



No bull bulletin

News for OPSEU members at the Niagara Parks Commission

Our bargaining has started

We want to keep you, the members, more up-to-date on the status of negotiations this round of bargaining.

There are two reasons for this. First, we can't bargain a good contract without your support.

Niagara Parks needs to see that you care about the bargaining demands as much as the team you elected does.

Secondly, hearing from us regularly will help you make an informed decision when the time comes to accept or reject the contract offer.

This is the first of our bargaining bulletins. We plan to produce them on a regular basis.

Before we go into the update, let's talk about how bargaining works.

Understanding the process

Bargaining is about give and take on both sides. One side says to the other: we'll do this, if you do that. The other side says the same thing about a different issue. There are a lot of "what if's." That's why we can't go into detail about what's being discussed.

Bargaining is also about democracy.

You, the members, set the



demands we take to the table.

You elect the bargaining team. You vote on the offer we bring to you.

Bargaining begins

We met across the table with management for the first time on March 10.

We set the ground rules as to who would talk for each side and how demands would be exchanged.

Barb Arndt, the Director of Human Resources, told us that Niagara Parks had applied for conciliation.

What is conciliation?

Conciliation involves a conciliation officer from the Ministry of Labour meeting with both sides to help them reach a

deal. Either side can request conciliation.

If either side feels that it isn't getting them anywhere, they can ask the conciliation officer for a "no-board" report.

On the 17th day after the no-board is issued, the union can legally strike or the employer can legally lock us out.

The point of this tight timeline is to put pressure on both sides to get a deal.

The intent of our side is to get a deal without a strike or lock out. We can't speak to the intent of management's team.

Conciliation set for April 5-7

We bargained on March 22 and 23. We have bargaining dates March 30 and 31.

We meet the employer in conciliation April 5-7.

We also have bargaining dates scheduled for April 20-22 and 27-29.

The major issues

Key issues for us are a wage increase, parity between full-time regular employees and seasonal employees, seniority, job security, and an improvement in health and safety.

We have a strike committee

Many of you have asked why did our local elect a strike committee?

Your team is committed to negotiating a fair contract without a strike. But it takes two parties to negotiate. And we don't know the management team's intention.

There have been ayoffs of full-time staff and the concern about park-wide cut backs continues. We felt the responsible thing to do was to follow OPSEU's bargaining manual to the letter. It called for a strike committee to be formed.

The best way to avoid a strike is to be prepared.

When the strike threat is real, then the pressure is on the employer to come up with the best offer so that a strike won't be

necessary. Of course, there are no guarantees.

The strike committee was elected at our Sept. 25 demand set meeting. The chair is Bill Burns and its members are Janet Hepworth, Ian Mather and Barb Wilson.

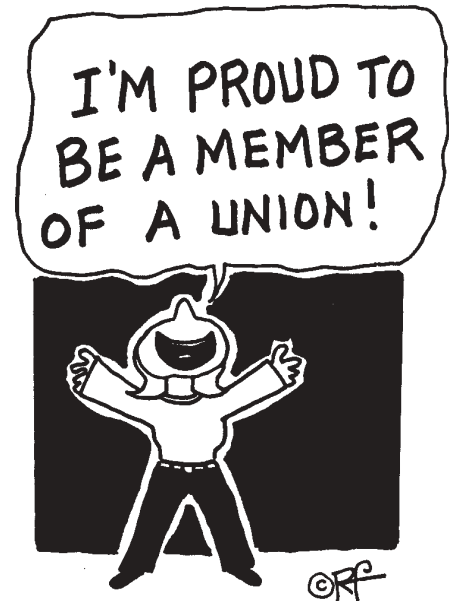
This is the core group. We need you to volunteer for the subcommittees: Strike Duties, Communications and Strike Finance.

The good news is that we are not alone. OPSEU has a lot of experience mobilizing for bargaining.

The union has assigned a staff person to help with this bulletin and has assigned an ex-officio member to the committee.

After we take our strike vote, start-up grants will be available to our local to get strike-ready.

So show your support and call Bill to sign up now. We hope to not need it, but as the scouts say, be prepared!



Meet your bargaining team

The negotiation of a collective agreement is a complex and demanding task that is not to be taken lightly.

You elected four members to represent the needs of our diverse membership.

A fifth member, the president of our local, automatically sits on the team.

Niagara Parks indicated their unwillingness to negotiate with one of our team.

We insisted this person remain, but also brought in the member who placed fifth in the election, bringing our numbers to six.

Your team:

Chair Shelley Reed
Food Service

Co-chair Rob Atkin
Horticulture

Desiree Constantinides
Horticulture

Colleen McComb-Page
Horticulture

Dino McDonnell
Horticulture

Colin MacKenzie
Engineering

We have a new staff negotiator, Mark Kotanen. Brother Kotanen's fresh style,

professionalism and experience is much needed and appreciated.

In upcoming bulletins, we'll profile the team members.

We'll keep you up-dated as bargaining continues.

In solidarity,

Your Local 217 bargaining team

Authorized for distribution:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leah Casselman".

Leah Casselman, President