

THE LOCAL

OPSEU Local 560 at Seneca College

October 2010

The Value of Public Services

Ted Montgomery, President, OPSEU Local 560, with notes from CAUT

"We just can't afford it." We hear that in bargaining, and we hear it almost daily in the media from major corporations. In fact, we're likely saying it ourselves when we contemplate the purchase of a better vehicle or some other needed item. But what's the reality when it comes to public sector salaries? *Who* can't afford it?

Ontario, along with virtually every other government in the industrialized world, is operating a budgetary deficit. **The crucial point is that the deficit has arisen as a consequence of the most serious economic recession since the Great Depression, not as a result of "over-spending" on public services.**

Because the government's current fiscal shortfall is cyclical in nature, it is also temporary. As economic growth returns, the deficit will be eliminated even if the government enacts no spending cuts. With a normal recovery to pre-recession rates of economic growth, the provincial deficit will likely disappear by 2014 or 2015. Even assuming growth rates lower than the historical average, the deficit would still disappear by 2016-17. It makes no sense to cut public services or freeze the wages of public sector workers, as the government is saying it will do this year and beyond.

The government needs to be honest about the real state of the province's finances. The fiscal and economic situation has improved significantly since the March 2010 budget. Private sector forecasters indicate that economic growth is much higher than anticipated by the Ministry of Finance and that the projected deficit is already lower than forecast in the 2010 Budget.

Economic Forecast for Ontario, FY 2010	
	% change in real GDP
March 2010 budget	2.7
Average private sector forecast (March 010)	3.0
TD Canada Trust (June, 2010)	4.0
BMO (June, 2010)	3.4
CIBC (June, 2010)	3.7
Scotiabank (June, 2010)	3.7
RBC (July, 2010)	3.8

The Royal Bank of Canada, in its July update, now estimates 3.8% real growth for 2010 – a 1.1% increase above the government's planning estimates. The Conference Board of Canada says this higher-than-expected growth will translate into \$1.1 billion in additional revenues this fiscal year alone.

Imposing wage restraint on public sector workers will weaken the recovery. About one in six people employed in Ontario works in the provincial public sector. Public sector workers and their families play a critical economic role in the province. Wage restraint will put an immediate brake on domestic demand and consumer spending. In turn, lower growth will mean lower government revenues.

The increase in the provincial debt, even under pessimistic forecasts, is manageable. Debt-servicing charges are set to rise modestly from 1.51% of GDP in Fiscal Year (FY) 2008 to 1.69% in FY 2010 and an estimated 1.77% in FY 2011. By

(Continued on page 4)

In this issue....

Value of Public Services	Front Page
Who's Who in the Local	2
Message from Smokey Thomas	3
Affording Full-Time Faculty	4
OPSEU Convention 2010	5
Wage Increase Award	6
Agnew & Agnew — On the Same Page	7
The Path Forward — Guest: Mark Bailey	8
The Back Page — Guest: Howard Doughty	12

Who's Who in the Local

Patricia Clark, Secretary, OPSEU Local 560

ELECTION RESULTS FOR 2010-2012 TERM

At the June 3 General Membership Meeting, members elected the following representatives:

EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

President: Ted Montgomery
Vice-President: Larry Olivo
V. P. Employment Equity & Communications: Beth Agnew
Health & Safety Officer: Muriel McKenna
Secretary: Patricia Clark
Treasurer: Paul Matson
Chief Steward: Jonathan Singer

DELEGATES: to OPSEU Convention, Region-Five Meetings, and CAAT-A Divisional Meetings: Ted Montgomery, Beth Agnew, Patricia Clark, Larry Olivo, Jonathan Singer, Keith Opatowski

ALTERNATES: 1. Romel Cipriani, 2. Bibi John, 3. Tim Ayerst, 4. Margo Burtch, 5. JoAnn Kurtz

Trustees: Michael Jaglowitz, Ya Ping Liu

STEWARDS (elected locally)

Buttonville: Ed Pasquale, Daniel Copeland

Jane: Malcolm Archer, Romel Cipriani

King: Tim Ayerst (now at S@Y), David Sernick, Anne Moorhouse (2 vacancies)

Markham: Del Antoine, John Daly, George Tripp (1 vacancy)

Newmarket: (2 vacancies)

Newnham:

- **Faculty of Business:** Margo Burtch, Patricia Clark, Leroy DaCosta, Bibi John, Muriel McKenna, Larry Olivo, Jonathan Singer
- **Faculty of Technology:** Ali Abedini, Dave Finlay, Bob Harshaw, Paul Matson, Benjamin Shefler
- **Early Childhood Education (NH) & Opticianary Schools:** Pat Resnick, Patricia Robertson
- **Counselling and Library Faculty:** Jack Walters (1 vacancy)
- **English Language Institute:** Ross McCague (1 vacancy)
- **Contract Ed:** Ted Montgomery (1 vacancy)

Seneca @ York:

- **SCA** - Gavin Buchanan, Daria Magas-Zamaria
- **SCS** - Brian Gray, Mary-Lynn Manton, Ron Tarr
- **SELS / LAT/WSD / Library / Counselling** - Beth Agnew (1 vacancy)
- **SBSAC / YSIMSTE** - Michael Gadsden (1 vacancy)

Yorkgate: Norma Friedlander (1 vacancy)

The stewards' term of office commenced on September 1, 2010. Stewards represent their schools as well as their campus. If you cannot contact a steward in your area, feel free to contact any of the officers listed above.



