

## President's Message

The year past; the year forward

by Jonathan Singer

Welcome back to another year at Seneca College. I say that not just as a Union Local President, but also as a colleague—teaching at Newnham, trying to navigate i3 (see our handy tips on page six), and trying to figure out how to provide effective feedback to my students' assignments without sacrificing my personal life or sanity.

The last year has been an extremely challenging, and in many cases demoralizing, time for Seneca faculty. Some of us have been affected more directly or more catastrophically than others by management decisions. But all of our efforts as faculty—to provide quality education to our students, to receive fair treatment and compensation in return, and to have our professionalism and expertise respected—have been impacted by the following recent trends imposed by the highest level of Seneca's decision-makers:

- A reduction of the grade students need to pass our courses, further reducing the quality of our graduates;
- A reduction of teaching hours for many classes, over faculty objections that students need additional time;
- The “demotion” of 150 unionized partial-load positions to non-unionized part-time or sessional positions, in order to save money by reducing the wages and eliminating the benefits of Seneca's most vulnerable faculty;
- The reclassification of dozens of partial-load faculty instructing students in field placement classes as “part-time support staff”, with approximately a 2/3 reduction in their hourly wage. (This development is significant for all faculty, given the promise in Seneca's Academic Plan to provide all students “with an experiential learning opportunity during their time at Seneca”, which may in reality be an opportunity for management to outsource still more teaching to non-faculty across all programs);
- The implementation of Seneca's Academic Plan through the direction advised by six Task Groups, *most of which had no faculty members whatsoever*; and
- An unprecedented disciplining of faculty based on nothing more than student allegations, with no effort to investigate fairly the truth of those allegations.

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# Grievance Update—Top Employer?

by Larry Olivo, Chief Steward

Five years ago, Seneca had relatively few grievances in the system. That isn't the case anymore. There are currently 10 grievances referred to arbitration or about to get started.

Of the 10, four involve faculty who have been unjustly disciplined where micro-managing Chairs have made mountains out of molehills. In two cases, faculty members were disciplined for the content of student work. These members teaching in media programs followed existing management policy for reviewing student-designed videos, but their students proceeded to make unauthorized last-minute changes *after* their videos were vetted by faculty. These changes included sexist and otherwise inappropriate material of which the faculty had no idea. When the students' videos were shown (with the unauthorized offensive material included), the two faculty members received disciplinary letters, despite the fact that they had followed long-established college procedures and could not have possibly intervened in time to stop the students who were well aware of policies and standards. These grievances are soon to be scheduled.

In another case, a veteran faculty member at King was disciplined for cursing and using a racial term. The grievor absolutely denies the use of any racist language and we will fight this out at arbitration. While the faculty member acknowledges using a curse word or two to drive a point home, the professor is not teaching divinity students, nor was the language used so outside the bounds of what is now often acceptable informal language use: even the *Globe and Mail* will print the word "fuck" without blushing or using asterisks. This kind of Pecksniffian overreaction to something trifling is completely out of place, particularly in an academic institution that purports to have an Academic Freedom policy. In this case, we appear to have a Chair who simply took complaining students at their word without there being a competent or impartial investigation. Normally student complaints, except in a very narrow range of circumstances, go to the teacher, and if not resolved, to the Chair. From there, Human Resources usually carries out an investigation, and the union sends a steward to assist and represent the faculty member. But that is not what happened in this case, or apparently, in some others.

This is one of the unfortunate results of the education business model that is a hallmark of the Agnew administration, with a college policy that treats students as customers rather than students. As there may be a pattern here, we have urged faculty at King to ask for their local union rep to accompany them to any meeting with their Chair, if the subject of the meeting is not clear or appears to be based on student criticism. There is a procedure to follow, and faculty are entitled to a union rep if their conduct is called into question at any time.

There is also a similar case brewing at S@Y, where a faculty member who had the temerity to uphold teaching and grading standards was subjected to criticism by the Chair, based on unsubstantiated student complaints. Fortunately, a union rep was involved at an early stage, and there appears to have been

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something of a retreat by the Chair, but we are watching and monitoring this case.

Another area where there are two grievances pending, and one in the wings, is the college's failure to accommodate faculty with health issues when doctors have clearly identified a limitation that requires accommodation. In some of these cases, there have been attempts by the so-called Wellness Office to obtain diagnoses, which is not permitted. In others, the college has implemented ineffective measures to accommodate, while resisting effective accommodations, or has waded in to suggest treatment plans or further medical investigations that are not warranted by the evidence.

