

Dominic Giroux nommé recteur de l'Université Laurentienne

Dominic Giroux est le nouveau recteur de l'Université Laurentienne à Sudbury. L'homme originaire d'Ottawa a fait ses premiers pas en tant que conseiller scolaire dans la capitale alors qu'il n'était âgé que de 19 ans. Il occupe actuellement un poste de sous-ministre adjoint au ministère de l'Éducation et au ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités de l'Ontario.

Le Sénat a vanté sa vaste expérience dans plusieurs secteurs du monde de l'éducation en Ontario. «Alors qu'il dirigera l'Université et renforcera sa mission dans le nord de l'Ontario et ailleurs, ses connaissances des politiques gouvernementales et des questions qui se posent pour l'enseignement postsecondaire, son solide leadership et son engagement envers les initiatives franco-

phones et autochtones seront très profitables», a déclaré Carolyn Sinclair, présidente du conseil des gouverneurs et du comité de sélection de l'Université.

«Son engagement envers les initiatives francophones et autochtones sera très profitable.»

Carolyn Sinclair

Dominic Giroux avait 19 ans lorsqu'il s'est fait élire au Conseil des écoles catholiques de langue

française d'Ottawa en 1994. À cette époque, il était le plus jeune conseiller scolaire au pays. Il est ensuite nommé président du Conseil en 1996. Entre 1998 et 2001, il devient chef de personnel du directeur général puis directeur des finances dans un district comptant 45 écoles dans le sud de la province. Entre 2002 et 2005, il revient à Ottawa où il occupe le poste de directeur exécutif des services administratifs du conseil des écoles catholiques de langue française du centre-est.

Au cours des dernières années, il a participé à la stratégie d'éducation des Autochtones de l'Ontario et dirigé la création du Bureau de l'éducation des Autochtones. Il a également contribué à la question de l'amélioration mesurable du rendement et de la persévérance sco-

laire. Il a aussi été impliqué dans le processus décisionnel qui a mené à l'autonomie de TFO.

En 2008, le chancelier de l'Université d'Ottawa lui a remis le premier prix du leadership en éducation. Plus récemment, il a mené les activités du gouvernement provincial concernant le renouvellement de plus de 400 conventions collectives du monde de l'éducation.

De plus, au nom du Conseil des ministres de l'Éducation, il préside le comité qui négocie, avec le fédéral, le renouvellement du protocole sur les langues officielles dont la valeur est estimée à plus d'un milliard de dollars.

La date de l'entrée en fonction de Dominic Giroux à l'Université Laurentienne sera déterminée sous peu.

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Dominic Giroux

ARCHIVES

EN BREF

Entente entre la CSCV et Papineauville

Les résidents de Papineauville et les élèves de l'école secondaire Louis-Joseph-Papineau (LJP) auront de nouveau accès aux installations sportives de la municipalité. La Commission scolaire au Coeur-des-Vallées (CSCV) et la municipalité de Papineauville ont conclu une entente sur la grille tarifaire qui sera en vigueur pour l'utilisation des infrastructures de loisir des deux entités. Dorénavant, pour chaque utilisation, la municipalité et la CSCV exigeront les frais suivants: 15\$/h pour le gymnase, 25\$/h pour la piscine, 35\$/h pour le centre communautaire et 70\$/h pour l'aréna. «Les tarifs horaires proposés par la CSCV et la municipalité sont très raisonnables dans les circonstances. Donc, les services offerts sur les deux plateaux continueront d'être offerts au public», a déclaré le maire André Blais.

Les deux organismes ont convenu de se rencontrer annuellement pour faire le bilan des services qui sont disponibles à la population.

La persévérance scolaire à l'étude

Les commissaires des quatre commissions scolaires de l'Outaouais se rencontreront le 26 février prochain pour la tenue des accises régionales qui auront lieu à la Maison de la culture, à Gatineau. Le thème de la persévérance scolaire y sera abordé, entre autres avec la présentation d'une pièce de théâtre sur le sujet. Ces accises sont une présentation de la Table de l'éducation de l'Outaouais. Les quatre commissions scolaires de la région sont la Commission scolaire des Portages-de-l'Outaouais, des Draveurs, des Hauts-Bois-de-l'Outaouais et au Coeur-des-Vallées.

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High school students left without contingency plan



by **Patricia Lonergan**

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Day one of Ottawa's transit strike saw students who normally rely on OC Transpo looking for alternate arrangements despite a contingency plan by the school board that could have solved some commuting dilemmas. Ottawa Catholic School Board spokesperson Mardi de Kemp explained the contingency plan called for the board to add extra yellow school bus routes to replace OC Transpo buses. With specific drop-off and pick-up points, those buses would have provided transportation to the roughly 3,600 students at the Catholic board who rely on public transit, she said.

That contingency plan, however, had to be scrapped after officials with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) – which represents OC Transpo personnel currently on strike – wouldn't give the board assurance extra yellow buses wouldn't be picketed, de Kemp indicated.

To put the plan in action, she continued, yellow bus operators needed assurances there would be no picketing or interference from those on strike.

De Kemp said the board's legal department contacted union officials but the union wouldn't give any assurances there would be no protest activity at school pick-up and drop-off points.

In a press release sent out Tuesday, Dec. 8 the Eastern Ontario French Language Public School Board (CEPEO) said it cancelled plans to transport students to and from school during the strike after ATU declined to send Ottawa's school boards a letter confirming its members would not hinder the work of school bus operators transporting students, and after legal advisors were unable to obtain a court injunction.

