

the VOCAL LOCAL

THE OFFICIAL VOICE OF
OPSEU LOCAL 556 • GBC
GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE FACULTY,
COUNSELLORS AND LIBRARIANS

OCTOBER 2009
VOLUME 3 • NUMBER 1

Welcome Message

by Tom Tomassi



What's Inside

- 1 Welcome Message
- 2 Ask Your Chief Steward
- 3 Big Brother
- 3 Bottled Water Free
- 4 Green Corner

The local's new office at 160 Kendal Ave., room C414 provides a cheery, private setting for union business.

Hello all and welcome back.

After waiting for so long for the summer to arrive, we were back at work and summer never really came. Well, the silver lining to this is the fact that although our outdoor activity may have been curtailed by the weather, we did have an opportunity to relax, spend time with our loved ones and prepare ourselves for the challenges that September brings about. The local now has a new office on

the 4th floor of building C at Casa Loma Campus, Room C414. Please drop by and pay us a visit.

The beginning of this academic year has not been much different from the past four or five years. Students are returning in droves and the space to host them is getting smaller and smaller. The College is working harder and harder in trying to address the issue of space and although we have made some strides by renting

Welcome cont'd page 2

ASK YOUR CHIEF STEWARD

Question? I'm about to go on parental leave, how much pay will I receive? *Eagerly Expectant*

Answer! The short answer is that while on parental leave you should receive compensation at the rate 93% of your earned salary for a full year and take no vacation during that period. In the year that you return you must take your unused vacation and will be paid your regular earned salary. In addition you should also get your vacation for the year in which you return to work. It is most important that you look at parental leave in the context of the year in which the leave is taken PLUS the year in which you return.

In a "normal" situation where your biweekly paycheck equals the salary earned, and you have paid vacations, you will receive 93% of your annual salary on the year of parental leave and 100% of your salary plus two vacations in the year after your parental leave.

However our situation at the colleges is different. College professors, like most teachers, earn their salary nominally at the rate of one tenth of annual salary per month. The college withholds a portion of earned salary each month and pays out one twenty sixth of salary each two weeks, nominally one twelfth of annual salary per month, continuing to pay during the summer months when we are not working/earning. A professor on parental leave should be compensated at the rate of 93% of income earned for each month for a full 12 months. This will result in compensation approximately 12% greater than would have been received had the individual not been on parental leave.

While this seems counter-intuitive, it is the correct way to calculate parental leave because in the year that you return you will

be required to take your unused vacation and will work for only eight months, earning only 80% of a normal salary. The overall compensation for the two years will equal that received by individuals who earn their income over a twelve month period and have paid vacations.

When the college calculates the parental leave pay rate based on the rate of one twenty sixth of annual pay every two weeks a professor on parental leave receives only 93% of annual salary on the year of leave and only 80% of salary on the year of return. For a professor at top step this represents a loss of approaching \$20,000.

The latest of several court cases to confirm that parental leave payments must be based on the rate at which income is earned, rather than the rate at which it is paid occurred on January 15th 2009 and involved a dispute between the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario.

In answer to a question that you didn't ask, what happens if you are having twins? On September 18, 2009 the Employment Insurance Board of Referees of Canada ruled in favour of an appeal by Christian Martin and Paula Critchley, parents of new twins, that each would receive full parental leave benefits because each was entitled to claim a child.

If you are applying or considering applying for parental leave benefits please contact our local at extension 2200. ▼

We want you to **ASK Your Chief Steward** 

Questions can be submitted to the VoLo Editor at opseu556@gmail.com
The Vocal Local will endeavour to answer all your questions here, space permitting.

Welcome *cont'd from page 1*

and renovating space, not much relief will occur most likely until the waterfront project is completed—all projections point at the completion date as being September 2011.