We have also been busy grieving the college's decision last year to throw their devoted partial-load employees under the bus by demoting them to part-time positions, thereby removing them from the faculty bargaining unit, cutting their wages, eliminating their benefits, and otherwise treating them as if they were fungible and expendable .

Three union grievances were launched to protect the rights and positions of field placement teachers whom the college decided to call (and compensate as) "part-time support staff", although they still carry out teaching functions for students in practicum settings. Unfortunately, an arbitrator refused to hear the Union's grievances, based on the college's argument that grievances had to be launched by the individual faculty. The college's approach is interesting, given that an individual on a temporary contract who grieves could expect that temporary contract to be their last. Regardless of this blow, we are looking at alternative strategies to put a stop to this denigration of faculty by "one of Toronto's top employers".

We have also filed other union grievances challenging the college on the erosion of the bargaining unit and limiting our right to communicate with our members in the workplace.

Our current collective agreement features a temporary moratorium on Article 2 grievances against the college for giving preference to hiring partial-load over full time (a practice that is becoming less common since non-unionized part-time and sessional faculty have lower wages and fewer rights than unionized partial-load faculty). However, we are not barred from grieving the college's policy of hiring sessional contract faculty in ways that violate the collective agreement. Our first such grievance in recent years – focusing on the abuse of sessional faculty in the English Language Institute – is on its way to arbitration.

## Why Grieve?

You may wonder why the union makes a big deal out of whether part timers or partial-load faculty are hired, and why it matters who is, or is not, a member of the bargaining unit.

The primary function of a union is to ensure good jobs for its members, and also to ensure that those employees are treated fairly. That is why the collective agreement ensures that colleges give preference to hiring full time faculty over partial-load, and ensures that colleges have strict limits on the length of time that positions can be filled with sessional hires instead of full time faculty. It is also why we are so concerned about Seneca College's demotion of over a hundred partial-load positions (with benefits, limited job security, and centrally-negotiated wages) to precarious part-time contract work.

If we do not call the college to account for violations of our employment contract, i.e., the collective agreement, it loses its force, and in the next round of bargaining we are likely to lose the gains we have made over the years, such as sick days, and various other benefits and protections, on the theory that if we're not willing to fight for them, we don't really care about them.

Increasingly, our efforts involve equity issues. Even members who have been cool to the union in years past warm up considerably when they encounter a manager who treats them unfairly. It can happen to YOU, and we are here to support faculty in your efforts to assert your rights when dealing with the college.

# Core Literacies – The New “New Big Thing”

by Howard A. Doughty, Steward – King Campus

According to the New Testament (Luke 2:1), “It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.” In that same spirit, in 2013, there went out a decree from Brad Duguid – former Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities – that all the Ontario colleges should re-brand themselves and, in their visionary statements, explain why the province should keep (decreasingly) funding them.

Seneca’s answer was to put forward a ten-step program for academic excellence, employability and of course, global competitiveness. The ten steps were to be known as “core literacies.”

It has taken a couple of years, but the first pilot projects are now underway. Soon (in no more than five years), the college is committed to producing graduates who can read, write, count, think (analytically, critically, creatively and ethically), find their way around the Internet, use social media, and adopt a global perspective on ... well, just about everything.

This “new” commitment mainly rehearsed what the English and Communications Division and the Liberal Studies Division had done for a quarter-century before they were devalued, degraded, dismembered and denatured in the early 1990s – but Seneca seems uninterested in its own institutional memory. The therefore-not-so-new-after-all “new big thing” was, of course, conjured up behind closed doors and is only now being “rolled out” in a series of not-very-well publicized “interactions” between management and faculty.

A few questions about core literacies should occur to all of us including:

- What foundational research – primary or secondary – was conducted to help develop their "theory" and/or "philosophy"?
- What external models were investigated in their development?
- What examples of "best practices" in this area were considered?

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## CONTRACT FACULTY FORWARD!



As a Union Local, we have joined with other Locals representing GTA colleges, to support a new initiative in support of contract faculty. *Contractfacultyforward.ca* will provide a comprehensive site for information about issues affecting contract faculty and their students. The site is expected to launch in September, and currently seeks stories from faculty at Seneca and elsewhere about your experiences. Where requested, all stories will be kept strictly anonymous.