<http://www.facebook.com/pages/OPSEU-560/181935308386>



<http://www.twitter.com/OPSEU560>

A Message from Smokey Thomas

President, OPSEU

I am writing to again update you on the Liberal government's "Compensation Restraint Consultations" process. Unfortunately, it appears there may be some confusion about decisions that have been made and where the government's agenda fits into our normal bargaining practices.

Following our September 13th All-Presidents Meeting, and in keeping with a motion passed by the Executive Board, we contacted the government and have now scheduled one meeting. We have been very clear in our message to the government:

- OPSEU rejects the government's call for us to agree with their Compensation Restraint policy.
- We have re-affirmed that bargaining contracts will continue as usual and arbitrations will proceed as scheduled.
- Our staff negotiators and staff reps have been directed to bargain as usual.

The one scheduled meeting will take place on September 30th. We will listen to what the government and employers have to say. We may well lecture them – again – on their unrealistic expectation that working people take a huge hit and watch their wage cut pay for more corporate income tax cuts. We will NOT be negotiating on September 30th. We will listen and then take time to consider our next steps.

I have scheduled a follow-up conference call for the Executive Board right after the meeting to report what was said and to discuss next steps.

The following leadership group was originally pulled together to join me for the September 30th meeting: Patty Rout our VP, Treasurer; and one Regional VP; Gino Franche from our Executive Board; and Sector Chairs Roxanne Barnes (OPS), Jamie Ramage (BPS), Betty Cree (CAAT Support), and Benoit Dupuis (CAAT Academic).

To broaden our elected representation, I have now invited the other Regional Vice Presidents: Mike

Grimaldi, Claire Rowett, Dave Lundy, Nancy Pridham, Sue Brown and Jamie Tocker to join our team.

Staff assigned include: Ron Lavigne, Executive Assistant to the President; Brian Gould, Chief Negotiator; Sector Supervisors Barry Casey, Ruth Hamilton and Gord Hamilton; and Randy Robinson, our political economist. I may add additional staff from Communications and our lawyer.

It is very important that our members know what their elected leadership is doing. I will report to you regularly on new developments.

In solidarity,

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

Further News from Smokey...

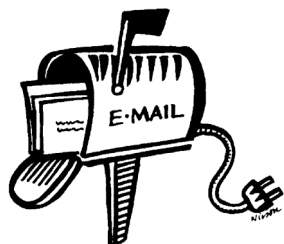
The results of the September 30 meeting were inconclusive – as might be expected, given OPSEU represents hundreds of bargaining units across dozens of sectors in the provincial workforce.

A wage freeze is really a deep wage cut. Money saved from a wage freeze will NOT save jobs, protect public services or pay down the deficit. Frozen public-sector wages are going to be paying for massive tax cuts for profitable corporations and banks.

OPSEU's commitment as we continue to respond to the notion of wage cuts:

- We will continue to bargain collective agreements as normal.
- Arbitrations continue to be scheduled and decisions continue to be rendered.

Promoting a 'good jobs' agenda and defending the importance of our work for healthy communities continues to be your union's top job.



Graphic: CALM

THE LOCAL is a publication of OPSEU Local 560, the faculty union of Seneca College. Please feel free to copy any original material with appropriate credit.

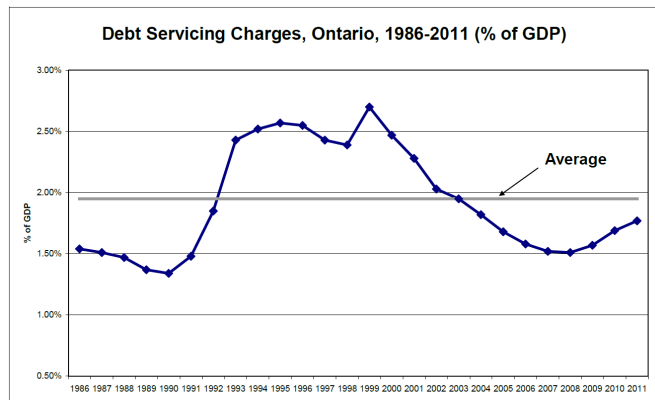
We welcome submissions and correspondence, which should be sent to Patricia Clark, Secretary, OPSEU Local 560, at 2942 Finch Avenue East, Suite 119, Scarborough, Ontario, M1W 2T4, or by fax to (416) 495-7573, or by e-mail to union@opseu560.org

Call us at (416) 495-1599 or visit the Local 560 Web Site at: <http://opseu560.org>



way of historical (Continued from page 1)

comparison, debt servicing charges averaged 1.95% between 1986 and 2008.



