

1700 Support Staff Continue Strike at McGill University

By Robert Loney

McGill's 1700 non-academic workers, the McGill University Non-Academic Certified Association (MUNACA), went on strike back on September 1, and are still walking the picket lines. The group includes lab technicians, IT technicians, clerical staff and library assistants. They are similar to us in that their Association includes a wide variety of work.

Classes started on time, and initially there were few reports of problems on campus. About 2 weeks in there was some reports of slowdowns for various services. Medical residents have complained that they are not able to do their jobs properly with the lack of support staff.

A couple of weeks in there were allegations of scab labour (replacement workers). An inspector from the Quebec Ministry of Labour visited the campus, and he reported on several breaches, which McGill is contesting. It is up to the workers if they want to pursue it via the Quebec Labour Board. Some of the definitions of work type and worker types are loose enough to allow for interpretation.

In response to 'tactics' by picketers to limit access to campus, McGill obtained a court injunction to restrict size of picket lines, curtail noise levels, and called for unimpeded access to campus. That injunction expired October 3, and was renewed with expanded limitations. The pickets were ordered away from the McGill entrance (via court injunction that expires Oct. 13), and workers are instead picketing offices of the Board of Governors.

The support staff workers' Collective Agreement expired in December 2010. One main issue is wages. Initially the workers wanted 3% per year, while McGill offered 1.2%. Conciliation started very shortly after the strike, but progress has been very slow. As of September 29, only a couple of issues had been settled, none of them big.

One interesting note I read about this strike: McGill claims they are not benefitting financially from their workers being out on strike, because all unpaid wages and benefits are deducted from the provincial grants the University receives from the Quebec government. I don't think we have the same laws in Ontario.

Sources:

MUNACA on strike after negotiations with administration fail

http://www.mcgilltribune.com/news/munaca-on-strike-after-negotiations-with-administration-fail-1.2577285#_To3xout0y9Q

MUNACA home page

<http://www.munaca.com/>

McGill Labour Relations:

http://www.mcgill.ca/channels/announcements/?channels=labour_relations

McGill Picketers Strike From a Distance

http://montreal.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20111003/mf1_mcgill_111003/20111003/hub-MontrealHome

Why McGill workers are on strike

<http://www.montrealgazette.com/business/McGill+workers+strike/5404830/story.html>

Strike at McGill causing disruptions: students

<http://www.montrealgazette.com/business/Strike+McGill+causing+disruptions+students/5390782/story.html>



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Solidarity: September's Annual General Meeting

By George Fogarasi

During September's AGM, OPSEU Local 365 got together to transcend tired workplace abstractions. A demoralized workforce can choose to do nothing, to grumble to itself, or to organize. We chose the latter, cutting through the mumbo jumbo usually aired over coffee to vote and direct our local to tackle the weighty challenges we face. In short, members walked the walk instead of simply talking the talk.

Members (old and new) stepped up to the plate to fill all committee positions (bravo!). Executive positions were contested, and members voted for Brothers and Sisters to fill these key roles. The Executive is re-vitalized: experience, enthusiasm and a dedication to fighting for our rights galvanizes a united new Executive that comes from a broad spectrum of OPSEU 365's work units to represent all members.

Perhaps most heartening were two by-law proposals that members took the time to carefully craft, submit and vote on. In short, both proposals revolved around ways to empower individual work units. One of the proposed by-laws suggested that the bargaining team be enlarged and that each work unit elect a representative from within the work unit to represent its demands on the bargaining team (full details of by-law proposals were sent to members with AGM information / the conversation and vote at the AGM are in the minutes [of course, showing up is the best way to not only have your finger on the pulse of what is happening but to influence the course of events]).

These by-laws sparked a powerful display of solidarity. Democracy is not always pretty, and whenever there is a vote, there can be strong passions and divisions. However, all through the AGM, OPSEU Local 365 chose solidarity. Debates were honest, open and amicable: there was no "us and them." Different members with varied points of view, from all kinds of work units, noted that while there is a need to foreground individual work unit's concerns, we are all in this together, and members from different parts of the university look out for each other in our local.

Members from smaller work units that might well have supported the by-laws stood and spoke to how the best person for the bargaining team may be from outside of

their bargaining unit, and they did not want to be limited in their choice. Again and again, the conversation came back to the central fact that we are in this together. The by-laws did not pass, but what came in their wake was a palpable expression of solidarity (as well as a renewed push for members, stewards and the executive to find creative ways for every work unit's concerns to be known and become the concerns of the entire union [one small avenue, of course, is to write for the *Voice*]).

Perhaps the surge in solidarity comes from the sobering spectre of our next bargaining session. But in the September AGM, on the cusp of bargaining, members came out, debated, voted and found support and solidarity. Our collective

voice is complex and not always easy to define, but when we find it... if enough of us care to participate and walk the walk instead of just talking the talk over coffee... we can roar. It was heartening to see this manifest itself at the September AGM. We will need much more of this in the coming months.



