



# No bull bulletin

SEFPO

News for OPSEU members at the Niagara Parks Commission

## Negotiations continue

Stewards told "we hope to get a deal, but we have to get ready"

We remain cautiously optimistic that we can reach a deal, but we have a long road ahead of us. The two sides have been negotiating money items, such as wages, since Monday.

We met with the stewards last night. Our message to them was: We hope to get a deal, but we need to be ready for a lockout or strike.

It was a great meeting. There was a strong feeling of solidarity in the room. We'll talk more about the preparations later.

First, let's clear up some disinformation.

### Only four workers are essential

If there is a lockout or strike, the union and the Niagara Parks Commission (NPC) have to follow an Essential Services Agreement negotiated in 1996.

That agreement -- called the ESA -- still stands. It has not been re-negotiated since then.

The **only** essential services workers are four police dispatchers.

No one else in the bargaining unit will be working.

Contrary to what John Kernahan told the Niagara Falls Review, the trades people are **not** essential services workers.

**ONLY** in the cases of an emergency such as a burst pipe or a freon leak will a **limited** number of them be called in on a rotating basis, as per the call-back language in the collective agreement.

The ESA requires us to provide emergency services in emergency situations. That's it.

### Dispelling rumours

We confronted management at the bargaining table with three rumours.

**Rumour:** Workers with eight years seniority in horticulture won't be called back this year.

**NPC answer:** No, that's not the case.

**Rumour:** Management received a 4.8 per cent pay hike.

**NPC answer:** They showed us the financial records. Managers have not received pay hikes or merit increases this year.

**Rumour:** NPC will lock us out May 7, they'll run Table Rock with scabs, they want to bust our union.

**NPC answer:** There is no secret plan to lock us out. They want to bargain a settlement.

The proof will be in NPC's actions. We raised these issues so that we have the Commission's answers on record.

## Picket sign painting party Thursday

In order to avoid a strike or lockout, we need to prepare for one.

**Thursday, April 22  
6 p.m.**

**OPSEU office  
2285 Hwy. 20 E.**

**Between Merritville Hwy.  
and Hwy 406**

**Fonthill**

**tel: 905-892-5729**

We'll be having all kinds of fun, making picket signs. Join us!

# Lockout or strike preparations move ahead

While we hope to reach a settlement, last night's stewards meeting was about preparing for the possibility of a lockout or strike.

Bill Burns, the chair of our Strike Committee, reported on preparations.

Bill is working with community contacts trying to locate a strike headquarters.

He and the bargaining team have identified 13 strategic picket locations if there is a lockout or strike.

He reported that a number of members have already volunteered to be picket captains.

Our stewards are the most important leaders in our local because they're our link with you.

They will work closely with Bill and his committee members, Barb Wilson and Ian Mather, in the days ahead.

## Setting up phone trees

The stewards' first priority will be to collect home phone numbers. They will set up a phone tree for their site.

When you hear from your steward, be ready to help any way you can.

If you don't have a steward, talk to one of the Strike Committee members.

Volunteer to be an information steward and collect the home numbers of your fellow OPSEU members.

We all benefit from the contract. We all need to pitch in and help.

## Administering strike pay

Our finance sub-committee will administer strike pay and strike costs.

Members who perform strike duties, four hours a day or 20 hours a week, are eligible for strike pay.

They receive \$25 a day or \$125 a week. This increases to \$40 a day or \$200 a week after three weeks.

Members receive \$4 a day or \$20 a week per dependent, such as a non-income earning spouse or a child under 18.

## Seasonal workers receiving EI benefits

We're researching your questions around EI benefits. We hope to have answers for you soon.

## MPP Kim Craitor hears our concerns

Niagara Falls MPP Kim Craitor was well-informed about the situation at NPC when Dino McDonnell and Bill Burns met with him last Friday.

Dino and Bill felt it was a positive meeting. They told him about the layoffs of full-time staff in the fall and winter, the cuts to services to the public and the late or non-existent recall of seasonal staff.

Craitor, the former president

of the Labour Council, asked a lot of questions and was well-informed.

He has received many calls from the public, our members and NPC management.

He was meeting later that day with the new chair of the NPC, Jim Williams, and the Minister of Tourism and St. Catharines MPP, Jim Bradley.

Craitor promised to raise our concerns with them.

## Keeping connected

We were successful beating off the NPC's concessions on non-monetary items.

We hope for the same success on monetary issues.

We count on your support to do that.

We're bargaining four days this week and three days next week. We'll keep you informed.

**In solidarity,  
Your Local 217 bargaining team**

Shelley Reed, *Chair*

Rob Atkin, *Co-chair*

Desiree Constantinides

Colleen McComb-Page

Dino McDonnell

Colin MacKenzie

Mark Kotanen, *staff negotiator*

Authorized for distribution:



Leah Casselman, President