The government is rejecting other ways to reduce the deficit. At the same time the government is demanding sacrifices from public sector workers, it is moving ahead with unnecessary corporate tax cuts that will cost nearly \$2.5 billion in lost revenues per year by 2012-13.

Who can't afford it? The public sector employees who contribute to a healthy economy through their work products and their spending, that's who. Cutting our wages is not the way to buy Ontario out of a deficit. **We just can't afford it.**

How Much is Too Much?

Under the contract, partial-load faculty are paid by the teaching contact hour. Of course, because you have to prepare classes and evaluate student work, there is more work involved than just the time in the classroom. Occasionally a partial-load faculty member has been asked to do some additional work, taking on coordination duties, or doing curriculum review or developing a new course. The college practice has been to work out some kind of compensation over and above payment for each teaching contact hour. And so long as the compensation has been fair, this probably is not an issue for these faculty.

However, it has come to the union's attention that some partial-load faculty have, in some areas, been given course-leader duties to assist new partial-load faculty, or to write course materials, or do other work "voluntarily" and without compensation. It is quite appropriate, in a case like this, to tell the supervisor that you are sorry, but you have a living to make, and can't afford the time to volunteer.

We Can't Afford the Cost of More Full-Time Faculty?

During the last round of bargaining, when we accepted paltry increases that are projected to be less than inflation – in effect, a cut in salary over the three-year life of the agreement — we were told by college managers that there was no more money in the system.

We have heard the same thing from college managers as witnesses in the Article 2 grievances requiring the college to hire more full-time faculty. We heard, for example, college Associate VP Academic Henry Decock piously proclaim that the college would have to limit all kinds of support services if they actually had to apply Article 2. We heard more of the same from Allan Evelyn, the Chief Financial Officer, and from Cindy Hazell, Senior VP Academic, when she testified. Of course, they didn't mention that they have each received generous salary increases since the Article 2 grievance started in 2006, as the table below reveals.**

	2009	2006	% Increase
President Rick Miner	\$414,137.35*	\$388,915.33	6.3%
Vice President Cindy Hazell	\$232,630	\$179,749	29%
Associate Vice President Henry Decock	\$156,198.85	\$119,208.56	31%
Chief Financial Officer Allan Evelyn	\$142,144.31	\$135,076.82	5%

* the cost of the President, including Dr. Miner and Mr. Agnew together in 2009 was actually \$568,789.50.

** Public Salary Disclosure, Ontario Ministry of Finance <http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/publications/salarydisclosure/2010/colleg10.html>

Important Benefits Update

There are new requirements for submitting claims for orthotics and orthopaedic shoes.

See your local's website at <http://opseu560.org> for details.



OPSEU Convention 2010

Larry Olivo, Vice President

OPSEU held its annual convention May 6-8 in Toronto. About 1,300 delegates and alternates attended, among them all five Local 560 delegates: Beth Agnew, Patricia Clark, Ted Montgomery, Larry Olivo, and Jonathan Singer.

OPSEU President, Smokey Thomas, in his opening address noted that while OPSEU had weathered “the perfect storm” of 2008, we are still dealing with its aftermath, with settlements of 0% salary increases possible in the public sector, and with cutbacks to public services, particularly children’s services with the evisceration of Children’s Aid budgets. Thomas called for a concrete plan, uniting labour and other groups to pressure the Liberal government to fund provincial services.

OPSEU’s Budget

The budget presented was nearly balanced, with a strong focus on deficit reduction in conjunction with healthy strike and contingency funds. Revenues were somewhat flattened due to low wage increases and reduced investment returns. Patty Rout, the Treasurer, cautioned that we need to be diligent about monitoring expenses and revenues, and become more efficient in delivery of services to our members. After much debate, four amendments from the floor were passed, and four rejected by the members. The result is a slight increase in the deficit. Both the treasurer, in respect of the 2010 budget, and the auditor, in respect of the 2009 financial report, answered a variety of questions before the budget was passed, as amended, and the auditor’s report approved.

The OPSEU Stanley Knowles Humanitarian Award was given this year to Mary Robinson, a well-known human rights campaigner and lawyer who was the first woman President of Ireland, and served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. She is also the founder of the Ethical Globalization Initiative which focuses on setting global standards and practices for human rights.

