

What is demand-setting?

The collective agreement between the LCBO and OPSEU expires on March 31, 2009. If that seems like a long way away, it's not! Bargaining a new contract means getting ready more than a year in advance, and the bargaining process has already started. The first step is called demand-setting.

Demand-setting is the way OPSEU members tell their bargaining team what they want in their next contract. Here's how it works:

- March 2008** **The member survey.** All OPSEU members at the LCBO should complete the demand-setting survey. This survey lets you say what matters most to you in bargaining. It will be hand-delivered by OPSEU stewards in March 2008.
- May 24-25, 2008** **The pre-bargaining conference.** Elected delegates from each local come to Toronto to elect the OPSEU bargaining team.
- September 2008** **Local meetings.** Locals report province-wide survey results to their members. Local demand-setting meetings are where members can discuss, debate, and decide what their priorities are in general.
- November 22, 2008** **The final demand-setting meeting.** Elected delegates from all OPSEU locals at the LCBO will meet in Toronto to set the agenda for the elected bargaining team.

When bargaining begins in January 2009, the demands your bargaining team takes to the table will be the ones that come out of the demand-setting process. If you don't participate, your issues may not be discussed. Let's start this round off right: Please complete the survey and return it to your OPSEU local steward!

“Demand-setting” is the way OPSEU members tell their bargaining team what they want in their next collective agreement....

Complete your demand-setting survey and return it to your OPSEU steward!



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Better, fairer wages: Not such a bad idea?

A lot of people who buy alcohol in Ontario think LCBO workers have a pretty good deal – easy, high-paying jobs with good benefits and a pension plan.

A lot people are wrong.

Despite the LCBO's enormous profits, LCBO wages are anything but high. While some OPSEU members may make more than \$50,000 a year, they are no longer in the majority. Close to 60 per cent of the people who work for the LCBO now work as casuals or seasonals. In some areas, such as warehouses, the LCBO is even hiring workers through temp agencies.

A customer who walks into an LCBO store on a busy summer day in summer can't see it, but typical employees **doing the same work** are paid at four different rates:

- A **permanent full-time** Liquor Store Clerk (Grade 3) is earning \$23.81 an hour.
- A **casual** worker hired before Sept. 1, 2002 is making \$18.22 an hour
- A **casual** worker hired after Aug. 31, 2002 is making \$16.14 an hour.
- The "**fixed term help**" who works during the holiday rush or during the summer gets just \$10.00 an hour.

As an employer, cutting wage costs is one of the LCBO's main goals. That's why the full-time workforce is shrinking. Every time a full-time position disappears and is replaced by a casual, the wages for that work go down.

The four-tier wage structure is designed to get the most work done at the lowest cost to the LCBO.

And that's not the only downward pressure on wages.

In 2006, the LCBO paid for a consultant's report that said that wages at the Board are too high and there are too many full-time staff compared to other retail operations. The report told the LCBO to consider a) closing the warehouses in Thunder Bay and Ottawa; b) contracting out all distribution; and c) contracting out Information Technology.

All of these options would wipe out jobs – and drive down wages.

In warehouses, the LCBO has started using so-called "agency temps" – non-LCBO employees who get paid the bare minimum while the agency they work for makes big profits.

What is the best way to ensure fair wages for LCBO employees? Tell your union what you think: Complete the demand-setting survey and return it to your OPSEU steward!

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Staying safe and healthy on the job

Anybody who has worked at the LCBO for a while – especially in retail or logistics – knows what it's like to be sore.

Working for the Liquor Board involves a lot of repetitive, often heavy work: loading and unloading trucks, stocking shelves, and working cash registers.

Office staff face health and safety issues as well, from indoor air quality to ergonomic issues.

Lastly, there is the problem, mostly in retail, of workplace violence. Alcohol is expensive and addictive, and it doesn't always bring out the best in people.

Robberies do happen. When they do, they put LCBO employees at extreme risk. Working alone, which happens in some rural areas, only increases the risk of violence.

Intoxicated people are unpredictable at the best of times, and LCBO employees routinely refuse to serve them. It can be a recipe for trouble – and injuries.



What are the most important steps to take to keep LCBO employees safe and healthy at work, and to better look after them if they are sick or injured?

Tell your union what you think: Complete the demand-setting survey and return it to your OPSEU steward!

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The question of health benefits

A good benefit plan is important to OPSEU members at the LCBO for two reasons.

First, we all deserve good health care for ourselves and our families – including dental care, eyeglasses, and other things that are not covered by OHIP.

Second, some health benefits can actually help lessen the strain of working at the LCBO. For example, chiropractic treatments and physiotherapy can help ease the pain of a bad back that has been lifting cases for too many years.

Aching bodies are all too common at the LCBO. That's why more LCBO staff are doing modified duties (being accommodated) now than at any other time in history.

Full-time workers at the LCBO have a benefit plan, but it may not always meet people's needs.

Casual and fixed-term workers have a different problem: They don't have a benefit plan at all.

In 2006, OPSEU studied the idea of an employee-paid benefit plan for casuals. The idea was that the union would use group buying power to buy affordable benefits for casuals, using the money casuals now receive for pay in lieu of benefits.

The idea didn't fly. The problem is

two-fold: First, most casuals can't afford to buy benefits with money they are already using to buy groceries. Second, casuals don't make enough money to pay for benefits on their own. In 2006, the benefit plan for a full-time employee cost about \$4,700 a year. **That is more than eight times what the average casual earns in pay-in-lieu of benefits each year.**

The issue of benefits is not about whether the LCBO can afford them. In 2008, LCBO profits will be enough to pay for full benefits for 200,000 workers and their families.

