

Everybody Needs Support: College Support Staff Currently in Bargaining

CAAT-S (Support) division of OPSEU represents 8,000 support staff members at Ontario's 24 colleges, including administrative support and building maintenance workers. Those helpful people who meet students at the front desks of every department, who facilitate financial aid, and who deliver the mail are just some of the staff that faculty and the colleges rely upon for the smooth operation of our workplaces. The CAAT-S (Support) union is currently bargaining with The Council, the body that represents college management across Ontario. Their contract expires on August 31, 2011. Both sides met for the first time on June 7.

Just as CAAT-A (Academic) bargaining was hampered by the new CCBA (Colleges Collective Bargaining Act) in 2009, CAAT-S (Support) bargaining is also constrained by the new, shorter bargaining window. The new CCBA shortens the bargaining window from 9 months to 3 months. As reported in the last issue of *the Educator* (March 2011), the CCBA now allows management to impose work terms and conditions if a negotiated agreement isn't reached by the prescribed deadline.

Regrettably, this new ability to impose work terms and conditions seems to have taken away The Council's desire to bargain in good faith.

An injury to one is an injury to all

Support staff at Ontario colleges work in a much more restrained and controlled environment than faculty. They don't have the luxury of the "not chained to their desks" article that academic staff enjoy (Article 11.01 G1), for example. The labour relations environment is also tougher.

CAAT-S has been subject to the denial of time off by union organizers, even though they are granted that right through Article 12.1, Leave without Pay in their agreement. Union locals have been denied the use of the college email system to communicate with their members. Support staff locals have been denied the right to book rooms in order to meet on campuses across Ontario. Local union executive members whose time has been purchased from the College to do union work have been told what they can and cannot do during their union time. Here at Fanshawe there have been issues with getting adequate release time for the Joint Health and Safety Committee and problems getting support staff to come forward to serve on the committee.

We need to support our fellow support staff workers.

Bargaining so far

The CAAT-S bargaining team came to the table with a detailed proposal, knowing that time is short. The Council came to the table with half the items being "housekeeping items" to update language. Management's other proposals are unsupported by specific changes or language requests.

Some management demands centre on desired concessions for newly hired staff employees. These concessions will create two tiers in the union, with new and younger workers being permanently worse off than those hired before them.

College management has made no wage or benefits proposals, saying they were not prepared to present at this time. In the last two rounds of bargaining, wage proposals were offered in June—and that was when there was not a looming deadline. Clearly, The Council is paying no attention—or, close attention—to the shortened bargaining timeline.

Strike vote called for July 14

A strike vote has been called for July 14. The CAAT-S bargaining team is asking members for a strike mandate to strengthen their bargaining position and force management to come prepared to the table. A strike vote will not mean an immediate walkout: the bargaining team would call a strike only when they determine that a contract settlement will not be reached at the bargaining table.

College management appears to be stalling in order to reach the 3 month deadline so they can impose work terms and conditions. Our support staff members deserve better treatment. They also deserve to exercise their Canadian Constitutional right to bargain collectively.

In the event of a strike

There has not been a strike by support staff since 1979. In the event that there is a strike, Local 110 will hold an emergency meeting in early September, likely at the CAW Union Hall at 606 First Street, to update faculty. Local 110's website - www.opseu110.ca - will also have important updates and information.



Ontario's union
Le syndicat de l'Ontario

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Chief Steward's Report: Know your SWF Check The Dates

In past issues of *the Educator* I have discussed the time allowed for the various types of evaluation. I have found over this past year SWFs, in general, have improved and discussions with faculty members reveal that many have become more informed about how to read their SWF.

However, one facet of the SWF remains inconsistent in some Schools: ***the dates listed on the SWF should reflect the actual dates they refer to.*** This is an important consideration, as faculty members only have three days after receipt of a SWF to refer their workload to WMG if they are not in agreement with the assignment (Art. 11.02 A 4).

Check that the "Dates of Discussion" and the "Date S.W.F. Received by Faculty Member" reflect the actual dates the events took place. If they do not, write the correct date in the appropriate space.

The SWF is a contract between you and the College that outlines the work you are

expected to do and are responsible for during the period indicated at the top of the SWF. All information on the SWF is important, including dates, course numbers, section numbers, methods of evaluation, complementary functions and any comments or other information written or typed on the form.

Take a moment--or three days--to review your SWF to make sure all information on it reflects the work you are prepared to do. If not, talk to your Chair and, as always, you can refer your SWF to the WMG by checking the box next to the appropriate statement.

I hope you have a restful vacation this summer and return rejuvenated for the upcoming academic year.