If you are interested in contributing your story or talents to the website, please contact Local President Jonathan Singer at [jsinger@opseu560.org](mailto:jsinger@opseu560.org).

(Continued from page 1) *President's Message*

A pattern is clear: Faculty are increasingly sidelined from academic decisions at the College, while a “student-as-customer” management culture increasingly treats faculty as merely customer service representatives.

Much of this issue of *The Local* is devoted to the many current threats to our role and status as faculty – and in some cases to the very livelihoods of contract faculty. The articles reflect a profoundly frustrating moment in labour relations at Seneca, and a precipitous decline in faculty morale.

The last year, however, has also demonstrated our ability to speak out both as individuals and collectively against threats to our faculty brothers and sisters. To wit, the last year saw an unprecedented level of mobilization around issues affecting faculty, including:

- Articles in the *Toronto Star* (Oct. 22), *Queens Park Today* (Oct. 27), *QP Briefing* (Oct. 27), *rabble.ca* (Nov. 7), and the *OSSTF Update* (Jan. 2015);
- Over 1,250 signatures on an online petition, asking Pres. David Agnew to stop the cuts to partial-load faculty;
- Faculty information picketing at Newnham, S@Y, King, and Markham campuses (all under the watchful eye of hired security staff in SUVs with tinted windows), in which approximately 3,000 flyers and buttons in support of partial-load faculty were distributed to Seneca students; and
- The creation of [partialload.org](http://partialload.org) to publicize partial-load issues.

But the greatest cause for hope remains in each other, and our commitment to collectively assert our rights and stand up for quality education at Seneca. The most concrete example of our renewed conviction presented itself at a Local 560 General Membership meeting in February, when members unanimously passed a budget that contained an unprecedented sum for drawing attention to and support for the issues that affect our members, particularly contract faculty.

We as a Local have grabbed the attention (and respect) of faculty and unions throughout the province, and if our role as a leader for faculty unions was forced upon us by unfortunate managerial decisions, I'm proud that we have embraced that role, directing our collective voices in support of issues that affect our members and our students.

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(Continued from page 4) *Core Literacies*

What measurements of success are to be imposed on faculty and students?

And, of course, the biggest one of all:

### **Why were faculty excluded from the process?**

If there is a single overarching problem at the college, it is surely the tendency toward centralization and standardization within a rigidly hierarchical corporate decision-making model that has no place in any college worthy of the name — especially one mandated to award free-standing baccalaureate degrees.

Early efforts to involve faculty in this process were, unfortunately, stymied by management intimidation of faculty volunteers. So, I've been left to do a little research on my own. The results are discouraging. To be fair and to her credit, however, Jean Choi – the newly-minted Dean, Academic Quality – has agreed to meet to discuss such matters “in the upcoming months”. I remain “cautiously pessimistic” about the outcome.

## Seneca Follies

To save money, we assume, management directed that systems in vacant offices over the summer be disconnected from the network. Well, in a shared office, there's usually at least one faculty working during the semester. This required yet more calls to tech support to get the computers back online.

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Productivity losses? If 1,000 people are delayed just 15 minutes every day in getting their work done thanks to i3, at an average rate of \$100 per hour (composed of salary, benefits, overhead, etc.) that costs the college \$25,000 a DAY.

## Happy Labour Day!



**Proud to be OPSEU.**

Enjoy this long weekend,  
and every weekend,  
courtesy of the labour movement.

## Pay Alert

The college is required to pay out the entire annual salary of full time faculty by the end of the academic year, August 31. The August 27 payday will include Aug 28-31.

As a result, you may see a little more money in the bank on August 27, but that also means the first pay in September will cover only Sep 1 to 10, and consequently appear to be a little short.

Pays will be back to normal by September 24.

## Tech Tips

Against the prevailing wisdom that computers should serve people and not the other way around, we find ourselves at the mercy of i3 for many of our tasks. What used to take minutes now takes ten times that. From simple expense reports to printing one's timetable, even the most basic operations are clunky and frustrating to perform. The words "intuitive" and "user-friendly" certainly do not apply to this system.