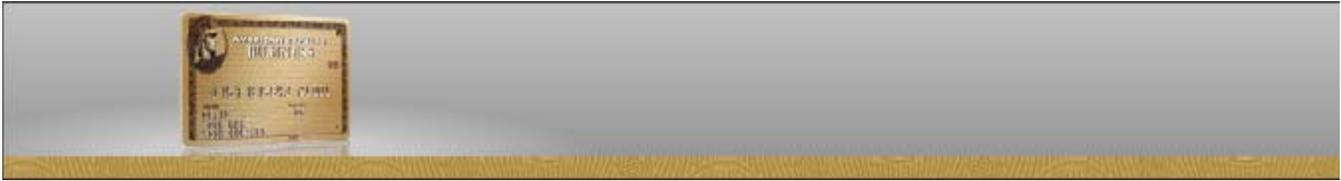
"Without OC Transpo's collaboration, we must cancel our contingency plan because we do not want to put our students' security at risk," explained CEPEO's director of education, François Benoit.

The board estimates that 3,000 students with the French language public schools are affected by the strike.

Schools across the region remain open for regular hours. It is estimated that over 12,000 students in grades 7-12 in the four Ottawa boards are issued bus passes.

Calls to ATU were not returned.

Are you impacted by the strike? If so, please share your story and send it to Patricia Lonergan at patricia.lonergan@transcontinental.ca



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L'autobus, un service essentiel



Pierre Jury
Le Droit

Les citoyens d'Ottawa ont dû composer avec deux perturbations majeures de leurs habitudes, hier. La première était inévitable, le coup de Dame Nature qui a laissé un tapis d'une trentaine de centimètres de neige sur tout le territoire, rendant les rues difficilement carrossables et faisant des trottoirs des montagnes russes. Le second était inévitable aussi... compte tenu du climat de tension qui semble régner à la table de négociations entre les employés d'OC Transpo et la Ville d'Ottawa. Les 2300 employés ont donc déclenché une grève qui a immobilisé le transport en commun dans la capitale.

L'ampleur de l'impact d'une grève se mesure lorsqu'on réalise que 350 000 personnes utilisent le transport en commun à chaque jour. Ce conflit perturbe les habitudes d'une personne sur trois : il s'agit d'un impact majeur qui doit interpeller tous les acteurs régionaux.

Si voter en faveur d'une grève, dans la langue des relations de travail, est bien plus un message quant au sérieux de doléances des travailleurs, la décision de la déclencher pour de vrai est autrement plus sérieuse. Car si l'on sait la journée où ça commence, on ignore en revanche quand la périlleuse aventure se terminera.

La raison

Certains pourront se dire que ça ne durera pas plus que deux ou trois jours, qu'Ottawa ne peut se passer plus longtemps de son réseau d'autobus à cette période de l'année où le secteur de la vente au détail, notamment, réalise l'essentiel de ses profits avec les achats de Noël. Mais dans le passé, on a vu ailleurs des autobus remisés pendant des semaines, voire des mois. Rien n'est impossible.

De l'extérieur, il est toujours difficile de pouvoir se faire une opinion juste sur la justesse des réclamations d'un côté comme de l'autre. Il a tout de même transpiré de la table de négociations un écart entre les demandes et les offres salariales : 10,5 % (3,5 % par an) est demandé, 8 % (3, 2, 2 %) est offert. Quand d'autres employés

municipaux ont reçu 9 % sur trois ans, et les fonctionnaires fédéraux, 6,8 % sur trois ans, l'offre patronale semble raisonnable.

Le fait qu'il s'agisse de bons emplois, bien rémunérés, et que le ralentissement économique affecte de nombreuses autres industries, devrait faire en sorte que les employés d'OC Transpo se montrent raisonnables dans ce domaine.

Par ailleurs, une négociation porte généralement sur plusieurs autres clauses dites «normatives» - elles concernent les conditions non-financières de l'emploi. Cela peut être tout aussi important que l'enveloppe salariale. De fait, le syndicat se rebiffe à l'implantation d'un nouveau mécanisme d'octroi des quarts de travail et des circuits d'autobus. Cela vient modifier une méthode qui est en place depuis plus d'un siècle, rapporte-t-on. Si l'employeur souhaite sans doute y faire des gains administratifs et en efficacité, les dossiers du genre sont souvent là où les ententes potentielles se cassent les dents. Les gestionnaires avisés le savent : avant de procéder à des modifications sur les conditions même des emplois, il faut mener une longue consultation et convaincre les employés qu'ils ont aussi à gagner avec de nouvelles manières de faire. Il ne semble pas que ces devoirs aient été faits ici. Dans ce cas, l'employeur n'aura d'autre choix que de reprendre le travail de la case départ.

Service de base

On s'étonnera, au passage, du peu de solidarité dont fait montre la population travailleuse à l'égard de ces employés. De quoi faire retourner Marx dans sa tombe, lui qui rêvait d'une lutte des classes ouvrières unies contre le pouvoir patronal !

Au-delà de ces considérations, le transport en commun doit être considéré comme un service essentiel dans une grande ville. Un minimum de services doit être assuré. Il faut s'étonner qu'une désignation en ce sens, présentée par le conseiller Rainer Bloess, n'ait généré aucun appui. Cela nous semble bien plus acceptable que le recours à une loi spéciale - que les pouvoirs fédéraux refusent à ce moment-ci, et fort heureusement. Il faut laisser encore quelques jours à la négociation de se faire, en souhaitant que le principe d'un service de base soit rétabli au plus tôt.

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Les opérations de déneigement à Ottawa perturbées par des manifestants d'OC Transpo

Les grévistes mettent du sel dans l'engrenage



Michel Lafleur, LeDroit



Dominique La Haye
Le Droit

Les grévistes d'OC Transpo ont causé de légers retards, hier, dans l'épandage du sel sur les routes d'Ottawa en manifestant devant les installations des travaux publics de la Ville.

Certains membres de la section 279 du Syndicat uni des transports se sont réunis, tôt hier matin, devant les installations de Maple Grove près de la Place Banque Scotia, dans l'ouest d'Ottawa.

« Ça a causé de petits retards, mais nous avons été en mesure de réacheminer nos camions vers d'autres installations situées dans les environs, pour qu'ils puissent aller s'approvisionner en sel »,

indique le directeur municipal des opérations de surface, John Manconi.

