



# THE BOTTOM LINE

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## Loyalist declared High-Risk college

by Wallace Rendell

Loyalist College has been identified as one of the firms with the highest injury frequency and cost in Ontario's educational sector – a dubious honour.

As a result, the college will be visited quarterly by a Ministry of Labour (MOL) health and safety inspector until our ranking drops us from the High-Risk (top 2% of all firms) category. Our inspector, Diane Hannah, made her first inspection in late September.

All departments will be assessed over the course of inspections. No one department has been identified as having more or fewer injuries. By covering the whole college, the MOL

will get an overall view of the college's internal responsibility system.

### *Sprains and strains*

In the declaration brought to the college by Ms. Hannah this past June, sprains and strains at Loyalist are the MOL's biggest concern. These injuries might result, for example, from poor posture at a work station. They can be chronic, something that would contribute to high Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) costs.

### *Determining rankings*

The MOL collected information on six criteria from WSIB's database on injuries



and costs, from 2002-2005. The criteria included: lost- and no lost-time injury rates, and the weighted costs (both average and excess) of lost- and no lost-time injuries.

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## Should we be surprised we're on top?

Hindsight is 20:20, but should we be surprised we're in the top 2% of institutions in the education sector in Ontario for workplace injuries and associated costs? Well, yes and no.

On the one hand, serious injuries are uncommon at

Loyalist. In fact, the actual number of injuries of all kinds at Loyalist from 2002-2005 included in the MOL analysis is approximately only 20, or five per year.

On the other hand, we shouldn't be surprised. If the college's existing health

and safety (H&S) policy is any indication of the college's regard for a healthy working environment over the past many years, then perhaps we should have seen this coming. First, this policy hasn't been revised

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"It is too expensive for business to follow ergonomic regulations."

Weighting put greater emphasis on recent injuries.

Each firm in the educational sector was ranked within each of the six criteria, and then the rankings were combined into one index.

To put the percentages in some context, the High-Risk category has approximately 30 firms out of 1400 in our sector. The next 10 percent (~ 110-130 firms) are in the Last Chance category.

High-risk firms also had at least one lost-time injury, weighted injury costs exceeding \$3,000, and one serious injury, from 2002-2004.

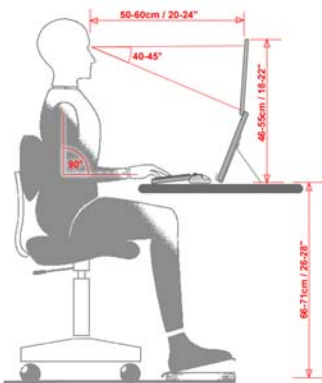
### What can you do?

If you have concerns that your work environment is affecting your health, get in touch with your health and safety representatives, Janet Mathany (our Workplace Health & Safety Co-

ordinator), and your supervisor. Extra vigilance on health and safety issues is needed by all people at the college to make our work environment as safe as possible, and get us off the list of High-Risk institutions. The internal responsibility system requires that we all do our part.

Sources: Educational Safety Association of Ontario (ESAO), [www.esao.on.ca](http://www.esao.on.ca)

## Combatting sprains & strains at your workstation



Repetitive strain injuries like tennis elbow and carpal tunnel syndrome occur when our joints are exposed to a combination of risk factors, including repetitive motion and poor posture. Sound like a semester at your computer?

To lower the risk of these injuries you need to keep wrists, elbows and shoulders in "ideal" positions while you're at your workstation. So what are these positions?

**Wrists:** Keep them in a naturally straight position, neither bent up, down nor sideways.

**Elbows:** Support them at right angles close to your body.

**Shoulders:** Keep them relaxed, neither slouched nor raised.

Take a few minutes to determine if you're meeting these guidelines. Get a colleague to

watch you while you work, or get them to photograph your posture. Request a new chair, or desktop wrist rests, of your supervisor. When the chair comes, take the time to adjust it to get you into a comfortable working position. You'll feel better at the end of each day, and lower the chance of becoming a workplace statistic.

Source: WSIB of Ontario

## Health & Safety at Loyalist...continued from p. 1



since 1992 and, second, it is one brief sentence. In contrast, Algonquin College has a 12-page policy document from August 2001 that outlines the principles and procedures for H&S on their campus from the Board of Governors on down. At Loyalist, more consideration is given to our policy concerning closing the college due to inclement weather

than the daily working environment for all staff.

While Loyalist is in the process of revising their H&S policy, it has been a slow process. A draft policy has been on its way to the Board of Governors since January 2006.

The future for H&S at Loyalist is brighter, however. Senior managers, our Direc-

tor for Human Resources, Karen Cullen, and our Dean of Media, Geoff Cudmore, are dedicated members of the Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHSC). Human Resources hired a Workplace Health and Safety Coordinator, Janet Mathany, to advise and steer the college toward a more proactive approach to

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## What's wrong with the Delta Chelsea Hotel?

This question was asked and answered at the 2006 OPSEU Editors' Weekend. The answer is neither a bedbug infestation, nor a triple homicide.

The problem is that the Chelsea chose to no longer recognize the grievance procedure available to its staff after workers had reached a

legal strike position. Workers at the Chelsea and two other major hotels have been fighting to improve working conditions and salary. According to Don Ford, an OPSEU Communications Officer, other hotels have settled with their workers with generous contracts. The Chelsea chose, instead, to dig in their heels.

