

2011 Bargaining Bulletin



Information for OPSEU members in the CAAT-Support Division

Issue #2, May 31, 2011

What's happening to the Colleges?



Ontario's colleges have been in existence for more than 40 years. Over that period 20 collective agreements have been negotiated between the Council (which over the years has been variously titled the Council of Regents; the Colleges' Compensation and Appointments Council; and now, the College Employers' Council) and OPSEU (which was called the Civil Service Association of Ontario until 1975).

These collective agreements have been negotiated through various economic conditions; changes in government, college administrations and negotiators; and different bargaining teams. Nineteen of 20 of these agreements were reached without the need to take job action. There hasn't been a support staff strike since 1979 – that's 32 consecutive years without a work stoppage.

Why? Because the colleges and our union have worked hard together to achieve collective agreements without resorting to walkouts or lockouts.

Apparently the colleges would like to put a stop to this enviable streak of successful negotiations by treating support staff as mushrooms - best nurtured in the dark and grown in compost or manure. Why do we say that? During the last three rounds of bargaining - in 2003, 2005, and 2008 – bargaining unit members from your college were granted time off and paid for by OPSEU to keep you informed about negotiations and to plan and execute bargaining events and activities. These hard-working folks are called mobilizers and during the last three rounds college management at all 24 colleges supported their requests for time off.

On Mar. 28, 2008 during the last round of bargaining, in response to our proposal to include union time off for mobilizing specifically under Article 5.1.1, the Colleges' negotiator and management's negotiating team said: "...

"We think that this is related to union activity specifically as it relates to mobilizing. Currently time is given off under the language in Article 12.1. Therefore, proposed change to 5.1.1 would not assist if the issue is mobilizers, they are currently managed under current language."

Essentially we were assured by the Colleges that there was no need to amend 5.1.1 because time off could be granted under Article 12.1.

Fast forward three years to this current round of negotiations. Now, the colleges have refused to allow that same time off. Despite the assurances made three years ago, 18 of 24 colleges this time have denied our requests for time off so that our mobilizers can keep you informed about bargaining.

It's good to see a few colleges have some respect for their support staff. Centennial, Confederation, Fleming, George Brown, Humber and Mohawk have all agreed to grant time off to mobilizers. Kudos to them. Regrettably, the remaining colleges aren't so

inclined to demonstrate respect for their support staff.

As the saying goes: one bad apple spoils the bunch ... in this case 18 colleges have indicated they are prepared to spoil bargaining.

So the question is: why would the colleges today deny time off for mobilizing, when in 2008 their negotiating team said it was guaranteed under Article 12.1?

What has happened to working in good faith to get a fair deal in the spirit of cooperation?

We have to wonder if this is an indication of how the Colleges plan to approach bargaining in 2011. In the face of this disrespect, we have to work even harder to make sure we are not cultivated as mushrooms – left in the dark with all that manure.

In short, we have to be prepared to fight even harder for a fair contract. It's just sad that over the course of one month, the Colleges have ruined a 43-year old working relationship by demonstrating abundant ego and arrogance.

Remember, whatever happens during this round of bargaining the uncooperative colleges have indicated they're prepared to play hardball with their own workers.

Read our Q&A!

For more information on this round of CAAT-Support bargaining, read our Q&A. It's online at www.opseu.org/caat/caat_sup/bargaining2011/qanda.htm.



Contact your team!

If you have any questions at all about bargaining, feel free to e-mail your team at any time. Our address is bargaining@rogers.com.

Please post and circulate.

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