

# Taxing TIMES

July 2009



**Newsletter for OPSEU members of the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Revenue • Issue #8**

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## The numbers are out

On Tuesday July 14 the employer released its estimate of the number of employees it expects to be impacted by introduction of the Single Sales Tax (SST) which was announced in the March provincial budget statement. These numbers represent a first step in identifying the actual members who will likely be impacted by implementation of the SST. The numbers provide a basis from which the employer will negotiate job offers with Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) and other offices of the federal government.

There were no layoff notices issued in the announcement by the employer. Information will be sent out shortly about expected time frames with respect to next steps in the implementation process.

This autumn your union, OPSEU, will organize an information “road show” for the benefit of all members affected by the SST. A key purpose of the road show will be to ensure that all impacted members are aware of their rights and entitlement under the collective agreement.

As more details emerge about implementation of the SST over the next few months you will be asked to make a lot of decisions about your future. We want you to be as informed as possible with respect to these rights. There is language in the new collective agreement which impacts on your rights and you need to be aware of it and its impact on your decisions.

Members will have questions about job offers, pensions, surplusings, redeployment and severance. We want you to have the best information available at each step in this process so that you’re able to make the best decisions for you and your families.

A complete road show schedule will be published and distributed later this summer.

### What’s Next?

The employer needs to identify the actual members who will be impacted by the SST process and begin negotiations with the federal government to minimize job losses. Your MERC team, along with the other members of our SST subcommittee will continue to press the employer to make sure that everyone who wants a job has a comparable job after the transition takes place.

Between the Ministry of Revenue, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Government Services, there are more than 1,000 OPSEU members who will be affected by the SST announcement. These members are a priority to us and we will fight to ensure everyone lands on their feet with minimal disruption to their working and personal lives.

Our primary objective is to eliminate any possibility of job losses. Whether you see your future in the OPS, the federal public service or elsewhere, we will

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demand that our employer offers you the best possible alternative job opportunity.

We know that the uncertainty is difficult for many of you. Unfortunately, at this time, there are far more questions than we have answers. We wish this weren't the case but we will have to exercise some patience before the full impact of the SST implementation becomes more clear. We pledge to continue working on your behalf to get the answers to your questions as soon as they are available.

In the meantime, know that we are all in this together.

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## Confidential Support for Members

With the announcement of the Single Sales Tax, staff members may be worried about their future. Please remember to use the supports that the employer has provided. You can contact your EAP for confidential counseling and detailed information on services that are free for OPS employees and eligible family members. They can be reached at 1-800-268-5211 or by visiting [www.shepellfgi.com](http://www.shepellfgi.com).

Don't forget that for locals which have them, Peer Union Counselors (PUC) can be used as a valuable resource, too. PUC can provide you with direction to other supports available in your community apart from the EAP.

Don't forget that confidentiality is guaranteed all employee support services are available on a confidentiality basis. of the above supports are available to you with confidentially ensured!

What we do know is that the OPSEU/COR working group has been meeting with the employer on a regular basis and we will continue to work to ensure that our Collective Agreement will be followed throughout the transfer to the SST.

Please be sure to attend OPSEU's information Road Show when it visits your region of Ontario this autumn. Don't be misled by gossip, rumours and false information. By attending the information sessions you can be guaranteed to learn about what is really happening.

## The anti-SST petition campaign

Our anti-SST petition campaign is still moving forward with more and more members signing it every day. We will present the petition to MPPs when the Legislature resumes this autumn. Encourage your colleagues to sign the petition and circulate it wide and far to family, friends and neighbours. Once completed, please send the original copy to the attention of your MoF/MoR MERC Team.

**Remember!** Everyone is legally eligible to sign the petition. The right to post a petition in the workplace is guaranteed in your collective agreement provided it is not done so on work time, or produced on work equipment

**Please!** post the anti-SST petition on your local union board.

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# Workplace Gossip: Harmless or Destructive?

*By Moira Cowan, MERC team member. This article first appeared in the Winter 2008 edition of In Solidarity*

The power of our words is amazing. If you say something nasty enough, people will believe it and then it doesn't matter if it was true – the damage is done. This is gossip: It is a natural occurrence, present in every workplace in varying forms. Gossip can be malicious in nature and usually deals with talking about someone who isn't present. It can also be about events or occurrences. Gossip can be true, false, or both. One thing is sure: It is everywhere in our lives.

## Why do we gossip in the workplace?

Sometimes we are bored or we do not have all the information about someone or something. It could also be, in some workplaces, there are periods of downtime and gossip is a nice reprieve from the daily stresses of our jobs.

Gossip, however, is time consuming; much more than people actually think. That time is valuable and cannot be replaced. Gossip can be a basis for building friendships as it involves telling little unknown facts about yourself or others and by doing so, creates the beginnings of trust. It can be used to

develop a rapport with someone or a group of people, especially when the individual being spoken about is not present. It can be used a viable tool to build friendships. Gossip can also be destructive and harmful, especially when it is about you. People who gossip may feel it their right or duty to spread their newfound knowledge and at times add a little extra to make it even more enticing.

For some, it is about the power that they derive from having this knowledge and being able to show to others that they are “in the know.” People do not realize the adverse effects their gossiping can cause and the hurt and pain that some people go through when falsities are being spread about them. There is no turning back when one is the subject of gossip. No matter how much you try to refute what is being said about you or someone else, the rumours will always win over the truth because gossip is usually more exciting and fascinating than the truth.

What can be done to curb the gossip in the workplace? Gossiping requires two participants, a talker and a listener. If we choose not to listen then the story has nowhere to go, it can't continue to be spread and it is dead. We must all be conscious of the consequences of workplace gossip and how it may affect the person or persons being talked about. Would we really want that to happen us? Nobody does.

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## Nobody's Friend

My name is Gossip.  
I have no respect for justice.  
I maim without killing.  
I am cunning and malicious and gather strength with age.  
The more I am quoted, the more I am believed.  
My victims are helpless. They cannot protect themselves against me because I have no name and no face.  
To track me down is impossible. The harder you try, the more elusive I become.  
I am nobody's friend.

Once I tarnish a reputation, it is never the same.  
I topple governments and wreck marriages.  
I ruin careers and cause sleepless nights, heartaches and indigestion.  
I make innocent people cry in their pillows.  
Even my name hisses. I am called Gossip.  
I make headlines and headaches.  
Before you repeat a story, ask yourself: Is it true?  
Is it harmless?  
Is it necessary?  
If it isn't, don't repeat it.  
~ *Author Unknown* ~

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