Ironically, the Chelsea is an annual recipient of considerable business from OPSEU and other unions. OPSEU pointed this out recently to the Chelsea, and the hotel has since reinstated the grievance procedure.

During International Hotel Workers Day on 10 November hotel workers from all



*Delta Chelsea Hotel at Yonge and Gerrard*

over Toronto rallied at the Chelsea. Contact UNITE HERE, Local 75, for more information (416) 510-0887 ext. 310.

## Casselman wants OPSEU to expand their influence

During her keynote address at the OPSEU Editor's Weekend, President Leah Casselman urged all members to consider not only the issues that affect our respective locals, but those issues common to all sectors of the Ontario public workforce.

She emphasized that there is no better time to make changes in our society than in an election year, with the Ontario election writ date set as 4 October 2007.

One battleground with political incumbents and hope-

fuls should be funding of Ontario's public services. For example, as faculty we're familiar with the facts that Ontario community colleges train more skilled workers than any similar organization in Canada, and that Ontario ranks second in per capita income among provinces. Yet we rank *last* in funding per college student.

However, we're not alone in being underfunded. Ministry of Natural Resources conservation officers must ration gas for their patrol vehicles,

yielding our wildlife resources to poachers. Also, even employer's associations are clamouring for more money so they can give raises to their workers in the Developmental Services sector.

President Casselman was blunt. Get political, was her message. This coming year, make your incumbent or wanna-be member of provincial parliament know how public service funding must be increased to strengthen Ontario's future.

You have the power.



*President Leah Casselman shown here announcing OPSEU's campaign to legalize unionization by Ontario college part-time employees.*

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H&S. Members of the JHSC all have, at least, their Basic Certification, and management and worker representatives work well together. The JHSC has even renewed the publication of a monthly newsletter devoted to H&S issues in the workplace. A brighter and, hopefully, safer future is possible.

What's behind the push for

great safety awareness? One motivating factor is Bill C-45, Amendments to the Criminal Code Affecting the Criminal Liability of Organizations (2004). This bill makes it clear that, for example, in the event of a serious accident at Loyalist College, where "representatives" of the college had prior knowledge of hazards involved but did nothing

to eliminate these hazards, such representatives (e.g., "senior officers") could be found to be negligent, and criminally responsible for the accident. Jail time for individuals, and no limit to fines for an organization for an indictable offence, are certainly strong motivators.

*Source: Dept. of Justice Canada, www.justice.gc.ca*

"THERE ARE TWO TIMES IN LIFE WHEN YOU ARE COMPLETELY ALONE: JUST BEFORE YOU DIE, AND JUST BEFORE YOU DO A NEWSLETTER." —  
*OPSEU PRESIDENT LEAH CASSELMAN*



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**QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

“He’s in over his head”

Attributed to: *Everybody*



**THE BOTTOM LINE** is a publication of OPSEU Local 420, written by, and distributed to, the faculty of Loyalist College. We encourage thoughtful discussion and comment by members on workplace and union-related issues.

**BEST WISHES FOR SPEEDY**

**RECOVERIES TO:**

Dan Holland, Dan Nyznik, Harry Plummer, Margaret Scott, and Lorne Thompson

**Graphics sources:** Pg. 1: Poppies, [www.legion.ca](http://www.legion.ca); Ladder and boxes, [www.tendingdc.gov.uk](http://www.tendingdc.gov.uk); Pg. 2: Cartoon, [www.calm.ca](http://www.calm.ca); Posture, [www.healthworks.com.au](http://www.healthworks.com.au); Skeleton, Yale University Ergonomics website, [www.yale.edu/ergo](http://www.yale.edu/ergo); Pg. 3: Delta Chelsea Hotel, [www.gtonline.jp](http://www.gtonline.jp); Leah Casselman, Bill Majesky, [www.caut.ca](http://www.caut.ca); Pg. 4: Harry and the King, Wallace Rendell; Cartoon, [www.iso.org](http://www.iso.org)

# The King celebrates The Accountant

Long thought to have retired from the music business and been living in Winnipeg, Elvis Presley, the king of rock & roll, visited Quinte West and *Occasions by the Bay* 20 October to celebrate the influential career of Harry Plummer. He made his brief appearance at the request of one of Harry’s closest colleagues, CAAT Bargaining Unit Chair, Ted Montgomery. The King and The Accountant entertained over 50 guests to a brief jig and a few bars of “Blue Suede Shoes”.

family, and serenaded by the lovely jazz-stylings of Lori brothers and sisters, and management alike. Among



Harry Plummer is visited by Elvis during Harry’s Retirement Roast.

Local 420 President Bernie Belanger, Founding President Local 420 Paul Wall, and Chair CAAT Divisional Executive, Paddy Musson.

What did we learn about Harry we didn’t already know? “Temporary full-time employee” Pat Dockrill exposed to all the games of strip backgammon she played with Harry, and Erla Hawthorne revealed his past proposal to establish an air service for college employees traveling between colleges in the province.

Harry’s retirement party was an entertaining and moving tribute. Surrounded by

Taylor, Harry was roasted and toasted by friends, union those in attendance: OPSEU Vice-President Smokey Tho-

His has been a life well lived, and well celebrated. Enjoy retirement, Harry!