Fred Varkaris

Chief Steward & Co-Chair Workload
Monitoring Group

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President's Message

Are you being served?



Dear Colleagues:

I hope you are enjoying your summer so far. For those of you returning from vacation, I hope you are well rested.

Earlier this summer I had the opportunity to attend the Faculty of Business retreat. I was attending as a member of the School of IT, but I always keep union issues in mind every time I hear something. One of the welcoming addresses was given by Larry Kinlin. You may recognize his name because the college renamed our School of Business as the Lawrence Kinlin School of Business. The union has never referred to the School as the Lawrence Kinlin School. We do not support what is essentially corporate sponsorship of public education. That's an article for another day.

There was something in his speech that I did want to write about. He spoke about the student being the customer. That is where I have to disagree. Now I'm not saying that the student isn't *a* customer, but I disagree that the student is *the* customer. If students were our only customers we would teach only what they were interested in and we'd give everyone great marks and everybody would be happy.

So, who are our other customers? Industry is a customer. We have advisory committees to get their feedback and we adjust our programs accordingly. But the most important customer would be the citizens of Ontario. Although our students pay higher tuition in Ontario than some other jurisdictions, the reality is we are very dependent on government for funding. The colleges are a public service and we are public service employees.

If you think about it, the whole system is an intergenerational contract. Today's workers pay taxes. And in part those taxes are used to pay for the education of tomorrow's workers. And this intergenerational contract has actually worked out quite well: the public college system has through the years provided excellent value for money. The college system has provided good jobs, not just for the graduates but also for its full-time faculty and support staff.

At this point in our history society finds itself at a crossroads. During the upcoming election, there will be many arguments about the value of public services and where education fits into that value proposition. Recent governments have injected capital funding into the college system but guarantees for good full-time jobs were not attached as conditions to that funding. One example is the Downtown London campus: first we read that 75 full-time staff were proposed; then the contract with the city changed it to 75 full-time equivalents, and now the news release reads "75 construction jobs." Who will teach and support the students at the downtown London campus?

Sometimes OPSEU is referred to as "Ontario's union." We're proud to serve the citizens of Ontario, our customers.

In solidarity,

Dan

*Have a great and
safe summer!*



2011 OPSEU Convention Personal Impressions: Democracy in (Exciting!) Action

By Jennifer Boswell, first time delegate

Democracy, true grass-roots democracy, is tedious, time-consuming, boring and *exhilarating*--all at the same time.

OPSEU had its 2011 Convention from April 6 to 9, 2011 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. This year OPSEU celebrated 100 years of action. The sheer size of the undertaking was incredible: there were 1700 people on the floor, including over 1000 voting delegates and hundreds of roped-off observers sitting at either end of the enormous room. About 24 microphones were scattered throughout, and television cameras focused on the proceedings at the head table where the union executive, heads of committees, and various guests addressed the room. Images of delegates who spoke at the microphones were also beamed onto the

large screens positioned at the edges of the floor, which helped all participants clearly see and hear what was going on.

As a communications teacher, the most compelling part of the convention for me was, not surprisingly, the speeches. Any delegate, at any time, could go to a mike and speak in support or against a motion. The ebb and flow of discussions, emotions raised, quieter voices appealing for calm, and votes being called were very exciting.

Speakers had 2 minutes at the mike to make their point. Who could

be effective in 2 minutes? What was the key? I would say, *quit* when you've made your point and people have applauded! Many limped on to make one more point while they were "on a roll," which only took away from the effectiveness of the words prior.

There were some great communicators who were at ease with the cameras and spotlights, and others who were not so great. Voices throbbing with emotion made up, often, for lack of skill. We're talking about committed

and eventually peaked, winning over voters. He answered his critics calmly at first, and with quietly building passion he explained how he saw his role as OPSEU's leader.

The race for vice president was incredibly close, with the winner by only 12 votes (!) being Eduardo (Eddy) Almeida.

Along with hundreds of other OPSEU members I took part in my first demonstration at 20 Bay Street, where the Colleges Employer Council has their offices. We were accompanied along King

and Bay Streets by police on bicycle and horseback. The demonstration was in support of OPSEU's continued attempts to unionize our part-time college workers, and protested against the tactics by the Colleges to block the counting of the ballots that were cast over 2 years ago. The democratic right to unionize has been delayed,



social justice advocates who were speaking from the heart! Some voices shook: it takes a lot of courage to speak in front of 1700 people, on camera, at a microphone. Remember, most OPSEU members are not teachers, who usually have trouble being *quiet*!