On The March

Noon on the first day of the convention featured a march on the Ministry of Labour as part of a general campaign by OPSEU to get resolution on the issue of unionizing part-timers. Accompanied by the Samba Squad percussionists to help make noise, hundreds of

delegates shouted for the Ministry to “Open the Boxes!”. Seventeen months after the vote to have a union was taken by part timers at the colleges, the votes had still not been counted, and OPSEU delegates called for an end to management’s constant procedural stalls.

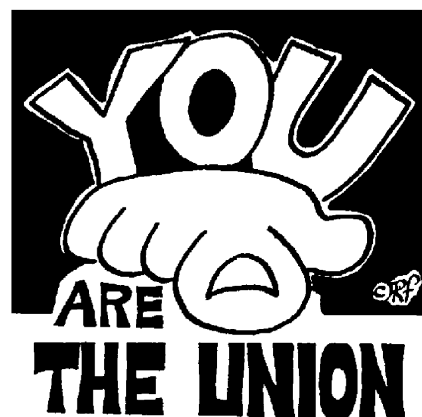
Resolutions

Convention delegates passed a number of resolutions relating to various issues. Local 560’s resolutions did not make it to the floor this year, but were considered by the Executive Board at its June meeting. Resolutions approved by the Executive Board will become policy; resolutions rejected will go no further.

Our resolutions were to:

- actively use web-based and on-line technologies to communicate with members,
- explore and report back on the potential for electronic voting,
- develop a provincial strategy for dealing with the systematic breach of the requirement to give preference to full-time hires at the colleges, and
- grant local strike committees the authority, after due investigation, to stop strike pay and remove from strike duties members who systematically and with obstructive intent wilfully undermine local strike efforts.

Since the number of delegates grows every year, Convention 2011 will be moved from the Sheraton Centre, to the larger Toronto Convention Centre to better accommodate delegates, observers, and guests.



Graphic: CALM

Arbitrator awards nursing home employee wage increase despite so-called Ontario government “wage freeze”

The government insists that when our current contract ends in 2012, we will be subject to the public-sector wage freeze and be forced to accept two years of zero-percent wage increases in our next contract. For workers without a right to strike who must use arbitration, that prospect is less likely, as a result of an arbitration under the *Hospital Labour Disputes Arbitrations Act*, in which arbitrator Norm Jesin ruled that, absent legislation requiring him to freeze wages, the government’s wage-freeze policy for unionized workers had no force or effect, and that he was free to consider appropriate wage increases.



The arbitration involved unionized workers in over 100 private, government-funded, nursing homes and long-term-care facilities. The employers relied on the policy statement in the Ontario 2010 budget that there should be no wage increases in the public sector, (which includes not only private nursing homes but also Ontario colleges). The arbitrator noted that there has been legislation freezing wages for non-unionized public sector-workers, but that there is no legislation enforcing a wage freeze on unionized workers. Further, he noted that the effect of the recession on public-sector finances was overstated and, in the circumstances, a 2% wage increase was warranted.

This decision is good news for the college sector, as it provides a lucid and rational basis to further buttress our arguments that when our contract ends in August 2012, we will have the basis to continue our long struggle for a salary position that is between secondary and university teachers, and for appropriate salary increases based on the cost of living.

Local 560 hosts provincial union workload monitoring group meeting

On May 17, 2010, the local hosted the annual meeting of union members of Workload Monitoring Groups from colleges across the province. Originally conceived of as a meeting of WMG members from Toronto area colleges, the meetings have grown, as more colleges have asked to participate. The meetings have proven to be extremely valuable, as members trade information about trends in assignments and strategies to use to enforce Article 11. For example, we learned that at a couple of colleges, most coordinators were 2-step coordinators, although the practice was fast disappearing.

At all colleges, there were problems with equitable treatment of faculty teaching in applied-degree programs, where extra work and time spent with students outside of class was often not adequately recognized, although at Seneca we have won recognition for this in a workload resolution arbitration. There were also issues with various types of on-line courses. While management thinks they can save money with on-line courses, we have discovered, as have other colleges, that monitoring, for example, a student chat room, can be very time consuming, and we have been successful in having that time recognized at Seneca.

As part of better communication among WMG members at different colleges, we are actively using a distribution list to engage in more consultation and discussion on a province-wide basis, and will also be sharing a database in which we enter workload arbitration decisions that all locals may access.

Agnew & Agnew — On the Same Page

Comments by OPSEU 560 VP Employment Equity Beth Agnew, on Seneca College President David Agnew's recent message about the Student Recruitment and Support Project. The message linked to a number of recommendations, some of which seem to have direct benefits for faculty as well as students. Here, the Agnews (no relation) are on the same page.