Les policiers d'Ottawa ont été appelés sur les lieux pour superviser la situation. M. Manconi explique que les forces de l'ordre seront appelées à intervenir si jamais les membres sur les piquets de grève en venaient à causer des retards significatifs dans le déneigement, portant ainsi atteinte à la sécurité des gens.

Intervention du fédéral

Le conseil municipal a pour sa part décidé de ne pas aller de l'avant, hier, avec la motion présentée à huis clos du conseiller Rainer Bloess et qui visait à demander l'intervention du fédéral pour mettre fin à la grève. L'élu demandait à ce que l'ordre de gouvernement supérieur déclare le transport en commun comme étant un service essentiel.

« Je ne pense pas que c'est le temps de demander au fédéral d'intervenir dans la grève », a indiqué le maire

d'Ottawa, Larry O'Brien.

« Je tiens à préciser que nous sommes le seul endroit à avoir un système de transport en commun en Amérique du Nord, en Europe ou en Australie, laissant le syndicat contrôler les horaires de travail », ajoute-t-il.

Horaires et ancienneté

Le directeur général d'OC Transpo, Alain Mercier, explique que la question des horaires de travail est un des points au coeur de l'échec des négociations entre les deux parties. La Ville veut ajuster les horaires en maintenant le principe de l'ancienneté, ce qui lui permettrait d'économiser 3,4 millions \$ par année, de mettre sur la glace l'achat de 20 autobus et d'éviter d'avoir à embaucher une centaine de chauffeurs l'an prochain.

« Nos pratiques d'horaires ne sont pas équitables pour les chauffeurs et n'avantagent qu'un employé sur huit. Elles ne sont également pas sécuritaires et coûtent plus cher pour faire fonctionner le système », fait valoir M. Mercier.

Selon le directeur, actuellement, seule une portion des chauffeurs sont en mesure de choisir leur horaire de la journée et se retrouvent parfois à travailler une journée de 6 h, tout en étant payés pour un quart de 8 h.

« Les autres se retrouvent avec des horaires faisant en sorte qu'ils ont moins de périodes de repos. On veut changer ça pour que tous les employés aient au moins 8 h de repos qui séparent deux journées de travail. »

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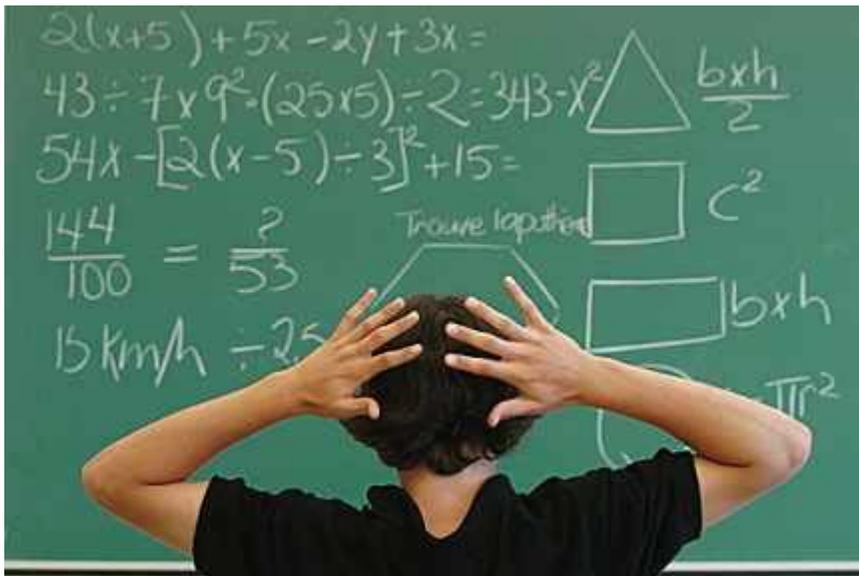
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Maths et sciences au secondaire: la dégringolade des élèves de la réforme se confirme



En math comme en sciences, les élèves de la réforme en arrachent.
Photothèque Le Soleil

Daphnée Dions-Viens

Le Soleil

(Québec) Les petits Québécois perdent encore des points à l'échelle internationale. Selon l'enquête internationale sur les mathématiques et les sciences (TEIMS), les résultats des élèves du secondaire n'ont jamais été aussi bas, confirmant la dégringolade d'une des premières cohortes d'élèves de la réforme. Au primaire, toutefois, les écoliers commencent à remonter la pente.

L'enquête TEIMS, dont l'édition 2007 vient d'être rendue publique, est réalisée tous les quatre ans. Cette évaluation permet de comparer les résultats des élèves de deuxième secondaire de 49 pays différents. En sciences, en plus de chuter du 10^e au 19^e rang, les Québécois ont obtenu leur plus bas

score depuis 1995 (c'est-à-dire depuis que le TEIMS existe sous sa forme actuelle). Les élèves ont récolté 507 points, alors qu'ils ont déjà atteint 540 points.

Le portrait est semblable en mathématiques, même si le Québec se classe toujours parmi les dix meilleurs : avec un score de 528 points, les élèves sont encore loin des 556 points obtenus en 1995. Au classement, le Québec glisse de la sixième à la huitième position.

«Autant en mathématiques qu'en sciences, il y a une détérioration au niveau secondaire qui semble s'accroître. C'est inquiétant parce qu'il ne reste plus beaucoup de temps pour donner un coup de barre. On a peut-être quelques cohortes qui, malheureusement, ont servi de cobayes», affirme Normand Péladeau, qui a analysé les résultats du TEIMS 2003 pour le ministère de l'Éducation avec le chercheur Steve Bissonnette.

La donnée la plus fiable reste toutefois le nombre de points plutôt que le classement, précise M. Péladeau,

puisque les pays qui participent à cette enquête ne sont pas nécessairement les mêmes au fil des ans. Cette année encore, le score du Québec reste toutefois supérieur à la moyenne internationale. Ces résultats confirment néanmoins les difficultés de cette cohorte d'élèves ? une des premières de la réforme ? qui avait aussi participé au TEIMS en 2003. Les enfants avaient alors été évalués en quatrième année. La chute, par rapport aux données de 1995, avait été «vertigineuse».

