

Ontario Public Service Division

March 6, 2008

Time to “Plug Yourself In” to OPS Bargaining 2008

OPS Local Presidents attended regional workshops on Saturday, March 1, 2008 to learn more about the 2008 round of OPS bargaining. The workshops covered topics such as the bargaining timelines, surveys and demand-setting meetings, increasing member participation and the new procedure for bargaining issues prior to essential and emergency services.



Bringing OPS Presidents together, ten months before the expiry of the collective agreement is intended to ensure that we get out in front of the many tasks that must be completed in order to have a successful and productive round of bargaining. Local presidents, staff and executive board members spent the day looking ahead to the next few months and the importance of getting our members “plugged in” to the collective bargaining process. A high rate of member participation in the demand set process is critical to establishing credibility at the bargaining table. The first phase of the OPS Bargaining campaign will be devoted to communicating the importance and relevance of the collective bargaining process in our members’ lives and the importance of dedicating time and attention to this very important privilege.

In the weeks ahead members will become more aware of the new bargaining timeline. The new timeline will result in the parties attempting to bargain a contract; between November 4, 2008 and December 23, 2008; without an Essential and Emergency Service Agreement (EESA) in place. If a tentative agreement is not reached in that period, then an EESA would be bargained in early January 2009 while mobilizing members toward a final offer vote.

In order to achieve this timeline, locals will be asked to complete their demand set surveys and demand set meetings in late April and early May. The regional and provincial bargaining conferences that will lead to the election of our bargaining teams are set for the month of June. This will allow us to focus solely on bargaining issues for the final four months of 2008

The next nine months promise to be busy and action packed. It is time for everyone to get “plugged in” so they don’t miss a thing. For current information on OPS Bargaining 2008 go to: <http://www.opseu.org/ops/barg2008/index.htm>

Rhéal Delaquis steps down from CERC

Brother Rhéal Delaquis has stepped down from CERC after years of exemplary service on behalf of OPSEU members in the OPS. Rhéal’s passion for workplace justice is surpassed only by his desire and conviction to fight for OPSEU members when called upon. Rheel is a tireless worker whose commitment to the principles of the union movement is beyond reproach. His thoughtful approach and “keen eye” for detail will be missed at the CERC table. Merci mon frère et a beintot!



The March 5, 2008 meeting for CERC was cancelled due to inclement weather in the Toronto area. Outstanding issues will be rolled over to the April 2, 2008 agenda. Sorry for the inconvenience.

Hundreds join demonstrations outside ODSP offices in show of strength

Hundreds of staff, clients and supporters of the Ontario Disability Support Program rallied outside ODSP offices across Ontario on March 4 in a show of solidarity seldom before seen in the 10-year history of the agency which administers benefits and services to 325,000 clients and their families, all of whom struggle to survive on poverty incomes.

OPSEU president Smokey Thomas expressed his gratitude and delight for the province-wide demonstration of picket lines.

“Your presence on the picket lines demonstrated your commitment to building a stronger union movement in Ontario. I am truly grateful for your participation. Your willingness to be heard loudly sends the message that our strength grows and our demands will be met when we stand together in common cause,” he said.

Noon hour pickets went up outside more than 35 ODSP offices on what amounted to a cold and blustery day in most communities. But a bit of inclement weather hardly deterred the spirit so evident on the picket lines. From all corners of the province, the ODSP message was heard loud and clear: it’s time to end the understaffing crisis by investing \$60 million in this spring’s budget to bring Ontario’s income support caseload ratio (currently at 530 claims for every one income support specialist) more in line with the national average of about 250:1. Media coverage was extensive. More than 20 daily newspapers published stories about the demonstrations. Television and radio stations broadcasted multiple news stories from around Ontario. A few papers published an Op Ed opinion piece by Brother Smokey who described the problem at the ODSP in the context of the McGuinty government’s failure to provide public services to marginalized and disabled Ontarians, despite its commitment to wage a war against poverty.

Displaying a finely-tuned deaf ear to the problem, Community and Social Services Minister Madeleine Meilleur issued a statement on March 4 in which she declared that her office had been working “closely” with OPSEU negotiators for five years to fix the problem. Not so, according to ODSP MERC subcommittee members who say the employer has been doing its best to avoid discussing the understaffing crisis and that little progress has been made, despite the findings of the Lewchuk Report (paid for by Meilleur’s ministry) which reported abnormal rates of stress, tensions, ill health and high absenteeism, caused by outrageous workloads that ODSP staff are expected to carry.

Protecting jobs, building power

To date there have been more than 20 meetings held across the province that have been attended by over 500 members. That translates into more than 500 OPSEU activists standing on guard to protect our work on the OPS. So far OPSEU staff have reviewed more than 100 job descriptions as a result of members’ submissions. There have been 24 policy grievances filed to date. With a consistent flow of submissions now coming from activist members across the province, more grievances will now be filed on an ongoing basis. Keep the information coming. In this campaign more is better. There will be a table at convention where more information along with stickers and flyers will be available.



Your CERC is: Eric Morin
 Patrick Fry-Smith
 Peter Wall
 Brian Gould

"We must build dikes of courage to hold back the flood of fear".

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Coming Events

- April 17-19, 2008 – Annual OPSEU Convention, Toronto
- June 7, 2008 - Regional OPS Bargaining Conferences
- June 21, 2008 – Provincial OPS Bargaining Conference