Seneca President David Agnew	Local 560 VP Employment Equity Beth Agnew
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine what values make the College a great place to study and work and strive to model those values in everything we do and stand for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty have always held academic excellence as our most important value. Fairness, and treating people equitably... those are values that benefit faculty, too. We all want to make Seneca a nice place to work. We look to our senior administrators to lead by example, and model those values in everything we stand for.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current processes and practices that are systemic barriers to sustaining an environment that values students and staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Valuing faculty -- I like that! I'm sure each of us could name some systemic barriers that could use review.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower staff at all levels to make decisions and to take risks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Faculty making decisions on their own and finding it safe to take risks -- I like that too.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide increased opportunities for students and staff to be heard in a safe environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I agree! Faculty should be able to feel they can speak up about issues of concern to them.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement across the College a practice of asking "How will this decision affect our students?" and "How will this decision impact other areas of the College?" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More full-time faculty? That will affect our students and impact other areas of the College. There are many other faculty-related decisions that should be held up against the filter of these two questions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster a culture that places priority on trust and respect for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I agree, and I'm glad to see our President endorse this recommendation regarding trust and respect.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review current processes and procedures that are systemic barriers to ensuring everyone at the College has an equal opportunity to succeed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A commitment to address and eliminate barriers to faculty success. We can start making a list right now!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commit to continuously searching for, addressing and eliminating barriers to student success and employee satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A theme of total quality improvement — great for everyone!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide opportunities for staff to learn and grow and to contribute in a meaningful way to the success of our students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woot, more PD!!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide staff with the support, resources and time to deliver exceptional customer service, mandating compulsory training on an annual basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To me, this means PAID PD (anything compulsory must be paid) for part-timers, Partial-Load and of course Full-Time faculty. So I would expect to see release time on SWFs for these compulsory trainings, and \$\$\$ in pay cheques for PT and PL faculty. And that TIME word -- wow, what a gift! I'm pretty sure I cannot deliver exceptional customer service to a student if I'm allotted only 2.36 minutes to meet with each of them...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide compulsory diversity awareness workshops for all employees including new hires and contractors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This definitely speaks to PAID training for part timers and Partial-Load faculty.

The Path Forward

by Mark W. Bailey, MA, PhD, Professor, Liberal Arts Program

Although the ink has not yet dried on the new collective agreement, the colleges clearly intend to squeeze the faculty for as much work as can be wrung from them. Whether that is because larger financial problems plaguing the colleges are spurring administrators harder or because administrators have taken the faculty's acquiescence to the new collective agreement as a license to push harder for increased workload is impossible to determine. How the union and the faculty go forward from the recent adoption of the new collective agreement is therefore important, not only to the implementation of the current agreement but also to negotiations leading to the next agreement.

Naturally, the colleges will never admit to behavior so crass as wracking the faculty. As we have seen from President



David Agnew's occasional feel-good email messages to faculty, the colleges' course of action will be obscured by the use of trendy language such as "fiscal realities", "fiscal responsibility", "excellence in education", and "faculty professionalism". But buzz words will not change the realities of what is occurring in the college system.

Keep an Eye on the SWF

Looking forward, the union needs to emphasize to faculty members what happened to the SWF in this collective agreement. The process of fully informing the faculty should begin sooner rather than later, so the union needs to monitor and to publicize how the colleges make use of their new ability to de-SWF up to 20% of faculty members and whether that power is abused. In order to do so, some sort of blog should be created (if it does not already exist) where union members could post their experiences with being asked to "voluntarily" abandon the SWF and what occurs afterward. Faculty members need to see the unpleasant reality of what de-SWFing (apology for the grammatical atrocity) means.

During the last round of contract negotiations, the colleges outmaneuvered the faculty by appealing to public hostility toward a potential strike. Faculty

members were very aware of essentially zero public support for a strike, and this perception weakened the union's ability to bargain from a position of strength.

Send the Right Message

Since it has become standard practice by both the provincial and municipal governments to whip up public hostility toward unionized public employees, the faculty and their union representatives anticipated this move. The strike of municipal workers in Toronto during summer 2009 was a good example of a public employer deliberately fueling anger toward public employees engaged in a legitimate labor action. The tactic is successful because governments (and the colleges) focus all the attention on wages, and the media, unwilling or unable to explain the complexities of other important issues like workload formulas or class sizes, go along with this agenda.

The use of this tactic is hardly unique to the colleges' bargaining process. It is a part of a much larger problem, which OPSEU and other unions representing public employees must address. At a time when Canadians in general are quick to assert their "rights" and to demand their "entitlements", governments are steadily politicizing the collective agreements of public employees like the one for college faculty. Politicizing wages and benefits circumvents the collective bargaining process, since bargaining is removed from the realm of what is beneficial, equitable, and practical for both the college system and its employees and based instead on the shifting sands of public opinion. And we all know what the public thinks of unions and public employees today.