Les résultats 2007 des petits Québécois de quatrième année permettent toutefois de reprendre espoir. Sans avoir réussi à rattraper les scores de 1995, les élèves ont mieux réussi qu'en 2003. Ils ont gagné quelques points en maths (de 506 à 519) et en sciences (de 500 à 517. «Les élèves se sont améliorés, c'est encourageant», constate Steve Bissonnette.

Les modifications apportées à la réforme au cours des dernières années pourraient expliquer ce renversement de tendance, estiment les deux chercheurs. Des assouplissements permettent dorénavant aux enseignants de choisir plus librement comment ils veulent enseigner, expliquent-ils. La mémorisation des tables de multiplication, par exemple, pourrait avoir fait un retour en classe après le règne de la pédagogie par projet. Il a été impossible hier d'obtenir des commentaires du cabinet de la ministre de l'Éducation, Michelle Courchesne, concernant ces résultats.

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Bus drivers 'should be grateful' for decent offer

Online community mixed over bus stoppage

By Sarah Hartwick December 11, 2008

OTTAWA—While the mood of the online community was mixed Wednesday, one thing most agreed on — the bus strike was a hassle.

“Enduring the Ottawa transit strike Day 1. Usual commute of 45 minutes was 1 hour 20 minutes,” announced a Twitter user.

That sentiment was echoed throughout ottawacitizen.com and Facebook, where many transit users voiced frustrations.

Many felt the union was striking because of greed. “My problem begins when a profession who makes more than most — and somehow are not considered an essential service when they so clearly are — decide to use the holiday season as leverage for a pay hike,” wrote one poster on a Facebook group called “Kick an OC Transpo Bus Driver,” modelled satirically after the infamous “kick a ginger” group.

“I don’t have a cushy salary, I don’t get sick days and I sure as hell don’t get benefits,” wrote one poster on the Citizen’s transit strike soundoff page. “They should be grateful for what they’re being offered — and for what they have. What the city is offering is quite decent considering the recession.”

Facebooker Glenn Johnson put the blame in the city’s lap. “This could have been over some time ago. Money is less of an issue than seniority rights for drivers. A dispute over a system where drivers can bid on their routes should never have festered like this,” he said on “I Survived the OC Transpo Strike,” set up by the Citizen.

Posting to the newspaper’s soundoff page in advance of the strike, one reader was outraged by the “cavalier” and “flippant” attitude of the mayor when she learned the city was suggesting cycling as an alternative method of transportation.

“Cycling — what a ridiculous notion. I doubt the mayor will be pulling out his bicycle tomorrow morning,” she wrote.

One bus driver who posted on the livejournal.com page felt confident in the public’s support. “I would just like to say a big thanks to all of my passengers today for taking the high road. Many asked for info about the strike and wished me (us) good luck,” posted ikarus8737 Tuesday night. “Thanks and I hope you make out O.K. through the strike, hope it’s a short one.”

with files from Cassandra Drudi

City to deal with transit strike alone

Federal intervention ‘premature’

By Patrick Dare and Lee Greenberg December 11, 2008

OTTAWA—An attempt to get the federal government involved in Ottawa’s transit strike died in the city council chamber Wednesday.

Innes Councillor Rainer Bloess tried to introduce a motion to ask the federal government to have OC Transpo declared an essential service, to get the transit system running again and having the strike settled through arbitration.

At first, it appeared Mr. Bloess had support. Councillors Jan Harder, Bob Monette and Gord Hunter all agreed that the situation is urgent. Mr. Hunter said that in the last Toronto Transit Commission labour dispute in April, the Ontario legislature stepped in on the second day of a strike and ordered the workers back to work. But because OC Transpo routes cross into Quebec, Ottawa’s transit company is regulated by the federal government.

Council went into closed session to be briefed on the strike and talk about options. After the briefing, Mr. Bloess didn’t even have a seconder for his motion. Councillors may be concerned that such a move would harm the city’s bargaining position or that if the federal government does move in, an arbitrated settlement could be too rich for the city to bear.

In open session, city manager Kent Kirkpatrick said federal intervention “would be premature at this time.”

Chances are slim that the minority Conservatives will enact back to work legislation to end the strike. A spokeswoman for Labour Minister Rona Ambrose conceded as much Tuesday when she said the legislation had “never been used for a federal work stoppage of this sort.”

Even if the Conservatives wanted to order OC Transpo drivers, dispatchers and maintenance workers back on the job, the dramatic political events of last week make it extremely unlikely, according to one of the country’s top former bureaucrats.

“You’d have to recall Parliament,” says Mel Cappe, who served as clerk of the Privy Council from 1999 to 2002, referring to Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s decision to suspend Parliament rather than face a non-confidence vote. “You’d have to have the Governor General issue a writ to call Parliament back. And the chances of that are zero.”

Because Parliament was prorogued, the government would have to produce a speech from the throne before the House of Commons could take up any business. Mr. Harper would then need to gather support from all three opposition parties — including the very labour-friendly New Democrats and Bloc Québécois — to give the hypothetical bill speedy passage.

Mr. Cappe said Ottawa's transit strike isn't a serious enough issue for the minority Conservatives to attempt to overcome those significant hurdles.

"If Parliament was sitting, we'd be having a different discussion. Given how Mr. Harper has shown how much he respects collective bargaining, I don't think ... he would hesitate to legislate them back," said Mr. Cappe. "But he's not going to recall Parliament just because people in Kanata can't get downtown."

Mr. Bloess said the federal government may decline to get involved, but must at least be asked. He said too many people, often low-income seniors and students, suffer during a transit strike to allow it to continue without federal intervention.

Bay Councillor Alex Cullen, who chairs council's transit committee, opposed the intervention, saying Wednesday was the first day of a legal strike and that the place to resolve it is back at the bargaining table.