However, there are ways to make it behave. Here are some useful tips for faculty:

**To print your schedule:** In Faculty Centre, below your list of classes, click the link View Weekly Teaching Schedule. Scroll down and click Seneca Printer Friendly Version for a nicely-formatted PDF you can print (or save). If you select just Printer Friendly Version it prints your timetable exactly the way you see it in i3.

**To print a class list with photos:** In Faculty Centre, click the icon to the left of the class name. Select display option: Include photos in list. It will show a box with one student's photo; choose View All. Then print. It doesn't look that great, but it does the job.

**To print a class roster:** In Faculty Centre, click the icon to the left of the class name. Then scroll to the bottom and click the link for Printer Friendly Version. You can also click Class Roster, scroll to the bottom and select Printer Friendly Version. Then Print from your browser.

**Why don't they just fix it, you ask?** They could, but then the next already-contracted-for upgrade would overwrite all the custom programming. And if you think you've got it bad, consider our valiant support staff brothers and sisters who have to wrestle with it on an hourly basis for contracts, scheduling, and routine administrative tasks, as well as provide tech support to everyone who cannot get something done because they can't figure out how to make i3 do it, despite all the excellent training we've had. That's an estimated \$72+ million dollars well spent, wouldn't you say? Not to mention daily productivity losses of thousands of dollars. There's no "E" for efficiency in i3.

### *Is it YOU?*

**We keep hearing a lot about initiatives made with "faculty consultation". Strangely, we can't seem to find any faculty who actually have been consulted. If you've been asked your thoughts about any new initiatives, please let us know!**

# Freedom of Information

*By Larry Olivo, Chief Steward*

Seneca management zealously controls information about college operations, using the ever-growing marketing department to control its image. Fortunately, we as faculty are not limited to hearing only what management wants us to hear, and we do have access to information through the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA) and the Privacy Office, which gives us access to some information that the college might not want to parade in public.

## **How much did i3 cost?**

Last year, Local 560 applied to find out how much the i3 system was costing the college. The college initially refused to reveal what it had paid to outside contractors, but after an appeal to the Privacy Commissioner, we managed to find out that Oracle (seller of PeopleSoft) and DeLoitte (for managing the process and flogging the software which we have all found so useful and delightful) were paid \$25,567,578, and that the total amount paid for everything connected to i3 as of November 14, 2014 was \$37,063,262. And one may assume that it didn't stop there; some several millions more have been shovelled into the maw of the i3 project since last November, largely to add needed customization and pay for huge demands on technical support. Rumour has it the total price tag is now upwards of \$72 million dollars... With Seneca's world-class faculty in software engineering, computer programming, open source technology, and usability, you'd think some of them would have been consulted before this behemoth that is i3 was even contemplated, but no. Whoever decided usability was not a requirement surely did not understand that hard-to-use software leads to high technical support costs, user frustration, lowered morale, and productivity losses.

## **What is it costing to turn Counselling into a student accommodation assembly line?**

Seneca College hasn't yet started replacing counsellors with therapy dogs but managerial decisions are nevertheless making it harder to receive therapeutic services from qualified humans, since counsellors are being turned increasingly into assembly-line workers issuing accommodation forms.

At one time, counsellors dealt with accommodations and also with students who had other issues requiring counselling. But recently, the college hired Dalton and Associates to provide counselling and therapeutic services for students. As of June 2015, over a 16-month period, there were 10 referrals at a total cost of \$10,000. Many of the services provided could have been delivered by our own counsellors, but instead the college is prepared to spend yet more to do what our experienced counsellors could do at no additional cost. The information provided by the College to the Freedom of Information request raises further questions about the contract-tendering process, as well.

Tossing money away on outside contractors when employees can do the work is not the only money-tossing escapade in counselling. The college also decided to replace its existing appointment scheduling software with new software, although the counsellors didn't have any problems with the existing program. The new software, called Accommodate, apparently cost \$32,649.58 including installation, staff training and the licencing fee. Does it provide other costs savings or make counsellors' jobs easier? No.