The question is, how important are health benefits compared to other possible contract improvements, for example, higher wages, paid vacation time, or protection against losing your job?

For casuals, the issue of benefits is also tied up with the job you have. If you are promoted to a full-time job, you will automatically have benefits. What is the best route to go? Getting benefits for casuals, or converting more casuals to permanent positions with benefits?

Whatever you think, please tell your union. Complete the demand-setting survey and return it to your OPSEU steward!

How important to you is it to have a benefit plan for you and your family? If you are already part of the benefit plan, are there specific improvements that are especially important?

Tell your union what you think: Complete the demand-setting survey and return it to your OPSEU steward!


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Worried about losing your job?

Will you be working at the LCBO tomorrow? How about a year from now?

Almost every LCBO employee is concerned about job security. For casuals, the day-to-day problem often boils down to hours: Will I get the hours I need to live on next week? Will I get enough hours during seasonal slowdowns?

Full-timers face a threat to their livelihoods as well. That threat – which also affects casuals, seasonal, and flex-time workers – is called privatization.

Selling the LCBO

The liquor business is **very** lucrative. Every year, the LCBO makes well over \$1 billion in profits.

Those profits are very attractive to private investors. Those investors will never stop calling for the Ontario government to sell off the LCBO so they can get a piece of the pie.

So far, they have not succeeded. so they're trying other approaches.

Agency stores

Right now, the LCBO lets private operators run about 200 "agency stores" in communities around Ontario. Originally, these outlets could only sell in remote areas. But lately, agency stores are getting bigger, and new ones are opening up closer

to existing stores. Existing stores are losing sales – and jobs.

Agency temps

Another kind of privatization is starting to take root in LCBO warehouses. More and more, LCBO managers are paying temporary help agencies to provide workers on short notice and for short periods of time. These "agency temps" – who might make \$10 an hour even if the LCBO pays their agency \$16 or more – are being treated unfairly themselves and taking work away from OPSEU members at the same time. These workers should be covered by our collective agreement.

Sale of certain functions

The LCBO is also under pressure to privatize some of the work OPSEU members do. In 2006, the LCBO paid for a consultant's report that said that wages are too high. The report told the LCBO to consider contracting out all distribution (logistics) as well as Information Technology.

Do you want to see more protections in your collective agreement so you can be sure you'll be working next week or next year? Tell your union what you think: Complete the demand-setting survey and return it to your OPSEU steward!

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Fighting for better jobs at the LCBO

True or false?

“A stable, profitable, publicly-owned company like the LCBO should take pride in providing good jobs in the communities it serves.”

For decades, the LCBO was proud to offer its employees good jobs with decent pay, decent benefits and decent pensions.

Those days are fading fast. Today, barely 40 per cent of LCBO employees have full-time permanent jobs.

The other 60 per cent are casuals who are barely scraping by. They get paid less than full-timers. They don't get benefits. And they can't usually afford to pay into the pension plan.

Many, many casuals would love to work full-time. Some full-timers (like those with aching bodies from 20 years of lifting) would like to work less – if they could do it without losing their job security, their benefits, and their pensions.

The LCBO's long-term strategy is to have full-timers disappear, one by one, so that almost all workers are casuals – just like in other retail operations.

There is another way: Good jobs for everybody.

Many, many part-time (casual) jobs at the LCBO could be made into full-time jobs tomorrow if the LCBO wanted to do it. Instead, managers use the “Permanent Vacancy Review” as a way to prevent casuals from moving to full-time jobs.

Jobs that remained part-time could be better part-time jobs, with more job security, recognition of seniority, pro-rated benefits, and so on. Instead, the LCBO is moving to get rid of the Permanent Part-Time classification.

In this round of bargaining, we can start to turn things around – if we want to. If you want to see better jobs at the LCBO, tell your union: Complete the demand-setting survey and return it to your OPSEU steward!

Do you want to see more OPSEU members have better jobs at the LCBO?

Tell your union what you think: Complete the demand-setting survey and return it to your OPSEU steward!



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Are your shifts scheduled fairly?

Are you concerned about the way your shifts are scheduled?

The scheduling of shifts has a big impact on the way you live your life. Shift scheduling can decide what you get to do – or not do – with your friends and family. It can affect your stress level, your health, and (of course) your income.

Many OPSEU members say that there is far too much employer discretion in the way shifts are scheduled. The result? There is a lot of variation from manager to manager in the way scheduling happens. Some managers are fair and impartial; others are not.

Sometimes this disrupts your personal life. Sometimes, if you are a casual, it reduces the number of hours you work that week. Here are just a few of the scheduling problems that are happening right now:

- Some managers deliberately move hours away from higher-paid workers to lower-paid workers. For example, a top casual might lose good shifts to lower-paid fixed-term help. It shouldn't work that way. But sometimes it does.
- Many managers work hard to make sure that casual

employees never get enough work to be converted to full-time jobs. The so-called "Permanent Vacancy Review" is supposed to create full-time opportunities for casuals. Too often all it creates is disappointment.

- Some managers engage in "scheduling light" of casuals. They will call you in to work for four hours, but when you get there it turns out they want you for six. If you're like most casuals, you can't afford to say no. But there goes your plan for your evening.
- The collective agreement allows managers to call people in for shifts as short as two hours. This is too short.

It is possible to create fair rules for scheduling, where seniority really does apply, where workers can plan ahead, and where people can look forward to a better job as time passes.

If you want to see fairer rules around the scheduling of shifts, tell your union what you think: Complete the demand-setting survey and return it to your OPSEU steward!

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