I have heard from many faculty, especially in the first couple of weeks of September, regarding the overcrowding of their classrooms. From a funding perspective, this is a good thing. However, from an academic perspective in dealing with so many more students in our classroom, it becomes much more challenging. If you are in a situation where the student numbers assigned to you on your SWF is less than what is actually in your classes, please keep track of these numbers and on audit date (beginning of November) have your SWF revised and credited for the extra students in your classes. If this creates an overtime situation, you will be paid retroactive to the beginning of the semester. Should you encounter any difficulties in having your chair revise your SWF, please let us know and we will undertake to have the issue moved forward on your behalf. Please don't buy into the rhetoric that the department is losing money and therefore you must do your part by not demanding what is rightfully yours, or to do more for less.

As you all know we are at the Bargaining Table in an effort to reach a settlement on a new Collective Agreement, as ours expired on August 31, 2009. Just so that you know, the old Collective Agreement remains in force until a new one is agreed to and signed off. There seems to be some confusion regarding the information that is being sent out on negotiations. The Colleges' Management Bargaining Team has undertaken the task (for what ever reason) of sending out information on bargaining to our faculty. This creates a fair amount of confusion and perhaps the purpose for this undertaking on

Welcome *cont'd page 3*

80 Workers Learn To Fear Big Brother

by Ed Larocque

Below are a few highlights from an article which appeared in the Toronto Star on September 11, 2009, written by staff reporter, Kenyon Wallace.

“About 80 workers at the Bruce Power nuclear plant were dismissed this week for “inappropriate” use of their computers—a warning to employees everywhere that if you use company computers for personal business, the boss may be watching.”

“Labour lawyer Howard Levitt stated that it is “entirely legal” for employers to monitor their employees’ actions online”

A quote from an employee with 20 years service; “I was given no explanation for my dismissal”

You may be saying to yourself, “Something like that can’t happen here, our employer has to follow their own Progressive Discipline Policy.”

As reported in *The Vocal Local* (Vol.2, No. 1, October 2008): A professor with 18 years’ seniority was dismissed without the employer going through the progressive discipline steps. The discharge was upheld by the arbitrator because the employer convinced the arbitrator that the professor’s actions were unsatisfactory and therefore allowed them to bypass their own policy on progressive discipline. I consider that case to be precedent setting and definitely applies to faculty here at GBC.

Q. But I didn’t know George Brown College had an email/internet use policy. How can I be disciplined?

A. From the George Brown College, Academic Policies, Guidelines and Codes of Conduct 2001-02.

Chapter X Preamble: This code of conduct is designed to provide an explicit definition of the minimum standards of professional conducted expected of all faculty.



Chapter X 1.2 ...The College also expects that academic employees will...

- Familiarize themselves with College policies that are relevant to their responsibilities
- adhere to those policies to the best of their ability

To view our Codes of Conduct go to: Insite-Human Resources-Staff Information-Academic Policies-Employee Codes of Conduct.

Q. What about my telephone conversations. Can they monitor that as well?

A. I would say that phone conversations are monitored only if police are involved and criminal activity is suspected. Otherwise, employees have a “reasonable expectation of privacy”.

GBC has a policy on email/internet use that has been in place since 2003. To read all of the policies related to our email/internet use go to: Insite-Human Resources-Staff Information-Academic policies-Information Technology Policy.

Our Suggested Guidelines:

Do not use college computers/internet for anything other than college related activities.

For personal activities, I recommend the telephone. Consider a Blackberry type of phone for personal emails while at work.

Why take chances? If you are dismissed for violating college policies you “may” be reinstated by an arbitration panel at the end of your grievance procedure. However, there is no guarantee and this can take up to two years or more. ▼

Welcome *cont'd from page 2*

their part, is to do exactly that. Make no mistake, management’s issues are not our issues. We, as a union, have gone through a lengthy and onerous process to put demands in place that would address workload, wages and benefits, for all faculty covered by the Collective Agreement. We then selected a team to move forward these issues on our behalf. The trust that we must have is for our elected team to represent our interests. I urge you to read their updates which are sent out under the banner of ‘Negotiations News’. Let’s not forget that they are working on our behalf and they deserve our support. Have a great year. ▼

Memorial University to Become Bottled Water Free

Tuesday, September 8, 2009—Water Pledge officially signed at MUN orientation event.

