-year pin, I never dreamed that only three years later I would have less than what I started with. After thirteen years at Fleming College, I will now be tossed aside. As a result of a job reclassification, one that I must admit is an odd combination—mathematics and communications—I was instantly rendered unqualified for and, therefore, **ineligible to apply for my own job**. The only consolation I was offered were the overflow hours the new full-time employee will be unable to accommodate. I deserve to be treated with the same respect and dignity with which my full-time co-workers are treated.

Although part-time workers are barred by law from receiving legal representation, perhaps a little consistency throughout the college could be instituted under your direction so that your part-time workers feel respected in each department and are treated equally across the college. Consider how you would feel if you were in our position.

*Respectfully, Terri Hayes*

## Job Opportunities for the “I Believe in Fairness” campaign

OPSECAAT, the new association representing part-time college workers, is launching a membership drive across the province during the months of January to March, 2007. We are looking for energetic activists who are interested in working on a half-time or full time basis, along with members of the campaign committee at their college.

### Who is eligible to apply?

These positions are open to part-time or sessional faculty members (including part-time librarians and counselors) and part-time support staff.

### How will campaign staff be paid?

The rate of pay for these positions is \$930 per week plus 14% in lieu of benefits in accordance with the collective agreement between OPSEU and OPSSU (prorated for part-time hours).

### Who are we looking for?

- You have experience in union organizing and mobilizing, or in community, electoral or social justice campaigns
- You have the ability to inspire and motivate people
- You are a self-starter, comfortable calling new people and building new relationships
- You have high energy

Please mail, fax or e-mail a covering letter and a resume to:

Barbara Linds  
OPSEU  
100 Lesmill Road  
Toronto, ON M3B 3P8  
Fax: 416 443-1762  
E-mail: [blinds@opseu.org](mailto:blinds@opseu.org)

Deadline for applications is Monday, December 18, 2006

For further information, call Barb at 416 443-8888/1 800 268-7376 x 8203

## In the House

Ontario Hansard - 23 Nov. 2006

**Mr. Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):**

“Despite the government’s ban on unionization ... faculty and support staff from Ontario’s 24 colleges have recently formed an organization of part-time and sessional employees of colleges of applied arts and technology.

Recently the International Labour Organization ruled that such workers be given the legal right to bargain collectively and urged the McGuinty Liberals to let this happen.

The report stated unambiguously that “there’s no reason that the basic rights of association and collective bargaining shouldn’t also apply to part-time workers.”

I have addressed this abysmal situation in my private member’s Bill 13, An Act to amend the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act with respect to part-time staff.... Simply because someone works in a profession on a part-time basis is no justification to deny them the same rights that colleagues have.

I’m strongly urging this government to pass my private member’s bill. After all, the whole world is watching us.”

## Congratulations to Ontario's Part-Time College Workers!

By David Starbuck, Chair, OPSEU Sudbury Area Council

Ontario's 16,000 part-time and sessional community college employees have made two achievements in their struggle for the recognition of the rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining.

In a Nov. 15 report, the Committee on Freedom of Association of the International Labour Organization “fails to see any reason why the basic

rights of association and collective bargaining afforded to all workers should not also apply to part-time employees. The committee therefore requests the government rapidly take legislative measures, in consultation with the social partners, to ensure that academic and support part-time staff in colleges of applied arts and technology fully enjoy the rights to organize and to bargain collectively, as any other workers.”

The ILO decision has stripped away the fig leaf proffered by the Ontario government and college management that part-time and sessional college employees have no collective bargaining rights because it is ‘the law.’ Legislation which removes human rights is not ‘the law’ but the abrogation of the rule of law and Canada's international commitments. The provisions of the (law) which have been used to prevent the organization of part-time college employees deserve nothing but contempt.

In forming OPSECAAT, the part-time and sessional college employees have rejected the government's position that they can do nothing about their situation.... While the laws make no provision for part-time and sessional employees to negotiate a collective agreement, they do not, and cannot, prevent them from exercising their right of freedom of association to collectively determine how to defend their common interests and to organize to win acceptable wages and working conditions.

“We need(ed) to form an association to work with each other collectively and then deal with college management from a position of strength,” said OPSECAAT president Roger Couvrette. “Creating an association is a key first step towards the long-term goal of union representation,” he said. “Of course the law will have to change for that to occur, but once you have an association that is up and running, perform a lot of the functions that a union would perform. The history of the labour movement is such that you didn't ask permission to form a union,” Couvrette says.

Ontario's part-time community college workers deserve hearty congratulations for these two achievements and full support in their campaign to have their rights of freedom of association and collective bargaining recognized by the Ontario government.