Educate the Public

Granting that OPSEU cannot easily change the larger political environment in which it operates, OPSEU and other public sector unions must nevertheless attempt to educate both the public and the politicians representing them. Without the public onside, our position is hopeless.

In the context of collective bargaining in the college system, Ontarians' are impatient with, even openly hostile toward, disruption of their children's education by labor disputes. More broadly, however, Ontarians want other things. They want accessible higher education. They want a broad selection of programs

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

at both the college and university level. They want professional and experienced instructors providing “excellence in education”. In short, they want a top-of-the-line post-secondary educational system. But they do not want to pay for it. What Ontarians want therefore runs hard into the unhappy financial situation of the colleges.

The inherent contradictions of the public’s get-more-for-less mentality points out the difficulties raised by politicizing public-sector wages and benefits. Politicians in Ottawa and Toronto make policy based on their reading of public opinion. Whatever they might be telling college administrators and employees, public opinion tells them that they must give the appearance of meeting the demand for high-quality post-secondary education but do so without imposing on taxpayers its true cost.

Stop Chronic Underfunding

The result of this contradiction is a chronically underfunded post-secondary system in which the colleges are particularly hard-hit. Per-capita funding for college students in Ontario in 2006/07 was 20% below the national average. In Ontario, per-capita funding for high school students is 43% higher than for college students. Per capita funding for students attending university is 10.5% higher. College administrators know this, and the faculty certainly suspect it. Unfortunately, the message that the colleges are chronically underfunded is not getting through to the public. Given that college presidents and administrators are either uninterested or ineffective in addressing systemic underfunding, we, the faculty, need to publicize what is happening to Ontario’s colleges.

Although articles and letters about universities occasionally appear in newspapers and periodicals (*Maclean’s Magazine* devotes an entire issue to ranking universities), colleges might as well be at the centre of a black hole as far as their media profile is concerned. The only article about colleges recently, appearing in the *Toronto Star*, was written by a university faculty member whose major concern was to denigrate the quality of college faculty and programs in order to question the wisdom of allowing more college/university transfer credits.

Change Perceptions

If we wish to change the public’s perception of the college system, we must make our voices heard in the media, and we must do it on an ongoing basis and not simply after the expiration of the current collective agreement. If the *Toronto Star* published a deeply flawed and obviously biased article

discrediting colleges, we can at least hope that the newspaper would publish carefully researched and well-written articles about the challenges facing Ontario colleges. Nor is anything stopping us from creating a website that does the same thing. In fact, Jonathan Singer, a professor at Seneca College, and Local 560’s Chief Steward, has already plunged into the blogosphere with his own unofficial website (<http://collegeprof.ca/>).



Graphic: CALM

An ongoing media campaign conducted by college faculty would raise a red flag showing that a high-quality college system cannot be sustained under current conditions and that the situation will only worsen if systemic underfunding is not addressed. This process will take time. It will not convince everyone. But it must be done.

Raise Issues Publicly

The faculty talent pool is deep enough to provide authors capable of writing for a wider audience. The union’s role would be primarily to encourage greater faculty involvement and perhaps to facilitate getting faculty articles into the public forum. Such articles could not be paid advertisements (which are already published by the union when occasion demands but are perceived by the public as self-serving). Instead, articles must be balanced and well-informed discussions of the problems in the college system. The articles would be, in effect, discussions of public policy concerning post-secondary education as applied to colleges. Articles of this kind on policy and funding appear frequently in the media—on public education, university education, health care, the arts, etc. The colleges, however, have received very little attention in the media, and we must be proactive in order to raise the colleges’ low profile. In discussing

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

what is wrong with the college system generally, issues such as pay equity, workload, and class size can be treated as symptoms of a larger problem. We would be making a case for reform within a wider public discussion.

Initiate a Dialogue

By taking the initiative, the faculty would get the issues into the public forum and gain some control of the political agenda. Instead of focusing attention on faculty wages and benefits and the not very subtle implication that college faculty are simply greedy, the faculty could provide a broader view of the issues. Instead of reacting to proclamations from the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities and from the colleges, the faculty could force the Ministry and college administrators into an intelligent debate in a forum where misinformation and the occasional lie would be more open to question. Such a dialogue is, I think, a precondition for any effective reform of the college system and for the next round of contract negotiations in 2012.

If nothing else, the publicity would make college administrators uncomfortable. The generally hostile response of university administrators to the surveys conducted by *Maclean's Magazine* is proof that they do not react kindly to an objective evaluation of their institution's performance. Like their counterparts in the college system, university administrators initially reacted by denying, deflecting, and defending. Those tactics were unsuccessful, and many universities felt obliged to address the shortcomings revealed by the *Maclean's* survey. We need to do the same for the college system.

