



# Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology

# THE SUPPORT REPORT

Ontario College Support Staff Newsletter

May 2012 - Issue #1

## College Support workers gather for Divisional Meeting

Support workers from Ontario's 24 colleges are gathering on May 5 and 6, 2012 for a Divisional Meeting. Focusing on discussion and resolution of policy issues, approximately 100 OPSEU members from the College Support Division are meeting at the Toronto Delta Chelsea hotel.

Our new Collective Agreement is remarkable as the first one negotiated under the terms of the 2008 Colleges Collective Bargaining Act. This put a whole new set of rules in place, however your bargaining team succeeded in using the Act to our benefit, in spite of the challenges. A focus of the weekend is feedback on the recent round of bargaining and the strike with a view to improving processes. The members will also look to ways of strengthening locals and educating to win grievances.

Over the next three years, our task will be to enforce our new agreement. We are all going to have a part to play, from attending general membership meetings and union events to assisting with campaigns. Engaging with your union and standing in solidarity with all of our members is what makes us strong.

## What do your Division Committees do for you?

The following committee reports provide updates and insights into what your union is doing to improve your daily experience on the job.

### The Division Executive Committee

The Division Executive (Divex) is the leadership of the College Support Division. Committee members liaise with our other provincial committees and address issues that may have system wide implications. These include workplace cutbacks, pension changes, legislative changes and organizing campaigns.

The Divex does not address issues stemming from the collective agreement, but rather they act as the political arm for the College Support sector. The committee works on

campaigns such as the part-time workers campaign, meets with the Minister of Colleges, Training and Universities to discuss matters that affect the membership and also liaises with other labour groups such as the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), and National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE).

### Employee/Employer Relations Committee

The responsibility of the Employee/Employer Relations Committee (EERC) includes matters arising out of the collective agreement during its term, and other matters affecting the bargaining interests of the members. The role of EERC is to make recommendations to the bargaining team about subjects of system-wide importance, facilitate communication with management at the provincial level, preclude and resolve common problems during the life of the Collective Agreement and prepare the Bargaining Team to enter negotiations through information gathering.

The Union brings topics to the table such as workplace wellness and gathers research through surveys or canvassing local unions. The result could be ground work for new language in the collective agreement such as that for workplace bullying. The Union also looks at local agreements and tries to achieve equality across the system, such as tuition for dependents and family members.

### Grievance Scheduling Committee

It is the responsibility of the Grievance Scheduling Committee to schedule your grievances. They meet on the first Friday of each month, excluding July and August. Your grievances come to the committee once internal steps have been exhausted and your grievance has been denied at step 2. Grievances are scheduled by date. Locals are sent the list of grievances about a week before the meeting and asked to provide the priority for grievances on the list, otherwise the committee schedules by date. Dismissals and layoff grievances are the only grievances that are given first priority.

A few days after the meeting, a tentative arbitration schedule is sent to the locals. Each party is only allowed to turn down

a date two times. This is called the three strike rule. College management usually turns down two dates each time. This is one of the reasons why it takes so long for your grievance to be heard. Once a scheduled arbitration date has been turned down twice by one side, the grievance is then locked into the third date scheduled by the committee.

## The Bargaining Team

When we approach the expiry of our Collective Agreement, we hold a pre-bargaining conference to discuss upcoming issues and themes for the round of bargaining. This meeting is where the bargaining team is elected.

The team is responsible for collecting demands for the final demand setting meeting. They make recommendations on the demands and present them to provincial delegates to vote on. Demands passed by the provincial delegates are then drafted into an exchange document which is presented to management. This document forms our roadmap for bargaining.

Once the exchange document is presented, the bargaining team meets and negotiates with management to discuss changes – both ours and management's.

## Joint Classification Committee

The job of the Joint Classification Committee (JCC) is to make sure college support staff get the right pay for the work they do. The JCC deals with province-wide job classification issues.

The work performed by committee members includes review and summary of classification awards; review of the performance of arbitrators and study of controversial decisions; clarification of the application of the job evaluation system; communication with OPSEU members about classification issues; development of training modules for arbitrators and stewards; identification of problems in the classification system and development of strategies to fix them; updates to the job evaluation manual and classification awards database.

If you believe your position is wrongly classified, speak to your OPSEU local steward to identify the classification expert for your local.

## Joint Insurance Committee

Union members on the Joint Insurance Committee (JIC) meet with Sun Life, Council and college reps to monitor benefits plans, including costs and claims patterns, legislative and

industry changes and claims administration. We also assist members with questions and resolve appeals when claims are denied unfairly. If you wish to appeal a decision by Sun Life, contact either Kim Macpherson at OPSEU, a committee member or your local steward for more information.

During 2011, we saw a 1.5% benefit increase negotiated for members on LTD. All accounts are currently in surplus and premiums are stable. Our green benefits books are currently being revised and we expect electronic versions to be ready by summer. Sun Life plans to send "straight-forward" claims to India for processing, and the Insurer insists this will not result in Ontario job losses: OPSEU is lobbying to have that decision reversed.

Shirley McVittie retired in 2011 as Benefits Officer on the JIC. Her compassion and contribution will not be forgotten. Please join us in wishing Shirley a long and healthy retirement.

## Pension Committee

Members of the Pension Committee serve as Sponsor and Trustees of the CAAT Pension Plan. They have a fiduciary responsibility to pension plan members, beneficiaries and the Union to manage the plan's assets and ensure the funds are available to pay promised pensions.

The Board of Trustees is responsible for the administration of the Plan. They ensure that the Plan's trust funds are managed prudently and in accordance with applicable legal standards. This requires a clear understanding of the duties and standards of care required by legislation and other principles that apply to pension plans. The trustees decide on how the assets are to be managed and invested. They delegate the implementation process to plan staff. They then review the fund activities and performance to determine how well the system is functioning.

The Pension Sponsor approves changes to the Plan text as well as changes and improvements to benefits. Trustees and Sponsors are currently engaged in a Plan Equity Review to ensure that all members of the Plan receive equitable pension benefits based on the amount of contributions made.

## Visit the OPSEU website

for the complete list of all committee members together with the colleges they represent, meeting minutes and terms of reference.

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## THIS NEWSLETTER IS APPROVED FOR DISTRIBUTION BY:

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