Fighting Income Inequality

The rich get richer and the poor get zero. Trent is but a microcosm of the larger world. But when a business newspaper like the *National Post* is worried about rising income inequality, something is up. They, remarkably, note that even conservatives are concerned because "Income inequality isn't just unfair -- it threatens the whole foundation on which our capitalist economy is based." Unions, of course, are a powerful force to tackle income inequality. When will the *Post* write that?

See more here:

<http://www.nationalpost.com/news/problem+everyone/5433076/story.html>

Death Spiral Zombies and Other Eventualities: Be Informed

By George Fogarasi

It's October, and there is something spookier than Halloween on the distant horizon. A Collective Agreement that protects our positions is up at the end of June. Many members are already talking and (wisely) getting ready to organize. The time to think and act is upon us.

The more prepared and informed we are the less confusion there will be come June. You know

the drill (and, new members who do not, welcome to a most un-merry go round, the ever-invigorating bargaining shuffle). This is written in October to increase the local's knowledge base.

As I write this in early September, the Brothers and Sisters doing our work in community colleges are out on strike to ensure that there will be good jobs today and good jobs tomorrow. Decent jobs don't grow on trees. They are fought for. We only have weekends, health care, pensions and the vote because people got together and fought for them. Don't stick your head in the sand and assume our jobs were granted miraculously by a benevolent dean waving a magic wand. You don't want the kind of job they'd create if we let them.

What has happened in the past few years? We are seeing our jobs nickel and dined down (millions of nickels and millions of dimes down... or perhaps up to the salaries of upper management). An insane provincial funding formula that penalizes stability and insists on growth has devastated Trent. The university grows, but not by these fancy projections pulled out of who knows whose hat, and WHAM. Budget cuts. OPSEU positions are cut and eliminated (except for this brief last term, thanks to the settlement we fought for).

Budget cuts = fewer jobs = reduced service = fewer students = budget cuts = fewer jobs = reduced service = fewer students = budget cuts and so on and so on. Wake up. In business, this is called a death spiral (spooky!), and management is eager to pounce on us when our contract opens up (one senior administrator called our agreement "brilliant"—they wanted so much to cut us but could not).



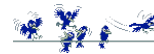
Other than policing and enforcing the Collective Agreement with grievances, the only power unionized workers have is to withhold their labour. This is what is happening at Fleming. Will it happen here? The more we prepare for every eventuality, the stronger our position will be when it comes to bargaining.

You may wish to delay big purchases where possible and start saving money. Know this: banks and credit unions are used to the culture of labour relations in

Canada. There are systems to deal with mortgages and bills. BE INFORMED. Don't sit there in June in a misinformed panic listening to people bleat about

bills and mortgages and strikes.

Get informed. Make plans. Now.



We Are the 99%

Inspired by the peaceful protests that toppled corrupt systems during the Arab Spring, a diverse group of protestors has occupied Wall Street for the last couple of weeks. Hundreds have been arrested, but momentum is growing. Trade unions are now throwing in their support as this leaderless movement demands decent jobs and fair pay (the protest is moving across North America, including Toronto).

Link:

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2011/09/29/140937386/new-york-unions-vow-to-support-wall-street-protesters>

To highlight how wealth trickles up to the top, people are writing brief summaries of their struggles culminating with the line "We are the 99%." The following website is a very powerful collection of these powerful testimonies (is anyone interested in doing something like this closer to bargaining time, perhaps with the tag line "We are not zero" ? In any case, look at this inspiring website <http://wearethe99percent.tumblr.com/>).

Save Your Bucks

By Robert Loney

If you are thinking about buying a computer, this article is for you!



Computers can keep you connected with friends and family, help you manage personal finances, and research the best deals on new purchases. But they can also be expensive. The computer is a tool- think about what you want to use it for. Here are some tips to help you get the most computer for your money.

The basic computer consists of a processor (with RAM), a graphics card that produces displays on a monitor, internal hard drive, a keyboard, and a mouse. Some have a DVD/CD player or burner. Don't forget software- an operating system (OS) underlies all other software you might use. New computers usually come with an OS, mouse, and keyboard.

First, you should decide what kind of computer you want- desktop, laptop, or tablet. Desktops are relatively large, not portable, and generally remain in one place. Laptops are portable computers that can do pretty well everything desktops can do. However there is a price to be paid for that portability- laptops tend to cost a bit more and/or are slower and/or have smaller hard drives. Tablets are new on the scene. They are 'ultra-portable' (very light and thin), but are not always fully capable computers. For instance some only run certain software. And because they are new they tend to be more expensive.