Some part-timers don’t want to reveal their identity as union activists, for fear of reprisals.

## Speech: To right a wrong

### By Roger Couvrette, President, OPSECAAT

Part-time support staff and teachers from 24 Ontario community colleges met to form the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (OPSECAAT). It was a crucial, historical step in righting a wrong that has endured for 30 years in Ontario. We vowed to fight as an organization until the very day that the *Colleges Collective Bargaining Act* is amended to give us our fundamental right as workers to form or join a union.

There is sense of occasion when a historical wrong is righted. What it must have felt like when women won the right to vote in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta in 1916! When they won that right in 1925 in Newfoundland! And when women won that right in 1940 in Quebec! What an important day it was on July 20, 2005 when for the first time in the history of the dominion same-sex marriage was legalized by virtue of an Act passed in the Parliament of Canada.

To right a wrong. And you know, it's not only us part-time college workers who say it is wrong to deny us the right to bargain collectively. Earlier this very month, the International Labour Organization (ILO), rebuked – and that is not too strong a word – rebuked – not the government of Indonesia for denying workers' rights and not the government of China for denying workers' rights – but the government of the Province of Ontario in the great and democratic country of Canada for denying workers what is recognized internationally as a fundamental right of a worker: the right to join or form a union.

The ILO ruled that the government of Ontario should, “*rapidly ...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.*”

“As any other workers.” Indeed. To right a wrong. I want to talk now about some of the things we have to do to right this wrong.

Management in the community colleges will continue to use us as a source of cheap labour, they will continue to deny us anything remotely similar to job security, we will continue to be deprived of any



form of grievance process that would force management to address our legitimate concerns, and we will continue to work without any benefits and sometimes in unacceptable working conditions, and they will continue to have us work in a work environment that is arbitrary and unfair, often incomprehensible, and one which more often than not makes a mockery of the notion of quality education **until we stop them.**

As I conclude I want to tell you two things about myself.

First, I was taken to the top of the mountain as a young man by Tommy Douglas and there I saw his vision of a New Jerusalem: a world of women and men who were as in a family, sisters and brothers who cared about and for (in the largest sense of that word) each other. Second, my Dad was a member of the Mine Mill and Smelter Workers Union in Sudbury. I know the vision of trade unionists' is not unlike that of Tommy Douglas. Tommy believed there was a parliamentary road to the New Jerusalem. The trade unionists I knew as I grew up believed that you had to live your vision, you had to fashion a way of life that reflected and incorporated your beliefs, and especially your belief in the solidarity of all women and men.

Finally, the trade unionists that I grew up with knew that you had to wake up every morning ready to fight for what you believe in. Our fight is well begun. But it is not over. Its success will be the fruit of your commitment, your solidarity, your dedication, your time, and your work. But together, we will stop them from doing to us what they have been doing to us. Together, we shall right this wrong.—*Durham College, Nov. 27, 2006*

## Your officers

*Roger Couvrette, President*

Roger Couvrette has been a part-time English teacher at Algonquin since 2003. He was Executive Director of the New Brunswick SPCA for two years and served as Provincial Secretary of the New Brunswick New Democratic Party for eight years in the 1990s. In the eighties, he worked for the NDP federal caucus in research and communications. Roger, who has a daughter, Kyla, at Mount Allison University, spent several years teaching part-time at McGill University, where he received a Master's degree in Religious Studies.

*Candy Lindsay, Vice-President*

Candy Lindsay is graduate of Fleming College's Educational Assistant program. She owned and operated the "Life Long Education Center" from September 1993 until 1998. She has worked at Fleming College as a part time support staff since 1998, in learning support services and educational support. She's excited to work with the new association and help co-workers finally obtain real fairness in their working lives. Married 24 years, Candy has four grown children, and one grandson.

*Veronica Pinnock, Secretary-Treasurer*

Veronica Pinnock works at Seneca College as Test Administrator/Office Administration. She came to Canada more than 32 years ago from Jamaica with her two sons. She studied Fashion Design at George Brown College and The School of Make-up-Arts and later completed an Entrepreneur Course at Centennial College. She has operated a small home-based business, and is board member with The Black Action Defence Committee. She has a strong belief in equal opportunity and fairness in the workplace.



Candy Lindsay, Roger Couvrette and Veronica Pinnock (front), celebrate the creation of OPSECAAT with OPSEU Region 5 Vice-President Nancy Pridham.

**Get on board! Call the part-time  
campaign hotline 416 448-7433 or  
1 866 811-7274**

**Authorized for distribution by:**

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