The 2,300 drivers, maintenance workers and dispatchers are on strike over scheduling, sick leave and pay issues. The city has offered increases of three, two and two per cent over three years, a \$2,000 signing bonus and various benefit improvements.

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December 11, 2008

Frustrated students hunker down, lash out

By **DONNA CASEY**

Sleeping overnight in the library, grabbing rides from friendly strangers -- students across Ottawa are doing it all so they can get to school on time.

Yesterday, students at the city's universities and colleges figuring out how to get to their exams through a snowstorm and the first public transit strike in 12 years.

"Talking to professors, it seems about 70% of students made it to their exams this morning," said Rob Nettleton, president of Algonquin College's student association.

While many students used ride boards to connect with drivers heading to campus, some decided the best plan was to stay put.

At Carleton University, a few students used the library, which is open 24 hours a day, to catch some sleep overnight so they wouldn't miss their exams in the morning, said university spokesman Steve Blais.

"The library is open 24 hours and it's up to them how they spend their time there, as long as they're not disrupting anyone else," said Blais.

Carleton's student association set up four shuttle buses routes running Monday to Saturday throughout the day to get students to campus for exams.

The \$3,000 per day cost to run the buses -- which leave from Place d'Orleans, South Keys, Bank St./MacLeod St. and Merivale Rd./Meadowlands Dr. -- will be shared by the student association and the university, said Brittany Smyth, president of the Carleton University Student Association.

VENTING ONLINE

Many students took their frustrations online, venting on newly-created Facebook groups dedicated to the bus strike.

Randy Simpson, a fourth-year history student at Carleton, said he created the Students Against the OC Transpo Strike group out of "sense of frustration" with the city and the transit union leadership.

While Simpson's group gave visitors links to carpooling sites and city councillor contacts, other bus strike groups were rife with expletive-laden posts, slamming both sides.

STUDENT INFO

- Both universities say exams will go on as scheduled.
- Carleton has increased shuttle bus service during the weekdays and on Saturday.
- Carleton University Students Association operates a Ride Board for students interested in car pool options.
- University of Ottawa is offering free hourly shuttle buses for students with valid ID. Buses will pick up and drop off at Monpetit Hall, with round trips offered to South Keys Mall, Place D'Orleans and Carleton

University.

- Students currently using yellow buses will not be affected by the strike.

- The public school board is working on a contingency plan to provide additional yellow bus service to students in Grades 7-12 who rely on OC Transpo.



December 11, 2008

Sides dig in, point fingers

Union: 'We have a legal right to strike and it's up to the city to deal with this'

By AEDAN HELMER, SUN MEDIA

Ottawa residents tried to get on with business as usual on Day 1 of a transit strike that threatens to paralyze the city.

An overnight blast of winter weather only added to the commuting headache yesterday, as residents fought heavy traffic and icy roads to make their way to work.

While frustration and anger spilled over into the clogged city streets, fingers were pointing at both sides of the negotiating table yesterday, after a last ditch attempt to avert a strike failed hours before the union's strike deadline.

Andre Cornellier, president of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 279, representing 2,200 striking bus drivers, dispatchers and maintenance workers, blamed the city for walking away from eleventh-hour talks late Tuesday night.

At midnight, union members walked off the job, leaving thousands of transit users scrambling for a backup plan.

INCENSED

Cornellier was incensed when confidential talks between the union's chief negotiator, the city's labour relations team, and a federal mediator were made public by city officials Tuesday afternoon.

"They were supposed to be confidential," said Cornellier, who responded by issuing a statement denying formal negotiations had resumed.

"The federal mediator recommended that we continue negotiations that would have delayed the strike, but the city said no."

Mayor Larry O'Brien would not comment on negotiations yesterday, but said "no progress was made" during the eleventh-hour talks.

"Eventually, (the mediator) told us that there wasn't any reason to go on, so at 9:30 p.m. or 10 p.m. (Tuesday), we got word that they were pulling out of the (negotiations)," said O'Brien.

LITTLE SYMPATHY

Angry residents yesterday were showing little sympathy for either side in the standoff.

"It's created a great difficulty for a lot of people, especially in weather like this, putting more cars on the road, more danger," said Morris Agulnik, 78, trudging through snowy streets. "As far as I'm concerned, with any essential service, these people should not be holding us for ransom. We're just hostages to their desires."

Cornellier said he's heard the acrimony directed at his members while marching on picket lines.

"I'm certainly hearing more negative than positive," said Cornellier. "People are calling me with threats, but it's the city that has to do something about this."



A driver and striking transit worker argue as pickets held up vehicles outside City Hall, creating long delays for people trying to get to work along Elgin St.. (JON WILLING Sun Media)

"We've taken a stand, we have a legal right to strike, and it's up to the city to deal with this. I don't respond to the public, I respond to my members."

The main sticking point in negotiations continues to be the city-proposed process of "block booking" shifts, which the union is refusing to accept.

"We are the only transit system in North America, in Europe or in Australia that lets the unions control the schedule. And quite frankly, that's unacceptable," said O'Brien.

O'Brien said the scheduling changes would save the city \$3-4 million a year. He also said the union was spreading "misinformation" to drivers about the city's final offer.

"Drivers, based on their seniority, will still have an opportunity to choose their routes in priority," said O'Brien.

No talks are scheduled between the two sides as the strike enters its second day.