## **The college attempt to shut down Union requests for information**

Everyone who has watched the current administration's installation of an educational business model will be well aware that they are not happy to have faculty asking questions about what they have been doing. When

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we made the request for information about i3, for which the answers were very complex, we were charged only an initial processing fee of \$5.00. But senior management, no doubt regarding our further questions about how college management is spending money as impertinent interference, decided to charge what they allege was their cost for providing the new information we requested, as a way of throwing up a roadblock to future inquiries. We refused to pay what they demanded, and appealed the decision to the Privacy Office. The mediator required the college to provide detailed fee breakdowns to justify their claim for the fees they wished to charge, which when provided, looked to us like a padded, after-the-fact attempt to justify their claim for costs. Indeed, the effort and money that went into creating the record of their so-called costs was likely far higher than it would have been if they had just answered the questions asked. The detailed fee breakdowns that the college provided at the insistence of a Provincial mediator included fees for managerial meetings and other items that there was no legal provision for the college to charge.

If college managers think for a moment that by throwing up roadblocks faculty are simply going to let them manage and manipulate their message without our asking questions, they are mistaken—when there are questions about how they squander resources while they nickel and dime faculty, those questions will get asked, and using the lever of the Privacy Office, Local 560 will get those questions answered.

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## WMG Roundup

Toronto's top employer also seems to have trouble getting SWFs out on time, and we have had a number of SWFs, particularly in ECE, where faculty were not given the 6 weeks advance notice of upcoming teaching assignments that the collective agreement requires. In these cases we obtained compensation for many of those affected.

We have also had several cases where evaluation factors were SWFd improperly—in particular some Chairs were routinely using in-process marking (where you watch a student do something and mark them on the spot, usually in a lab setting) in courses where this is clearly inappropriate. In virtually all cases we were able to correct the problem.

We also discovered one enterprising Chair issuing SWFs with sham courses on it, in order to assign work when there was no real teaching assignment. The appropriate process under the contract is discussion and mutual agreement on work to be done in a non-teaching period under article 11.08. This matter is pending before the WMG and we hope to have it resolved.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Local 560 needs your talents to help accomplish member-driven training and communication initiatives.

We seek the expertise of members (or supporters) who have the following skills:

- Graphic Design
- Basic Animation
- Radio and Television Production
- Familiarity with Print or Online Media Sources
- Translation (Arabic, Cantonese, Farsi, French, Hindi/Urdu, Korean, Mandarin, Russian)
- Copy Editing

To volunteer, please contact Jonathan Singer at [jsinger@opseu560.org](mailto:jsinger@opseu560.org)



# King's Korner: The GOOD, the BAD and the UGLY

*A Report from King Campus*

## The GOOD

All things **Good, Bad and Ugly** occur at King Campus. The **Good** is finally happening at "King's Korner", where after a lengthy gestation period, the preliminary site preparation for the "Super Build" has just started. The actual construction of the proposed building(s) and renovations to Garriock Hall, however, have not yet begun — they are anticipated to start sometime in 2016.

The Super Build concept was originally conceived at least 10 years ago to alleviate the chronic overcrowding at King, where students in some cases were relegated to sitting on classroom floors while attending lectures. Designed for an academic population of approximately 1,500, enrollment has burgeoned to 3,500 students or more during regular Fall and Winter terms. Consequently, students have been warehoused in classrooms in contravention of the Ontario Fire and Building Codes. Seneca College, however, managed to convince the King Fire Marshall to give King campus an exception to the existing laws without a public hearing or input from all the stakeholders.



With great fanfare and published in the "The Senecan" Sept/Oct 2011 edition, President David Agnew, Dean Tina DiSimone, York Regional Police Chief Eric Joliffe, and other notables including regional politicians and other Seneca College dignitaries gathered in front of Garriock Hall to announce a joint Revitalization Project between York Regional Police and Seneca College, King Campus.

As reported in the *Toronto Star* on Oct. 27, 2012, the cost of the project was estimated to be \$96 million, "including \$43 million from the provincial government and \$18 million from York Regional Police", with a completion date "targeted for 2015". Unfortunately, we are well into 2015 and construction has not yet commenced.

The original Revitalization Project envisioned a Centre for Emergency Studies that would house all the York Region Emergency Services training at King, and enjoy a unique partnership with Seneca programs unlike any other Ontario College Partnerships. Unfortunately, Emergency Medical Services and Fire withdrew from the unique training centre without explanation, leaving a partnership only with York Regional Police.

## The BAD

The **Bad** is that Seneca College's unique partnership with York Regional Police has similarly dissolved. YRP withdrew from the project and proffered the explanation that "...the department simply didn't have the budget to go through with the project," as stated in a YorkRegion.com article dated Dec 12, 2012. As a consequence, the College was left with at least an \$18 million shortfall in funding.

