

STRIKING NEWS TODAY

March 27, 2006

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A FAILURE OF POLITICAL WILL

The McGuinty Liberals' budget reveals a fundamental contradiction and failure of political will in its post-secondary education policies. Last year, concerned Ontarians were optimistic when the Premier announced an injection of \$100 million into the College system. While it's a smidgen of the \$1.3 billion Bob Rae said would be needed for Ontario's Colleges and Universities by 2008, one doesn't want to begrudge a good first effort. Sadly however, the bloom is off the rose when one considers the numbers Dwight Duncan revealed Thursday. Those digits don't lie – Ontario can afford additional investments in quality education.

Queen's Park found itself awash with \$3 billion in unanticipated revenue to make this year's budget. Some of that was spent in welcome new initiatives for public transportation. However, even with college students deprived of their professors for almost three weeks, the government was eerily silent about postsecondary education and many other progressive social concerns.

The political calculation is reasonably obvious. McGuinty's Liberals are hoarding taxpayers' money for a pre-election budget in the next two years. There was enough good news yesterday that the Grits might have secured themselves a by-election victory or two next week, but Dalton and Dwight are clearly tucking away lots of our cash and saving major political capital for future budgets.

All that talk about subways and infrastructure

should not lead anyone to ignore the current silence emanating from Queen's Park on further education spending or on the alleged need for recently announced tuition increases. Given the current impasse in our negotiations, yesterday's budget represents a fundamental abdication of political responsibility for educational reform

Bob Rae argued that colleges had been the "poster boy" for economic efficiencies in provincial education for too long. He insisted that, "The hiring of additional faculty will be one of the measurable quality improvements sought as additional revenues are provided to institutions beginning in 2005-06." Hiring of new faculty is a core issue in this strike. Management's offers have addressed the problem only marginally, despite the fact that our student population has jumped by more than 50% while our faculty complement has grown by just over 20% in recent years.

The Ontario budget clearly reveals that the money is there to make this collective agreement a touchstone for commitment to the Rae Report. Don't forget that Rick Miner himself said Rae was "spot on" in his analysis of the challenges faced by colleges. Political gumption is urgently required to indicate to management that the means are there for the kind of deal that will truly serve students now and in the future.

You do the math...

Management claims there is no money to provide the improvements in quality that faculty demand. Let's check the facts...

- The Ontario budget revealed last Thursday that the colleges ran a \$50 million surplus in the 2005-06 budget year and are projecting a \$38 million surplus for 2006-07. This year's budget gives colleges \$89 million more than they had last year. The 2006 funding allocation to the colleges was \$1.076 billion. That was a \$133.5 million increase over 2005 – a 14% increase. Yet, the college allocation to new faculty hires in 2006-07 was only \$3.9 million which is 0.36% of the funding.
- Of that \$133.5 million, \$87.3 million was put in the *Quality Improvement Fund*. The hiring of more teachers is the first priority of that fund. Yet the hiring for 2006 proposed by management for the first time (two weeks into the strike) after months of stonewalling – was just 4.4% of that \$87.3 million.

Minister Bug



Bentley's a *minister*? Bentley's a car!
'Bug' for the minister's fitter by far.
Why? 'cause he's sluggish, reluctant to start,
Runs, when he does, like a grocery cart;

Crappy of heater, and wipers, and jack;
Trunk at the front, and the motor in back;
Room, in the former, for only the spare,
Plus, if you're lucky, a strand of your hair.

Bentleys have *pedigree*; Bentley's have *balls*;
Whoever heard of a Bentley that stalls?
Whoever *heard* one? They *purr*; they don't *chug*!
Minister Bentley? No – Minister Bug!



Because both parties have agreed that all of their issues should be resolved by arbitration, I am suggesting that the pickets come down. They should return to work, the students should get back to class and that should happen as quickly as possible.



Hosting rallies at Seneca and across the province, striking faculty rejected colleges minister Chris Bentley's call to stop picketing even though the parties had not yet agreed on a way to resolve outstanding issues.

E-mail us your photos & stories: union@opseu560.org