St. John’s: Students joined Memorial University of Newfoundland’s (MUN) president pro tempore, Dr. Chris Loomis, yesterday to officially sign a Water Pledge that commits the university to progressively eliminate the distribution of bottled water at all of MUN’s campuses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

“By working together, students, faculty and staff have sent a clear message that MUN is ready to lead the way in making our campuses and communities more environmentally sustainable,” said Daniel Smith, Newfoundland and Labrador chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students. “We urge other institutions across Canada to take similar action to protect our public drinking water as a right and not as a commodity.”

MUN is only the second university in Canada to commit to phasing out bottled

Bottled Water Free *cont'd page 4*

THE GREEN CORNER

Waste Reduction Week is a perfect opportunity to assess, not only our garbage output, but also our conservation initiatives. Since the cold weather is upon us, let us take a look at some ways to conserve energy.

Here are a few things we can do around our homes:

Turn down the thermostat. Even a few degrees can make a difference. Wear a sweater or sweatshirt to keep warm—you won't notice the cooler room temperature. Install an automatic timer to keep the thermostat at 20°C during the day and 13°C at night. Make sure your thermostat is located in an area that is neither too cold or too hot. It is also wise to make sure

Hot Flash !

Waste Reduction Week in Canada • October 18 – 24

that it is not in an area that is subject to temperature fluctuations.

When possible, open draperies and shades in winter to allow the sun to shine into your home. This provides passive solar heat. It will also help cheer your mood on those short winter days.

Caulk around windows to prevent heat from leaking out. Use storm or thermal windows and doors—the air between the layers acts as insulation and helps keep the heat inside. Keep windows closed during cold weather, but be careful to “air out the house” on a regular basis to avoid buildup of any toxins. Use weather-strip-

ping around doors and windows. Don't forget to weather-strip your attic and basement doors to prevent heat from escaping.

In colder months move furniture away from exterior walls. Putting some space between you and the cold walls makes the house *seem* warmer. Leaving room for the air to move around *actually* makes it warmer.

And please: Never use the stove, flames or candles for heating—it could be extremely dangerous.

Bottled Water Free *cont'd from page 3*

water. The pledge also commits the university to increasing access to water fountains and water fill stations on its campuses by upgrading current water infrastructure. Thirteen water fill stations have already been installed over the summer months.

In March 2009, the Students for Sustainability Coalition at MUN—a coalition consisting of students' unions and on-campus and community environmental organizations—launched a campaign calling on the university administration to improve access to public drinking water in an effort to make the university bottled water free. The coalition's efforts were part of an ongoing national student campaign organised by the Canadian Federation of Students, the Sierra Youth Coalition and the Polaris Institute.

“Memorial is the first university east of Manitoba and the second university in Canada to kick-out the bottle and take back the tap” said Elly Adeland, of the Polaris Institute, “This action is part of a trend we are seeing across campuses, school boards and municipalities, where communities challenge the corporate control of water, while re-building and maintaining safe and accessible public tap water systems for all.”

Thanks, The Inside the Bottle Team, Joe, Elly, Richard, Tanya, and Tony ▼



OPSEU Local 556
George Brown College
PO Box 1015, Station B
Toronto, ON M5T 2T9
(416) 415-5000 ext 2200
opseu556@gmail.com

The Vocal Local is a publication of the George Brown College Faculty Union, OPSEU Local 556. It is intended to provide information and stimulate discussion among its members. We invite your participation and welcome your contributions. We reserve the right to edit for libel, length and clarity.

Send your comments, articles, letters to the editor, praise, etc. to:
VoLo Editor at opseu556@gmail.com