CITY'S OFFER

- 3% wage increase retroactive to April 1, 2008, 2% on April 1, 2009, and 2% on April 1, 2010.
 - One-time payment of \$2,000 to be paid following ratification.
 - Eight sick days a year, employees can bank unused sick days up to 12 per year.
 - Limits to hours of work to 14 hours per day with a minimum of 8 hours rest daily. All operators to rest one full day per bi-weekly period.
 - Increase paramedical benefits to a combined total of \$1,000/year for an increase to the employee-paid premium of \$1 per week.
 - Semi-private coverage for rehab facilities.
 - All employees who qualify for WSIB get an 85% top-up (net salary) based on 80 hours bi-weekly.
 - Two-week waiting period for maternity leave paid at 93%. (Previously unpaid.)
 - Increase in bereavement leave from four to five days for immediate family.
 - Payment of full tuition fees for apprentices.
 - Tool allowance increased to \$400 from \$385/year and more specialty tools.
 - Boot allowance increased to \$125 from \$120 for 2010 and \$130 for 2011.
 - Medical and trade examination reimbursement increased to \$90 from \$65.
- Source: City of Ottawa



December 11, 2008

So much for respect

By **SUSAN SHERRING**

"We're going to have a long, long strike. Our members aren't going to give up."

That's according to Andre Cornellier, president of the union that represents the striking OC Transpo drivers.

Clearly those are fighting words.

That appears to be his style.

But still, with a strike now affecting all of working Ottawa, it's important to understand the issues.

So it seemed like a fair enough question to put to Cornellier.

He has continually said money isn't the issue, but stresses the right of workers to determine their own schedule is the real stumbling block.

So the question: Please just explain what that means, and why the employer signing the cheques doesn't get to say when and where you work.

That's how the rest of us operate.

The city appears happy to give the public its point of view, so what about the union?

Fair's fair, and both sides would be nice.

"I can't go into all of that," Cornellier said. "It would take you the whole paper. I'm not trying to be rude or anything, but I've repeated myself so many times.

"I'm a little disappointed with the press that I have talked to, they just seem to take whatever they want, the real reason is not out there," he continued.

Now that seems to be a strange thing to say -- from a man who admits he's not about to take the time to explain.

"I'm going to not be making any sense to you. I just want you to realize, we've asked them to have five minutes at the end of the route, so we can stretch. We don't have time and they made it into a monster. They want to change the whole work schedule all of a sudden because we ask for five or 10 minutes to go to the washroom," he said.

"The bottom line without having to explain that members here do not want the company to have the right to choose their work, if we let them, it will take that right away from them. I don't know if you can make any sense, a seniority-based system, do their time, get to choose days off, what they want to work on a daily work, one piece of work, not necessarily a day, we have people who work six hours, you've probably heard of people working 40 hours and getting paid six hours. Well, there's not very many of those. (The city) wants to change the work rules.

"It's the union that needs to be convinced, it doesn't matter what the public thinks."

Well, he was certainly right about one thing. What he's saying doesn't make sense.

City officials say money can be saved if the city takes over the schedule. It's hard to understand how the union -- unless it has a vested interest -- could argue with that.

In the battle for the public's goodwill, the union doesn't seem to care. How else to explain some of the incredibly bizarre interviews the union leader has been giving.

Will he be giving his union members the opportunity to vote on the latest offer?

No.

Plain and simple.

Hard to figure out why he even does media interviews when he refuses to explain the union's position. Maybe it's not explainable. Maybe, just maybe, the union has a vested interest in the status quo.

Cornellier says he doesn't need the public's support, his membership gave him the authority to bargain for the best deal.

And so they blocked the entrance to City Hall on Laurier Ave. yesterday, what of it?

Inconveniencing people, what's wrong with that? he asked.

Ironically, he says his members want respect and dignity.

So why would he treat the citizens of Ottawa with such disrespect?

That's put to him. Why does he seem to be deliberately antagonistic?

Seems like a reasonable question.

He doesn't think so.

"Oh really? Thank you, goodbye," he says.

Click.

Yes, he hung up.

So much for respect.

And dignity? Not even in the ballpark.

YOUR OPTIONS

What the city is doing during the strike.

- Para-Transpo continues to operate.
- Transitway and bus-only lanes on highways 417 and 174 are restricted to emergency vehicles only.
- City bus-only lanes are open to regular traffic.
- Relaxation of some on-street parking restrictions. Parking is permitted all day where one-, two- and three-hour unmetered parking is permitted. This does not apply to parking meters.

- OC Transpo Park & Ride lots are available as carpooling points.

- Information on carpooling and ride sharing available on octranspo.com, ottawa.ca and ottawaridematch.com.

STO can't expand service in Ottawa

Limited to Rideau, Wellington streets

By Dave Rogers December 11, 2008

OTTAWA-Telephone lines at the Société de Transport de l'Outaouais were jammed Wednesday as Ottawa residents tried to find out how they could get an STO bus to work in Gatineau.

Renée Lafrenière, a spokeswoman for the Outaouais bus company, said hundreds of people wanted to know where they could board an STO bus in Ottawa. Ms. Lafrenière said Ottawa riders can catch buses to government offices in Gatineau at STO stops on Rideau and Wellington streets.

Ms. Lafrenière said the STO can't expand its service into Ottawa during the bus strike because its territory in Ontario is limited to Rideau and Wellington streets.

Holders of OC Transpo monthly passes can use the buses and those who don't can pay \$3.25 a ride. The STO does not accept OC Transpo tickets.

"It is difficult to say whether we had more riders than usual, but we do expect more people than usual to use our buses in the morning," Ms. Lafrenière said. "We have capacity on our buses on return trips from Ottawa so that is an option for people there.

"We have put all the buses we have on the road. People who can take the bus to downtown Gatineau should do so to leave space on city streets for those who don't have that option."

The STO provides bus service to Tunney's Pasture from Gatineau, but it is one-way in the morning so people can't ride the return bus from the government office complex.

During the OC Transpo strike, the City of Gatineau will offer parking for \$7 a day at the Robert-Guertin Arena on Boulevard des Allumetières near St-Rédempteur Street and at a lot on Montcalm Street and Highway 50.

Ottawa residents who rely on the bus to get to work in Gatineau said the OC Transpo bus strike is a major inconvenience.

Lise Roy, a public servant who works at Place du Portage, said her husband drove her from home in Orléans to the Rideau Centre, where she caught an STO bus.

"This strike is going to be a very big problem for me because I don't live in Ottawa," Mrs. Roy said. "There is nobody near where I live who drives into Gatineau, so I will have to ride part of the way with my husband.

