



THE ECHO

Information for OPSEU members in the Liquor Board Employees Division - Issue 11 - December 12, 2006

Keep it public! Wear those buttons

Employer won't discipline OPSEU members for wearing anti-privatization button at work

The Liquor Board Employees Division of OPSEU is urging all OPSEU members to wear their "Our LCBO: Let's keep it public" buttons at work to support the union's campaign against the privately-run liquor outlets known as "agency stores."

"At the union-management meeting held Nov. 28, the LCBO stated clearly that OPSEU members will not be disciplined in any way for wearing our buttons," said Jo Ann Fisher, Acting Chair of the Divisional Executive. "Unfortunately the message doesn't seem to have gotten through to some managers."

The issue came up following the union's Day of Action on agency stores, held Nov. 24. Over 100 members leafleted the public at 25 locations across the province and collected over 1,000 signed postcards from members of the public. Members also leafleted in Orangeville on Nov. 29.

When members wore the buttons in the workplace, some managers ordered OPSEU members to take them off.

"At the union-management meeting the employer told us that while members will not be disciplined for wearing the buttons, some managers may still ask staff to remove them," said Fisher. "We do not have to agree. If your manager asks you to take off your button, says thanks, but you'd rather keep it on. If your manager insists, tell him

or her to phone Human Resources.

"If the problem persists, contact your OPSEU steward or local president and file a grievance. Our collective agreement says quite clearly that members have the right to participate in union activities."

The attractive buttons in no way detract from the LCBO's image as an elegant purveyor of luxury goods, Fisher said.

The agency stores campaign continues in January. MPP lobbying and community outreach activities are in the works.

Bumpy ride for bottle return plan

A Liberal government plan to have LCBO customers pay a deposit on alcohol containers and return the empties to The Beer Store is getting a bumpy ride.

Both opposition parties have panned the plan, which the government says will be up and running by February 2007.

"I've said for years that they should have had a scheme that the LCBO operated itself in its stores," Conservative leader John Tory said recently. "A lot of people never go to

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Bottle return plan

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The Beer Store.”

MPP Peter Tabuns, a former head of Greenpeace Canada and the NDP’s environment critic, said the plan falls short because it fails to encourage re-use of bottles. He called it “a pale copy” of The Beer Store’s system.

Both opposition parties believe any deposit/return system should be run by the LCBO.

“The Liquor Control Board of Ontario [is] owned and controlled by this provincial government,” Tabuns told the Legislature on Dec. 4. “It’s straightforward enough to meet with the management of that corporation, tell them the kind of program that’s going to be implemented and have them carry it forward.”

OPSEU president Leah Casselman was the first to critique the plan when it was first floated in September.

“The only way to create a system that

encourages re-use of liquor bottles is through close co-operation between the retailer – the LCBO – and the wineries and distilleries,” Casselman said. “The LCBO has a close business relationship and logistical links with its suppliers, and as the largest buyer of alcohol in the world, it also has considerable influence with them.

“The LCBO has an obligation to be a global leader in re-use of wine and liquor bottles,” she said.

Casselman said it was “absurd” that, under the Liberal plan, LCBO customers will be able to return empties to privately-run agency stores but not to real LCBO stores.

Successor rights bill makes its way through Legislature

A bill to restore successor rights to Crown employees, including LCBO employees, took another step forward in the Legislature last Thursday, Dec. 7.

Bill 158 passed second reading in the Legislature and has been referred to the Standing Committee on General Government. The committee is expected to consider the bill in the new year, when it may recommend public hearings and/or changes to the bill.

When passed, the legislation will ensure that Crown employees keep their jobs, their union, and their collective agreement if their work is privatized through a “sale of business.”

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