

## **Q&As about Unionization**

As you know, OPSEU is seeking to represent part-time support and student employees and employees working in a project of a non-recurring kind at the Colleges.

Voting will begin on October 5. More information on that process will be posted at a later date. Below, we have set out some answers to questions that may arise.

**Q1. What do the Colleges think of OPSEU's efforts to organize part-time employees?**

Ontario's Colleges have always supported part-timers' right to associate as they see fit. It is a decision for each employee. However, while the Colleges respect the right of employees to choose unionization, the Colleges prefer to deal directly with its employees instead of going through a third party who may not have the same interests and concerns as the Colleges and their employees do.

**Q2. OPSEU says that the Colleges have refused to recognize collective bargaining rights for part-timers.**

That is not correct. The legislation has only recently been amended to permit part-timers in the College system to organize. The Colleges believe that the process set out in the legislation should be followed and that it is up to the employees to decide whether OPSEU should represent them.

**Q3. Did the full-time College employees vote to have OPSEU represent them?**

No. When the *Colleges Collective Bargaining Act* was first enacted, it stipulated that OPSEU was the bargaining agent for full-time College employees. You get the opportunity to vote on whether OPSEU will represent you.

**Q4. If I don't want to be represented by OPSEU, can I stay out of it if it unionizes part-timers?**

No. If the union wins, it gets the right to represent all employees in the bargaining unit whether they voted for the union or not. If OPSEU is certified, everyone is affected.

**Q5. Can OPSEU guarantee me better salary and benefits?**

No. Any changes to salary and benefits must be negotiated between the Colleges and OPSEU. The current economic climate in Ontario is challenging for the Colleges. Nothing the Government has said to date makes us optimistic that Colleges will obtain improved funding in the near future.

**Q6. Can OPSEU guarantee me employment?**

No. An employer always maintains the right to lay-off for economic reasons and to dismiss for cause. This right exists in the full-time collective agreements with OPSEU.

**Q7. How much will it cost me to join the union?**

OPSEU's dues are 1.375 % of gross pay.

**Q8. Does everyone have to pay dues if the union gets in?**

Even if only 51% of the employees vote for OPSEU, the Colleges are obliged to collect union dues from the pay of all employees in the bargaining unit. It is estimated that if OPSEU is successful, it will receive well over \$780,000 annually in union dues from College part-time employees.

**Q9. Would I have to go on strike if the union tells me to?**

A union must conduct a secret ballot vote prior to a strike commencing. If a majority of employees who vote support a strike, then a strike can occur.

**Q10. OPSEU says that strikes are "extremely rare".**

There have been four strikes in the College system. The most recent strike was by full-time academic employees in 2006. Strikes are not uncommon in the educational system. Many of you may have experienced them in elementary or high school. Many will remember the lengthy strike at York University last year. So strikes can occur.

**Q11. OPSEU's website suggests that the province will increase funding if the part-timers unionize.**

Nothing the Government has said to date makes us optimistic that Colleges will obtain improved funding in the near future.

**Q12. Does unionization change my relationship with the College?**

When employees are represented by a union, the employment relationship is fundamentally altered. Employers are no longer able to deal directly with the employee when determining such things as hours of work or wages.

**Q13. How has OPSEU dealt with the interests of part-timers in past negotiations with the Colleges?**

When OPSEU bargains the collective agreement for full-time support, it has consistently attempted to restrict the Colleges' ability to hire part-time and student employees.

You should give careful consideration to what the union is telling you. Ask yourself why they are interested in you. Also, considering the information above, ask yourself what benefits the union can provide you for your dues.