Once you decide the computer type you want, you need to think about model. This leads me to my next point- the newest most powerful computers can be expensive! Technology continues to change rapidly, resulting in the typical life span of a computer of 3-5 years. Often computers stop being useful because they cannot work with new technology, the components break down, or become too small or slow for accomplishing the desired tasks. Buying the newest most powerful computer can lengthen the life span somewhat, but at a hefty price. At the other extreme, spending as little as possible on a computer reduces your initial expense, but the computer will probably only last for a year or two. Avoid those \$300 laptops!

From my personal experience I find buying a computer model about a half to one year old works well. The technology is not outdated, and prices are reasonable, as prices on older models often drop when new models appear on the market.

The next question is what characteristics to look for when buying a computer system. I recommend you set yourself a budget you can afford, and spend that money on what is important at purchase time, then

later upgrade components that can be upgraded, extending the computer's life.

At the heart of the computer is the processor, which dictates a lot of a computer's speed. Processors are at best hard to upgrade, so you should get the very best processor you can afford. This web site compares processor speeds: <http://www.cpubenchmark.net/>. Spending more on a faster processor is a worthwhile investment because it often delays having to buy the next computer for a year or more.

Computers use a graphics card to produce output on a monitor. Unless you are doing very graphic intensive activities (playing high definition games or working with video), the graphics card coming with most systems is usually fine. Some graphics cards can be upgraded later (in desktops especially) as a way to extend computer life.

All computers need sufficient RAM (random access memory) to run software- RAM is where the operating system stores application data and documents. A computer with too little RAM uses the hard drive to supplement RAM, which really slows down the computer (RAM is 1000x faster than a traditional hard drive). I recommend a minimum 2 GB RAM to start. Most systems can be upgraded to more RAM later, extending the life of the computer.

The hard disk is where music, documents, videos, pictures, and software are stored. There are two considerations here- size and speed. The hard drive must be large enough to hold your software and documents with room to spare- rule of thumb is you should always have at least 30% of your hard drive free (makes the hard drive run more efficiently). Look for at least 320 GB, preferably 500 GB. Most traditional hard drives are this size and larger.

Speed is the other consideration. Hard drive speed partly dictate how fast applications start up and how fast documents load. This web site compares hard drive speeds: <http://www.harddrivebenchmark.net/>. A new type of hard drive has appeared on the market: SSD (solid state drive). These drives are very fast and quite expensive. But hard drives can be upgraded and SSD prices are dropping, so an SSD might be a cost effective upgrade in a year or two, extending the life of your computer.

Finally, a computer, like any machine, needs maintenance. Use your computer's operating system to check your disk for errors regularly (1x per month). Keep your software up to date. And keep your computer off the floor (to minimize dust accumulation inside the computer).

OPSEU Local 365 Executive, Committees, and Stewards

Names, Trent U. Email Addresses, and Work Units (keep for reference)

OPSEU Local 365 Executive:

President: Rose Dunford (rdunford; Physical Resources)
Vice President: Mike Hughes (michaelhughes; Physical Resources)
Chief Steward: Rod Macdonald (rmaconald, Information Technology)
Secretary: Deb Earle (deborahearle; Queen's-Trent Concurrent Education Program)
Treasurer: Jean Kirk (jkirk; Bata Library)

Local Committees:

Action Committee: Adele Devlin (adeledevlin; Physical Resources)
 Robert Loney (rloney; Environmental and Resource Studies)

Bylaw Committee: Brian Thackeray (bthackeray; Information Tech.) Jacquie Slater (jslater; Bata Library)
 Rob Ferguson (robferguson; Physical Resources) Craig Kelly (cwkelly; Physical Resources)
 Deb Earle (deborahearle; Queen-Trent Education Program) Resources)

Communications Committee: George Fogarasi (georgefogarasi; Academic Skills)
 Robert Loney (rloney; Environmental and Resource Studies)

Grievance Committee: Rod MacDonald (Chair) (rmaconald; IT) Craig Kelly (cwkelly; Physical Resources)
 Sean Daniels (sdaniels; Information Technology) John Boudreau (jboudreau; Physical Resources)
 Pat Butler (patbutler; Physical Resources)

Health & Safety Committee: Adele Devlin (adeledevlin; Physical Resources) Mark Bedlington (markbedlington; Physical Resources)
 Chris Williams (cwilliams; Dean of Science)

Nominating Committee: Betty Clark (bclark; Physical Resources) Inge Lovell (ilovell; Bata Library)
 Julie Crook (jcrook; Physical Resources)

University Committees:

Joint Job Evaluation Committee (JJEC) (2 year term): Angela Sikma (angelasikma; Associate Dean of Science)
 Ron Fox (rfox; Associate Dean of Science)
 Deborah Earle (deborahearle; Queen's-Trent Concurrent Edu. Prog.)