“We have to arrange our work around which bus we can take to go home. Some of my co-workers didn't come in to work. Let's hope the strike doesn't last long.”

Bicycle courier Rashi Mayer said there was slightly more traffic on Ottawa and Gatineau streets Wednesday, but it wasn't a real problem.

“Actually, buses are more of an inconvenience for me on the roads” Mr. Mayer said. “If the weather was better, I think more people would walk or take their bikes to work.”

Gatineau police spokeswoman Const. Isabelle Poirier said traffic on city streets was slow because of snow and a limit of two lanes of traffic on the Chaudière Bridge, but congestion was no worse than on Monday and Tuesday.

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Storm, strike add pressure to exam period

Carleton, U of O, Algonquin all trying to cope with bus stoppage

By Joanne Laucius December 11, 2008

OTTAWA-Wednesday morning produced a double whammy for students who rely on public transit to get to school — a bus strike and a snowstorm.

Make that a triple whammy. Some of the students also faced writing exams, and colleges and universities had warned them that a bus strike would be no excuse for failing to show.

Despite it all, there were few reports of students who missed tests or were significantly late.

“Reports from this morning were that the vast majority of students were able to make their exams,” said Steve Blais, a spokesman for Carleton University.

College and university administrations have asked professors to be as accommodating as possible when it comes to students who show up late, he said.

“If they show up within 45 minutes, they are able to write the exam,” said Mr. Blais.

Carleton University Students’ Association (CUSA) president Brittany Smyth said the association has had between five and 10 calls about missed exams and has passed the question on to the registrar’s office, which makes a decision on whether or not to offer a deferment.

“It seems to be going pretty well,” she said.

CUSA has also arranged for shuttle buses to run between four locations in the city and the university, and a shuttle service between Carleton and the University of Ottawa has been beefed up.

The CUSA buses run:

- from Place d’Orléans every hour
- from Merivale and Meadowlands every 45 minutes
- from South Keys Mall every 30 minutes
- from Bank Street and McLeod Street every 30 minutes.

Riders must present student identification to get on the shuttles. The shuttles run between 7 a.m. and noon, and again between 6 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

CUSA is spending about \$3,000 a day on the shuttles. So far, ridership has ebbed and flowed, but CUSA is expecting more riders as word circulates.

Algonquin College is offering emergency billets for students taking exams, but so far there have been no takers, college spokesman Bob LeDrew said.

“There’s no doubt that today was a challenge for lots of students, but overall, exams and assessments went on without major issues,” he said.

“I’m sure that some students have experienced difficulty, and we as a college are doing our best to respond to missed exams or lateness with flexibility.”

Parking enforcement staff were also asked to be flexible as the snowfall and bus strike combined to force more students to drive to school, he said.

“We will continue to monitor the strike and the weather, and continue to try to help students get through the next two days of assessment week as we can.”

Meanwhile, Ottawa’s school boards are still working on a contingency plan to get students who rely on OC Transpo to schools using yellow buses. There has been no movement on the part of the bus operators, who have declined to offer service unless the OC Transpo drivers’ union pledges that its members won’t picket schools and the places where students will be picked up.

More than 12,000 students in Grade 7 to 12 in Ottawa rely on OC Transpo buses to get to school.

The school boards have said schools will remain open during the strike, but students are responsible for finding their own way to school.

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Strike focuses on control over driver scheduling

No talks set as transit stoppage enters second day

By Jake Rupert December 11, 2008

OTTAWA—With a transit stoppage entering a second day, there were no talks scheduled between the city and its roughly 2,300 striking transit workers.

The dispute is not about wages, the city and the workers' union agree. It's about a city demand for more control over scheduling.

Currently, scheduling is largely done by workers. The city wants more control in this area, and the two sides have wildly different interpretations of what the municipality's proposed changes would mean.

Officials from the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 279 said the city's demand would play havoc with their members' quality of life and wouldn't improve the transit system, and it's a desperate demand caused by OC Transpo management's failure to run the system properly.

OC Transpo head Alain Mercier said the changes would actually improve the working conditions for drivers, allow the system to run more reliably and efficiently, and contribute to an overall improvement in workers' quality of life.

Mayor Larry O'Brien said Wednesday that having control over scheduling would save the city \$3 million to \$4 million per year, and eliminate the need to hire 100 more drivers and purchase 20 new buses in 2009.

"We are the only city in North America, Europe or Australia with a transit system where we let the union control the scheduling, and that's not acceptable," Mr. O'Brien said.

But union officials say the proposed changes are unacceptable because they would abrogate seniority privileges on working conditions and make it so drivers might not even be able to use a washroom while on the job.

"They want to take away our right to choose the work we do and force us to do unacceptable things to make up for the bad way they run the system," said the union's secretary-treasurer, Jim Haddad, 52, a bus driver since 1976.

Mr. Haddad, union president André Cornellier and other union executives said Wednesday they wanted the public to know the strike could have been avoided, but the city forced the union's hand by demanding the scheduling concession at the end of November, months after the last contract expired and talks began last spring.

Mr. Mercier disputed this. He said scheduling had been on the table since the beginning of negotiations.

Currently, drivers decide in order of seniority what routes they want to drive. More experienced drivers generally pick less-busy neighbourhood routes that allow small breaks for using the bathroom, eating and resting between runs. Under the contract, these drivers cannot be taken off the routes they've chosen and put on others during a shift.

The union says the city wants to be able to reassign drivers on the fly to routes that are experiencing delays (generally busy ones that cross downtown) without guaranteeing breaks, and to force drivers to do more split shifts covering morning and evening rush hours.

They say the situation could easily be fixed by putting an appropriate amount of buses and drivers on all routes, instead of putting too few buses on the road each day to save money.

"People don't know this, but the way they plan things causes delays, and they know this," Mr. Haddad said. "So they are trying to force us to plug holes they created without guaranteeing we will have any time to catch our breath. We can't fix the system like this."

