



February 3, 2011

The Hon. Dalton McGuinty
Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Room 281, Queen's Park
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

Dear Premier McGuinty,

After years of lobbying by OPSEU and its members in our community colleges, your government amended the *Colleges Collective Bargaining Act* to allow part-time academic and support staff the right to unionize and to participate in collective bargaining. This was an historical achievement that helped lay the ground work for Ontario's economic and social prosperity.

More than 9,000 part-time academic and support staff signed membership cards and chose OPSEU as their union believing they would gain collective bargaining rights.

In 2009, thousands of part-time College workers cast a ballot to join OPSEU. Since then, the Colleges have mounted a costly and anti-democratic legal fight to block the counting of those ballots. Both votes remain uncounted because of their unscrupulous tactics. Surely this was not the intent of your government when it amended the Act more than two years ago.

The International Labour Organization, a respected agency of the United Nations, has taken notice. In a decision released three months ago, the ILO urged your government to sit down with OPSEU and to arrive at a solution that respects the democratic wishes of those who voted. Instead of taking action, your government continues to ignore the growing international condemnation over the denial of basic rights for part-time college workers. At the end of the day, the ILO decision is about allowing the votes to speak for themselves – in a democracy, our elected officials have a responsibility to make sure this happens.

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There is a way out. Under s. 4(1) and s. 5(1) of the *Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act (2002)* the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities may intervene into the affairs of the Colleges to ensure the public interest is met. In other words, Minister John Milloy can order the Colleges to withdraw their objections to counting the ballots under s. 31 of the CCBA (2008) to the two applications for certification by OPSEU.

What makes this particular group of Ontarians so unique that they continue to have their fundamental human right to join a trade union, repeatedly and blatantly ignored? What is so special about the men and women who are charged with the education of the youth of our province that allows the Colleges to deny them their collective bargaining rights? These college workers not only teach and support our next generation of highly skilled workers. They are also responsible for retraining displaced workers who are vital to our province's economy.

There is an honorable manner by which full democratic rights can be restored to thousands of employees of our community college system. The solution is contained in the legislative authority vested in the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

I strongly urge you to uphold the democratic process and to respect the will of part-time academic and support staff at our community colleges. It is in your power to order the sealed ballot boxes to be opened and the votes to be counted.

Sincerely,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President

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c.c. - Hon. John Milloy, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities
- Hon. Charles Sousa, Minister of Labour