Trent Univ. Senate Representative: George Fogarasi (georgefogarasi; Academic Skills)

Trustees: Julie Crook (jcrook@trentu.ca; Physical Resources)
 Doug Brown (dbrown; Physical Resources)

Human Rights: Dana Capell (danacapell; Academic Skills)

Pension Committee: Robert Loney (rloney; Environmental and Resource Studies)
 Craig Kelly (cwkelly; Physical Resources)
 Catherine Leahy (cleahy; Financial Services)
Shadow Member: Ron Fox (rfox; Science Workshop)

Animal Care: Paul Orser (paulorser; Physical Resources)

Nature Areas Committee: Robert Loney (rloney; Environmental and Resource Studies)

OPSEU Local 365 Stewards (alphabetical by last name)

Bedlington, Mark (markbedlington; Physical Resources)	Fox, Ronald (rfox; Dean of Science)
Brocklehurst, Judi (jbrockle; Academic Skills)	Gardiner, Steve (sgardiner; Dean of Science)
Clark, Betty (bclark; Physical Resources)	Howard, Dorothy (dhoward; Environmental & Resource Studies Program)
Devlin, Adele (adeledevlin; Physical Resources)	Hughes, Michael (michaelhughes)
Dunford, Rosemary (rdunford; Physical Resources)	Kirk, Jean (jkirk; Bata Library)
Earle, Deborah (deborahearle; Concurrent Education)	MacDonald, Rod (rmaconald; Information Technology)
Fogarasi, George (georgefogarasi; Academic Skills)	

Labour Film Festival: CLiFF in Peterborough

Peterborough and District Labour Council, the United Way of Peterborough and District and the Canadian Labour International Film Festival (CLiFF) are presenting a United Way event: CLiFF in PTBO, a series of labour inspired films and a feature presentation film. Tickets are 15\$, and proceeds go to the United Way. Saturday, November 12th 5 pm to 10pm at Market Hall.



Rising tuition fees squeezing families

CCPA/CALM

ONTARIO'S SYSTEM of financing higher education is becoming less equitable and more regressive for families, says a study by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

According to Under Pressure: The impact of rising tuition fees on Ontario families, if a middle-income Ontario family dedicated every cent of their after-tax earnings towards the cost of their child's university tuition starting on September 1, 2011, they would have to work 195 days before they paid for a four-year degree. In 1990, it would have taken the same family only 87 days. For those students who gain entry into professional programs like medicine or law, it may take a middle-income family more than a year of earnings to pay.

The study offers two alternatives to increased downloading onto families. "The 2009 Ontario corporate tax cut, could have rolled back tuition fees to 1990 levels, representing a reduction in tuition fees from \$6,500 to \$2,500 a year," says CCPA research associate David Macdonald. "If we implemented the reduction through the personal tax system, it would cost an average of \$100/year per family to reduce undergraduate tuition fees to 1990 levels. For an annual average of \$170 a family, undergraduate university tuition fees could be eliminated altogether. This progressively-administered expenditure represents exceptional value and cost-effectiveness for families who otherwise face increased sacrifices and ever higher debt loads." •

www.policyalternatives.ca

Comments by Robert Loney on this story:

Recently Statistics Canada reported on tuition rates across Canada. Ontario has the highest average tuition of all provinces and the highest increase in the past year of all provinces. Students pay an average

\$6,640 in Ontario vs. \$5,366 for the Canadian average. The least expensive tuition is in Quebec, at \$2,519 annually.

Almost half of Trent University's income comes from tuition (most of the rest comes from Ontario funding on a per student basis). The Ontario Liberal party has promised (if elected) a tuition grant system, where families earning under \$160,000 annually can receive up to \$1,600 annually towards tuition.

Web links to stories/more information:

Tuition costs:

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/story/2011/09/16/statistics-canada-tuition-fees.html>

Liberal tuition grant promise:

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/ontario/ontario-liberals-make-tuition-grants-platform-centrepiece/article2153810/>

About THE VOICE and Submissions

The Voice is created and distributed by the Communication Committee of OPSEU Local 365.

Contributions about issues that allow us to come together and move forward are especially welcome. Members, this is your forum. Please send your submissions for The VOICE newsletter by mail to Robert Loney (ERS Program) or (preferably) by email to: rloney "at" trentu.ca. All submissions are subject to editing for grammar, spelling, and/or space. As guidance, a one-page article typically has 500-600 words (we'll accept any size article).

This is a forum for information, discussion and debate. Opinions expressed in The Voice are those of individual members and not necessarily those of the Communication Committee, OPSEU Local 365, or OPSEU unless signed by the Executive.

Contributors to this issue:

The Communications Committee: George Fogarasi, Dana Capell, & Robert Loney.

Some graphics from Canadian Association of Labour Media (C.A.L.M.; <http://www.calm.ca/>).

Visit our OPSEU Local 365 web site at <http://www.opseulocal365.com/>