

Council / Conseil

College Compensation and Appointments Council
Conseil de la rémunération et des nominations dans les collèges

To: Part-time Support and Student Employees and Projects of a Non-recurring Kind

I am writing to provide an update on the Ontario Public Service Employees Union's (OPSEU) application to unionize part-time support and student employees and employees working in projects of a non-recurring kind at the Colleges. This is the second letter the Council has provided on this matter. The earlier letter can be found on the Council's website at www.theCouncil.on.ca.

Vote Scheduled

The Ontario Labour Relations Board has scheduled a secret ballot vote on OPSEU's application to represent you. The vote commences on October 5 and ends on October 27. You may exercise your right to vote at any College on the day the vote is held at that location. The voting schedule has been posted at your College. In addition, we have posted the full voting schedule on the Council's website at www.theCouncil.on.ca. Please review it to ensure you are aware of the options you have to exercise your voting rights on this important matter.

You get to Decide

You will be asked to decide whether you wish to give OPSEU the right to represent you in your future relationship with the College. OPSEU wants you to join their union. You need to decide whether YOU want to or not. That's up to you. Our role is to provide you with information you may find helpful in making this important decision.

Here are some important issues to consider:

1. Regardless of how many people vote, all part-time support and student employees and employees working in projects of a non-recurring kind will become OPSEU members if more than 50% of the people who vote cast ballots in favour of the union.

Depending on the vote turnout, a relatively small number of people could make the decision for everyone. For example, there are approximately 9,000 employees in the proposed bargaining unit. If only 1,000 of those employees come out to vote and more than 500 votes are in favour of the union, then all employees become union members with OPSEU representing them.

2. Even if you did not previously sign a union card, you are eligible to vote. Indeed, it is important for all employees to vote, to ensure the final result reflects the wishes of employees.
3. If you have previously signed a union card, you may still choose to vote against the unionizing of your workplace. The vote is a secret ballot and no one will know how you voted.

Wages

A union, when attempting to recruit new members, promises to increase wages. In reality, a union can't really promise increased wages. Wages are negotiated with the employer. The outcome of negotiations is dependent on what the employer can pay, its financial situation and how its current rates fit within the marketplace. If the employer and the union cannot reach agreement, then the union can take its members out on strike.

The current economic climate in Ontario is challenging for all sectors and in particular, difficult for the colleges. Without improved funding, it will be difficult for colleges to offer significant wage increases to employees. Nothing the government has said to date makes us optimistic that colleges will obtain improved funding in the near future.

Your Relationship with the College

When employees are represented by a union, the employment relationship is fundamentally altered. An employee's terms of employment are governed by the collective agreement between the union and the employer. The employer is no longer able to deal directly with the employee when determining such things as hours of work or wages. A collective agreement generally reduces the level of flexibility an employer has to fashion terms of employment to meet the specific needs of an individual employee or its operations.

The Role of Part-Time Support and Student Employees

You may be surprised to learn that when OPSEU bargains the collective agreement for full-time support, it consistently attempts to restrict the colleges' ability to hire part-time and student employees. The colleges have always resisted OPSEU's attempts to restrict the use of part-time employees because we view your roles as critical to the success of our programs.

Before deciding how to vote, you may wish to ask OPSEU how it intends to reconcile its opposition to the hiring of part-time employees at colleges with its plans to represent you in bargaining.


Union Dues

OPSEU funds its operations by collecting dues from employees. Generally, a union collects dues from all employees in the bargaining unit regardless of whether the employee is actually a member or not.

OPSEU's current dues structure requires an employee to pay 1.375% of wages earned. It is estimated that if the union is successful in this application, it will receive well over \$780,000 annually in union dues from college part-time and student workers. You may wish to consider whether the union will provide appropriate value for this employee contribution.

Every Vote is Important!

Whether you choose to join a union or not is up to you. But it is important that you vote. Every employee affected by this issue has the right to be heard.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Sinclair', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Don Sinclair
Executive Director