There was a hard fought battle for president, which Smokey won. Nancy Pridham came across as a strong, passionate advocate of union principles but in my opinion Smokey won in part because of his superior communication skills. More than one person at my table was swayed by his final speech. He started low key, slowly built momentum

and ultimately denied here in Ontario by the Colleges Employer Council.

OPSEU Convention 2011 brought home to me in a startling manner the importance of true democracy, and also its fundamental 'human-ness'. A colleague once said to me that it's rare that we can actually *see* democracy in action. What happened at Convention—the exciting back and forth of discussion and argument, the demonstrations, the voting—brought home to me why democracy is so great.

And, by extension, why our union is so great.

CHALLENGING THE AUSTERITY AGENDA

OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas has released a Q&A fact sheet entitled *Challenging Austerity* to help public sector workers update others about the misinformation embodied in the constant calls to reduce public spending. Thomas summarizes the austerity agenda as “lower taxes for corporations, lower wages for workers, more privatization, and cuts to public services.”

The fact sheet is helpful, asking and answering 25 pointed questions in all, including basic questions from “what is the public sector?” and “what do people in the public sector do?” to more challenging ones, such as why should public sector workers make more money than private sector workers and “why should private sector workers pay for platinum-plated pensions for public employees when they don’t have company pensions themselves?”

Economics-based questions such as “where does the money come from to pay for public services?” and “how can we keep on paying for big government given the budget deficit?” are addressed. One answer is that many public services actually do not cost the government money to

Corporate tax cuts are one of the least effective methods to improve the economy.

run: for example, Canada Post Corporation, now under back-to-work legislation that ignored its workers’ right to collective bargaining, has made money for the last 16 years and

pays corporate taxes, according to Mark Platt, president of Local 548 CUPW. Another great example is the LCBO, which contributes over a billion dollars in profits to Ontario annually.

Working people are not the problem in our economy today...

Services such as the ones colleges offer—training the workforce of the future and retraining displaced workers—have enormous longer term economic benefits. It’s undeniable that we are creating better futures for our students and greatly increasing their lifetime earnings and quality of life. Intangibles that flow from higher education such as increased happiness, control over one’s life choices and improved health perhaps cannot be quantified in dollar terms. Outcomes such as these societal or human goods don’t fit into the economic calculations of the austerity agenda.

The point is made that the private and public sectors work together for the good of society. While all citizens pay taxes that help pay public sector salaries, it is also true that public workers who spend money in the economy are also paying the salaries of those private workers. *Challenging Austerity* makes that point that “we need better jobs in the private sector, not worse ones in the public sector.”

The idea that only corporate tax cuts have a positive impact on the economy and increase jobs is debunked. Corporate tax cuts are one

of the least effective methods to improve the economy. What provides the best economic bang for the government’s buck? Aiding low-income households and unemployed workers. Social justice spending such as this is what unions have always advocated.

Corporate tax rates have fallen for the past 10 years, but the rate of investment by businesses has also declined over the same period. Rather than having helped create more jobs, 200,000 fewer young people are working in Canada than ten years ago.

Canadians need good, secure jobs that will pay them decent wages and let them live a good life.

Today, only 5 out of 8 Canadian workers have permanent, full-time work. The other 3 out of 8 work in temporary, part-time, temp agency, or other low-paid or insecure employment arrangements.

Canadians need good, secure jobs that will pay them decent wages and let them live a good life.

Let’s be clear: working people are not the problem in our economy today. A much fairer approach to balancing the budget would be to stop giving away public money through corporate tax cuts and focus instead on creating good jobs for all.

To read all of *Challenging Austerity*, go to

<http://www.opseu.org/notices/challenging-austerity-summer-2011.htm>

Happy Pride Month!



The Pride London Festival is happening on July 22-24th this year at the North West corner of King & Clarence. The Pride Parade is on Sunday July 24th, starting at the Western Fairgrounds and heading West on Dundas Street. Parade ends at the party destination of the year!

For more information go to

<http://pridelondon.ca/2011/04/say-it-loud-say-it-proud-pride-london-festival-details/>



“Unions were important 50 years ago, but we don’t need them today.”

“If everyone worked in a safe, healthy, workplace, with no harassment or discrimination, with good wages, decent benefits and a pension plan, this might be true. But working people are facing more problems today than they have in decades. More and more jobs are part-time, temporary jobs; workplace discrimination is on the rise; wage growth has stalled even though workers are more productive; the number of workers with pension plans is falling.

Now more than ever, working people need to come together to stand up for their rights and the rights of the generations to come.

When they do, it’s called a union.”

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