Make the Case

By taking the initiative, the faculty would counter the apathy displayed by so many of us during the last round of negotiations. An effective case can be made for improved funding for Ontario colleges: we are the people who should make that case. Look at the ballooning cost of police services in Toronto and Ontario. Few questions are raised concerning those rising costs or the handsome salaries earned by many police officers, because people are convinced that they need all that police protection. In short, police agencies (ably supported by the media's addiction to crime stories, and politicians pushing a law-and-order

agenda) have benefited enormously from a good PR campaign. How many people, I wonder, have stopped to think about the salaries of police officers, with whom they are unlikely to have contact in any given year, in comparison to the salaries of college professors, with whom students have contact about 140 days during a typical school year?

Act when Necessary

I am enough of a Hobbesian to believe that people will not change their ways without suffering some pain and inconvenience. This is equally true of the general public, politicians, and college administrators. In other words, persuasive arguments might not be enough to produce the desired effect. One way to create pain is a strike, but a strike (or the threat of a strike) damages the faculty's public image. If nothing else, threatening to strike immediately makes us the bad guys. The recent contract negotiations appear to confirm this unhappy truth, since even faculty members believed such to be the case.

Work to rule seems to be an attractive notion. This tactic has been used to good effect by

police services (and health services) to strengthen their position during sluggish contract negotiations. Unfortunately, that is not an option for faculty. Under the Colleges Collective Bargaining Act any slowdown or withdrawal of services is considered to be a strike. Faculty engaging in a work-to-rule campaign would get no pay, and if this action were undertaken without a strike mandate, it would constitute an illegal strike.

Deliver a Strike Mandate

What is left to us, then, is an early strike vote that gives the bargaining team strong support, and clearly indicates to management that faculty are willing to do whatever it takes to achieve a fair contract. Timing of the strike vote is important. The collective agreement expires at the end of August 2012, and its expiration is usually accompanied by negotiations that last into the fall or longer. A strike vote held immediately after or shortly before the expiration of the contract would allow for no-nonsense negotiations and send a strong message of faculty solidarity to the colleges.

(Continued on page 11)



(Continued from page 10)

Monitor Workloads

In the meantime, faculty need to emphasize to management how rapidly the system would begin to unravel if full-time and committed partial-load faculty displayed less dedication than they currently offer. We all know how much unpaid time professors routinely provide in order to keep the system functioning. Faculty need to pay close attention to the workloads being assigned on the SWF, and not volunteer to take on work that is considerably outside the limitations set by the Standard Workload Formula. The SWF is a control mechanism on faculty workloads, which is why the colleges are trying to hold faculty to the absolute letter (and often a little beyond) of the SWF. But both sides know that the SWF is hardly an accurate reflection of the work actually done by faculty. The colleges have chosen to take a hard-line stance on what can be demanded from faculty under the SWF. Although it goes against the grain for many faculty members to limit what they do for their students, perhaps it is time for them to be equally hard-line.

Raise our Profile

Concurrent with continual reminders to management about our growing workloads should be a long-term media campaign. If we spend the next three years repeating the message that the system is badly underfunded and in need of reform, some people at least will notice that the system only staggered along so long as the faculty continued to take on additional students and additional work without compensation and without increased staffing levels. This is the message that we need to keep repeating — it is actually the faculty and their willingness to accept additional workload that keep the system working. Take those away and the system becomes unworkable.

The beginning of this media campaign should ideally have commenced this past summer after Premier McGuinty announced that the colleges and universities might enroll as many as 20,000 additional students this fall. On the surface, this is good news. Colleges, however, have imposed a hiring freeze on new faculty. Who exactly will teach those additional students? The Premier also indicated that an unspecified amount of extra funding will be made available to create places for those students. The announcement of that funding will undoubtedly be accompanied by a loud fanfare. But will the amount of funding eventually actually reflect the per-capita cost of accommodating a new student? Will it even match the already insufficient per-capita funding currently

provided? These are issues that need to be publicized in the media.

Clearly, this proposal is not a quick fix for the challenges facing Ontario colleges and college faculty. It demands long-term thinking and sustained effort from the faculty to raise the public profile of Ontario colleges and to reveal the deeply entrenched problems in the Ontario college system. Any solution to those problems will not be the work of a few days or weeks.

Notes

1. In 2006/06, the national average was \$9,254 versus \$7,425 in Ontario. "The Fiscal Challenges Facing Ontario Colleges." (Niagara College, 2006). Accessed 6.16.2010. http://www.niagaracollege.ca/corporate/college_funding_jan_2006.pdf.
2. Provincial grants for secondary school students are projected to be \$10,730 per student and for colleges \$6,085 per student (including tuition)—a 43% difference. Memorandum from Karen Maxwell (Assistant Deputy Minister (Acting)) to Directors of Education. Ministry of Education (Ontario). March 26, 2010. Accessed 6.16.2010. http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/funding/1011/2010_B5.pdf.
3. Taking into account both grants and tuition fees, universities received \$6,800 per student and colleges received \$6,085 per student — a 10½% difference. "Ontario College and University Fact Sheet." (Council of Ontario Universities, 2004). Accessed 6.16.2010. http://www.cou.on.ca/content/objects/BR_Ontario_College_and_University_Fact_Sheet.pdf.
4. Brian E. Brown, "The Perils of Transferring Credits." *Toronto Star* 11 Aug. 2009, A15.
5. Jonathan Singer, *One Ontario College Professor's Blog*. <http://collegeprof.ca/about/>.