"They are trying to make it so our members can't even take a pee, don't know where they will be at the end of the shifts, and don't know what routes they will be working," Mr. Cornellier said. "I think if people understood what they are asking for, they would understand our position. It's about the quality of our lives."

Mr. Mercier said this is not the case. He said the current scheduling regime results in drivers with seniority working less than eight hours and getting paid for full days and drivers with less seniority working too many back-to-back shifts with little rest. It forces an inefficient use of resources, he said.

"We have an unfair, unsafe, and essentially inefficient scheduling system," he said. "We want every employee to work a full day for a full day's pay."

He said the changes the city is seeking would still allow drivers to pick routes, shifts, and days off based on seniority and would guarantee time for rest, and to use washrooms and eat something at the ends of runs. Drivers would not be ordered to switch routes during a shift, he said, and the system would eliminate 30 per cent of existing "dead-heading," buses travelling empty to start routes or return to garages for the evenings.

Mr. Mercier said the current system results in abuse and waste and contributes to the system's reliability problems.

"What we are proposing is what's practical," he said. "For us to fix it, we need the tools. We need to be able to manage it."

The city's last offer, which was rejected by the union's leaders Monday, included a \$2,000-per-employee signing bonus if the municipality's scheduling proposal was agreed to.

Mr. Haddad said the union didn't ask for the bonus and won't take it.

Other remaining outstanding issues are wages, sick days, and contracting out. The city is offering a three-year deal with wage increases of three, two and two per cent per year while the union is looking for increases of 3.5 per cent per year. The city also wants language that disallows contracting out

some work changed. How to account for sick days not used is also an issue.

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Selon un professeur en relations industrielles

Le conflit à OC Transpo risque d'être long

CHARLES THÉRIAULT

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Si la grève des employés d'OC Transpo ne se règle pas dans les prochaines heures, elle pourrait durer très longtemps.

Selon Jean-François Tremblay, professeur en relations industrielles à l'Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO), il est possible que la grève entamée hier se prolonge durant quelques semaines, à moins que l'employeur ne retire sa principale

demande. Le conflit pourrait alors se régler rapidement.

« L'employeur demande des concessions très importantes aux syndiqués. Les négociations n'ont pas achoppé sur la question des salaires mais bien sûr l'organisation du travail. Les employés ont depuis toujours un droit de regard sur les horaires de travail. Or, la direction d'OC Transpo veut reprendre le contrôle de ces horaires. La direction croit être en mesure d'optimiser les circuits d'auto-

bus si elle reprend le contrôle des horaires des employés. Dans la plupart des milieux de travail, c'est l'employeur qui gère les horaires, non les employés », a fait remarquer M. Tremblay.

Le professeur en relations industrielles ne croit pas que le syndicat des chauffeurs soit trop fort. À son avis, il y a un bon équilibre entre l'employeur et les syndiqués, même si ce groupe d'employés est reconnu pour être particulièrement militant. « Les employés sont habitués

de contrôler leurs horaires et c'est un élément important dans la conciliation travail-famille. Il est difficile pour eux de céder sur ce point. Quant aux salaires et aux avantages sociaux, les positions des deux parties ne sont pas très éloignées alors ce n'est pas le problème principal », a-t-il ajouté.

Jean-François Tremblay a ser-

vi de médiateur entre la Société de transport de l'Outaouais (STO) et ses employés. Il hésite donc à comparer le comportement plus paisible des syndiqués de la STO à celui, plus revendicateur, de leurs vis-à-vis d'OC Transpo.

Mais il fait remarquer que les deux syndicats ont une culture différente.



MICHEL LAFLEUR, LeDroit

Pendant que certains attendaient vainement l'autobus du côté d'Ottawa, d'autres trouvaient des moyens originaux pour se rendre au travail, hier matin.

EN BREF

Tempête de 5 millions \$

La Ville d'Ottawa devra piger davantage dans son bas de laine pour rembourser le déficit que laissera la première tempête de neige de l'hiver dans le budget 2008. La municipalité avait déjà accumulé un déficit de 18 millions \$ l'hiver dernier pour le déneigement. La première bourrasque plongera dans le rouge de près de 5 millions \$ les finances de la Ville, selon le directeur municipal des opérations de surface, John Manconi.

LEDROIT

L'Est ontarien n'échappe pas à la grève d'OC Transpo

JEAN-FRANÇOIS DUGAS

Correspondant régional

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La grève de 2300 syndiqués d'OC Transpo a des répercussions jusque dans l'Est ontarien.

La fermeture du Transitway a engendré une modification au service de transport en commun des quelque 800 travailleurs en partance de Clarence-Rockland qui se rendent quotidiennement

à Ottawa. CR Transpo ne pourra plus utiliser les couloirs réservés aux autobus, ce qui fait en sorte que certains seront retirés de ses trajets. Les arrêts Blair, Cyrville, Train, Hurdman et Campus seront éliminés pour la durée de la grève.

Même son de cloche à la Commission de transport Glengarry-Nord Prescott et Russell (GNPR) qui avait une entente similaire avec OC Transpo.

« Ô Canada... » – Clive Doucet

DOMINIQUE LA HAYE

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Le premier jour de grève chez OC Transpo, jumelé à la première tempête de l'hiver, ont eu des répercussions jusqu'à l'hôtel de Ville d'Ottawa, où le conseil municipal se réunissait hier matin. La séance a débuté avec une dizaine de minutes de retard et sans la chorale devant chanter l'hymne national, comme le veut la coutume.

Le conseiller municipal du

quartier Capitale, Clive Doucet, a sauvé l'honneur du conseil en donnant la première note du *Ô Canada*, suivi en chœur par ses collègues réunis dans la chambre du conseil.

Acadien d'origine, M. Doucet s'est fait un devoir de chanter l'hymne dans les deux langues officielles.

La chorale provenant d'une école anglophone de la municipalité n'a pu être présente, en raison de la mauvaise température.

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