However, there may be more to the story than simple budgetary concerns on the part of the York Region decision-makers: *Only six months later*, the York Regional Police has started construction of their new

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training facility in East Gwillimbury – a mere 15-minute drive from King Campus, and a York Regional Police Media Release dated May 15, 2014, cited a budget of \$30.4 million for the new facility was approved.

The new facility will, of course, cost York Region Police \$12 million more than its partnership with Seneca College would have, yet the YRP cited budgetary shortage as the reason for dissolving its partnership with King Campus. One is left with the question: What concerns about partnership with Seneca College's King Campus (or the running of the expansion project) caused the York Region budget authorities to conclude that it was worth \$12 million dollars to *avoid* a partnership with Seneca College? Other questions also abound: What kind of missed opportunity does the loss of this police training facility represent to our Police Foundations students? And might the College's senior management attempt to make up that shortfall by reducing operating costs, in ways that impact the education we provide?

## The UGLY

Finally, the **Ugly** at King Campus: The YRP's withdrawal from the Revitalization Project left Seneca College with a shortfall in the construction budget of at least \$18 million dollars (estimated by some sources at closer to \$23 million). Unrelated, but occurring at the same time, i3 was being implemented college wide.

A Union Freedom of Information (FOI) request revealed that Seneca management admits to spending at least \$37 million on i3, as of November 14, 2014. Unsubstantiated sources, however, state that the actual cost is climbing above \$72 million when staffing, administrative, technical support, and other costs are included in the i3 project. As a result of these two major drains on the overall Seneca College budget, managers are making decisions to compensate for the deficiencies, and causing a serious labour relations crisis at King campus, if not Seneca as a whole.

Management has systematically attacked Faculty at King campus by (in no particular order of importance):

- Eliminating partial-load positions;
- The 'civilianizing' of professors' positions by re-classifying clinical professors to "clinical supervisors" and paying them 1/3 of faculty wages in Nursing, ECE, and SSW;
- Having support staff teach courses in several programs;
- Not replacing tenured professors when they retire or resign with new full time professors as required by the collective agreement;
- Improperly disciplining faculty members;
- Putting improper factors on SWFs, to compel faculty to do more work than they receive credit for;
- Eliminating meeting time and committee participation from the back of the SWF;
- Targeting faculty at "ambush meetings", in which teachers find themselves being criticized without union representation; and more ...

Unfortunately, the "ugly" treatment of faculty at King (and perhaps at other campuses) will likely continue, given that i3 and King's Revitalization Project will consume a disproportionate amount of money from the overall operating budget at Seneca College, thus compelling the college to seek savings on the backs of faculty—the people who actually fulfill the College's core mission.

## What's Good for the Goose?

Faculty at King campus have observed that managers have been largely immune to the kinds of recent attacks that that faculty and support staff have suffered. Rather than having positions eliminated, the ranks of managers have swelled, and 99% of all Seneca managers are full time. While faculty may see their teaching positions reassigned as part-time support staff positions (for 1/3 the hourly wage they had made as members of the union), managers have yet to fear such reclassification.

# Stand-Alone Nursing Degrees

*The Need for Academic Freedom*

## Academic Freedom is a Prerequisite for Stand-Alone Bachelor Nursing Programs

The Ontario Colleges have asked the Ontario Government to authorize them to offer Bachelor of Nursing degree programs independently, without any link to university nursing programs (as is currently the case). While we think college faculty are perfectly capable of offering a Bachelor of Nursing degree program on a stand-alone basis, for any program to be of university quality the faculty providing that instruction *must* have academic freedom, just as university faculty have, to ensure academic quality is not compromised.

OPSEU has contacted the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to ask for guarantees that faculty teaching in such programs -- should they become independent of current university programs – would have the kind of academic freedom, and the responsibility that goes with it, to ensure that these are genuinely high-quality academic programs.

What happens without academic freedom is obvious: those who possess the knowledge and skill to run a high-quality program are denied the decision-making authority that is vital to guaranteeing standards, best practices, and achievement of learning outcomes. Instead, managers who *may* lack necessary skill and experience in the programs' subject matter get to make the choices that affect program quality—as is currently the case at Seneca. Managers, who are pressured to satisfy a spreadsheet mentality over upholding academic rigor, have the power to determine how courses are structured, who graduates, and with what demonstrated skills.