Care to Write for Us?

If you have an opinion or position you'd like to share with the members, we invite you to contribute it to **The Local**. Guest authors are welcome, and may be featured on **The Back Page** or elsewhere in **The Local**. We'd love to hear from you! Send your submissions or ideas to: union@opseu560.org

The Back Page

Guest Columnist: Howard Doughty

Nobody likes a party pooper. Nobody likes unnecessary negativity. Nobody likes cynics, naysayers and soggy blankets. They are to be shunned or sent for psychological counseling. They are in need of emotional repair. Or such is the common opinion.

Nietzsche, of course, thought differently: "I love the great destroyers," he intoned, "for they are the only *true* adorers." Of course, nobody likes Nietzsche very much either.

On the other hand, as we are increasingly enveloped in ecological, economic and ethical breakdowns, some people are getting annoyed by those incessant happy faces and voice-mail admonitions to "have a nice day."

My response? "No, thanks, I've made other plans!"

But you don't have to be a Nietzsche or a nihilist to know something's wrong with relentless cheeriness. That's why a favourite author, Barbara Ehrenreich, is doing brisk sales with her book *Smile or Die: How Positive Thinking Fooled America and the World*. It's also why I hope to get away with this article.

My grumpiness arises from the invitation to volunteer at student orientation that we received electronically from President David Agnew, and duly augmented with information about on-line registration from Susie Vallance.

Now, to be clear: I have nothing against students being oriented, and I don't even disapprove of volunteering for good causes. I do, however, get cranky when I consider the tone of the message.

There are two problems.

First there's the idea of a Seneca (or is that a Potemkin?) Village at each campus. There incoming students can be glad-handed, exposed to "Welcome Buttons" akin to those once worn by Clarabelle the Clown, and kept amused in a "carnival-like setting with entertainment and music." Now, I don't want to sound curmudgeonly or even a little bit sanctimonious, but should faculty and staff really be showing students such a good time? After all, isn't that what Student Councils are for?

And what are these door prizes? Advanced Standing in English and Liberal Studies?

Maybe I'm just too much in thrall to the good old days, but on my first day of postsecondary education, about three hundred of us were kenneled into a room with dark drapes and a dais. A stern old man peered out from under his academic hood, and intoned: "Look to the left. Look to the right. Only one of the three of you will graduate." Now, *that*

was a welcome, and one that ensured we would take our studies seriously.

There's something else. Over the past year, teachers at Seneca and around the province have been intimidated, lied to and compelled to swallow a great deal of what I'll politely call "misinformation." I am talking, of course, about the lead-up to the ignominious vote on the *Collective Agreement* which was, at best, a ratification of the contractual terms unilaterally imposed on us by the province.

This isn't the time to rehash that mish-mash, though the time will come. For now, let's just say that it is unrealistic and maybe a tad demeaning to be nudged into the role of a jester as this semester starts. Instead, it would have been better to have some hint that the fundamental issues underlying the harsh realities of collective bargaining and professional life at Seneca could be addressed.

It's no secret that employer-employee relations have been toxic for decades. I've been around this college as a full-time teacher since August 1969, and I cannot recall a day when a genuinely collegial relationship was in place. From the outset, it was management's expressed intent to promote an industrial model of hierarchical governance. In that, management certainly succeeded.

If there is any alternative in the managerial mind to the perpetuation of mistrust and inherently adversarial relations, it will not come from festivities like this. And festivities like this will not wholly succeed until something more than a token of respect is forthcoming from "above." Absent that we're just amusing ourselves to death.

Meanwhile, we will all try to be helpful, to point students in the right direction, to be courteous and forthcoming. We won't unload our grievances in our classrooms or poison the workplace with chronic complaint.

We would do well, instead, to treat the workplace as a genuinely postsecondary educational institution. We are here to teach, not to deliver curriculum. The people in our classrooms are students, not customers. Our curriculum should be what Canada's beloved conservative philosopher George Grant called "the soul" of the college, not a pre-packaged product to be endlessly negotiated in the hope of winning KPI points from graduates. If we do a good job, management might even catch on.

In short, I do not care if anyone is blissful, exultant and mindlessly positive. I do care that everyone strives to be self-aware, attentive and thoughtful. If that were to become the essence of the corporate culture of Seneca College, I'd even smile a little more than I am inclined to do now.