

# Taxing TIMES

May 22, 2009



**Newsletter for OPSEU members of the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Revenue - Issue #7**

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## Harmonization hot topic at 2009 Convention

OPSEU activists in the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Revenue met in caucus on Friday Apr. 23 at our annual Convention and, not surprisingly, the issue on everyone's mind was the provincial government's plan to harmonize the PST and GST.

This is what we heard about harmonization:

- More communication is necessary,
- Better education is needed
- Political Campaigning that involves communities and small business
- MORE NOISE!

### **Debate in MERC caucus**

What emerged from our caucus discussions were two key points:

First, we oppose harmonization and the negative impact it will have on low- and middle income earners. Starting July 1, 2010 consumers will start paying retail taxes on a host of goods that, under the PST, they never paid before. The blended PST-GST is a regressive tax that will hit the poor the hardest.

Second, we must monitor the impact harmonization

will have on our members. We've already witnessed job losses through CTAR and we must not allow the same pattern to take place with this round of harmonization.

Your MERC team listened and on May 4 we meet with head office campaign and job security staff to discuss what options we might put into place.

### **Join the petition bandwagon!**

During Convention we distributed a petition to the delegates, alternates and observers calling on the provincial Legislature to oppose any move toward retail tax harmonization. The petition is now available for everyone to sign.

Please email one of the MERC team members for a copy for your area. We have also attached it to this newsletter. The petition meets the strict guidelines that will allow it to be tabled in the Legislature at Queen's Park.

### **Join the email tree!**

We started an email tree. We will be emailing everyone on that list any information that we can share. If

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you are interested in joining the email tree send us your email account. Remember: use a non-workplace email address.

This is not the time – in the middle of an economic recession – to put a regressive tax on the people who can least afford it. We need the support of communities and small business’ to put pressure on their MPPs and MPs and let them know that a blended retail tax is a regressive tax.

**Political opposition to harmonization**

Already the Ontario New Democratic Party is building a campaign in opposition to harmonization. Watch for details at [www.ondp.ca](http://www.ondp.ca) Even some Conservative MPPs seem to oppose the new tax, but for mixed reasons. Some oppose it outright while others simply want to delay its introduction.

Unfortunately, Liberal MPPs have been giving their “talking points” and will tow the government’s line. If we are to be successful at the political level we must make allies with MPPs who oppose the blended tax while at the same time convince Liberal backbenchers that the public opposes this tax and they should too!

**Opposition to harmonization starts with OPSEU**

If we are to successfully fight harmonization then we’ll need the active support of OPSEU members in the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Revenue.

We need you! We know that time is running out. This is something that we will need the support of the entire OPSEU family.

When you are asked to participate in a rally, or approach your MPP or MP, please do so. This is not about just saving some 3,000 ministry jobs in your communities. It is also about protecting those who are unable to protect themselves.

A resolution was passed at Convention that spoke to getting involved and organized in the communities. The resolution stated:

*“Energize Provincial and Local Coalitions or Campaigns formed in response to the economic crisis and fighting against cuts and layoffs”*

Your MERC believes that our campaign is exactly that. OPSEU’s Executive Board will be supporting our drive to do what you have identified in our caucus.

OPSEU president Smokey Thomas said it best at Convention: this is a member-driven union. That means all 130,000 OPSEU members need to get on the bus and drive it!

**LET’S BRING THE FIGHT TO THEM!**

To see what you can do to help, contact a MERC team member.

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