Seneca College's Nursing program exemplifies the concerns of those who insist on the importance of faculty academic freedom: the Dean in charge of that program has no background in nursing, nor has she a post-secondary teaching background. Those above her are even more detached from the academic reality of the classroom and the needs of healthcare facilities that would employ graduates. This would not be as serious a concern for academic quality if the qualified faculty possessed decision-making power in the program.

Such is not the case in Seneca's Nursing programs, where faculty are being devalued to an unprecedented degree. For example, the clinical nursing field placement courses *used to be* taught by professors who were experienced clinical nurses. These professors were engaged in active teaching, helping students make the transition from theory and practice in the classroom and lab, to practicing on live patients. Not any more. The professors were reclassified as support staff, told that they were just “monitoring and observing”. The result is a demoralized faculty and a much less useful clinical experience for Seneca nursing students. Ultimately, patients will pay that price.

With these kinds of shenanigans, it is shocking and disturbing to see the college request the right to run an independent Bachelor of Nursing program. And one can see the potentially catastrophic consequences when programs are given more independence than faculty are.

# The Back Page

Guest Editorial by Howard A. Doughty, Steward – King Campus

## The Coming Federal Election: Stop Harper

Labour Day isn't exactly the "May Day" celebration of world-wide revolution, but it's timely to reflect on the Labour Movement. Although most unions now find it hard enough to deal with everyday matters of managerial malfeasance and to monitor collective agreements, they are in deep peril if they aren't actively engaged in politics... which brings me to Stephen Harper.

I appreciate that some Local 560 members get annoyed when union officials become partisan—which these days mainly means praising Tom Mulcair and criticizing the latest thoughts, words and deeds of the Prime Minister. There's often a cry of defiance: "No union is going to tell *me* who to vote for!"

Still, *something* needs to be said. Apart from failing on the triple-E issues of ethics, economics and the environment, Harper has put us all in his sights and his trembling finger is twitching on the trigger. The issue is Bill C-377.

Bill C-377 (which Tim Harper of the *Toronto Star* called "odious, punitive and almost certainly unconstitutional") isn't just an attack on union rights; it's a grotesque assault on democracy. It removes *Charter* rights to free speech, association, doctor-patient and even solicitor-client privileges.

Bill C-377 also invites a rejection of the Rand Formula (which permits workers to refuse to join a union but requires them to pay dues in unionized workplaces) that has been the foundation of labour relations in Canada since 1946. According to *Toronto Star* columnist Tom Walkom, "the unstated aim of this bill is to provide ammunition to politicians... who would scrap the Rand Formula and introduce U.S.-style right-to-work laws," using "evidence" that some unions make donations to feminist, gay rights, pro-democracy and anti-poverty groups. Harper wants us to become Mississippi North.

Mr. Harper, of course, *knows* all this, but he doesn't care. He wants to tie us up with legal fees and useless paperwork until his law is rightly judged unconstitutional, and then he can launch another attack on the Supreme Court if, that is, he can steal this election. Meanwhile, for Harper, the end justifies the means and the end is to trump civil rights with corporate interests. That's politics according to Mr. Harper. He must be stopped.

Resources:

[https://nursesunions.ca/sites/default/files/bill\\_c-377\\_senate\\_brief\\_final\\_en\\_14.06.13.pdf](https://nursesunions.ca/sites/default/files/bill_c-377_senate_brief_final_en_14.06.13.pdf);

<http://53.15.200-74.q9.net/assets/pdf/DylanGadwaLetterBillC377.pdf>;

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/411%5CBANC/35EV-50179-E.HTM>;

[http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/412/LCJC/Briefs/20150417\\_C-377\\_brief\\_REVISEDcdnAssociationofLabourLawyers\\_e.pdf](http://www.parl.gc.ca/content/sen/committee/412/LCJC/Briefs/20150417_C-377_brief_REVISEDcdnAssociationofLabourLawyers_e.pdf)

<http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2012/11/28/>

[walkom\\_bill\\_c377\\_and\\_the\\_rights\\_stealth\\_attack\\_on\\_union\\_funding.html](http://walkom_bill_c377_and_the_rights_stealth_attack_on_union_funding.html);

<http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/progressive-economics-forum/2013/06/twelve-reasons-why-union-busting-bill-c-377-worst>)