



At the Table

Bargaining information for OPSEU members
at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation
Issue 2 • January 20, 2010

Seasonal employment in the north?

Your team will not be “snowed”

Your bargaining team met with the employer on January 6-8. At that time, the employer graced us with more details on their plans to try to cut full-time jobs from MPAC. Here’s what we know so far.

MPAC wants to take 40 of 70 existing Property Inspector (PI) positions in northern and rural offices and make them seasonal. The employer’s plan is for PIs to work from April 1 to October 31 each year. Why? In a revelation that came as a complete shock to your team, the employer said because in Northern Ontario in the winter...it snows.

Really?

The employer said that apparently there are access issues in the winter, inferring that property inspectors can’t do their work. Bargaining Team Chair Ivan Herrington enlightened the employer by telling them, “It has always snowed in the North...and that hasn’t stopped us from doing our jobs before.”

This completely ridiculous position has some very harsh realities. Turning full-time jobs into seven-month jobs will slash 40 per cent from members’ pay. The employer would also eliminate benefits for these seasonal PIs, giving them a percentage of pay in lieu. There would also be pension implications.

And how will the employer accomplish this? The employer says there are employees who want to work seasonally.

But that alone won’t be enough. Ultimately, if the employer plan goes through, those 40 seasonal jobs will be created by laying off full-time employees. “I have yet to hear from one member who wants to work seasonal,” Ivan said. “The employer has told us they will use attrition, then volunteers, then ultimately layoffs to achieve their goal.”

The other obvious casualty from this scheme will be service to Northern Ontario. Northern and rural municipalities will clearly receive less service if MPAC makes property inspectors seasonal...communities that already feel like they get second-class service from MPAC.

The employer’s plan to get rid of full-time jobs doesn’t stop there.

The employer also wants to turn existing full-time positions into part-time positions in the following areas: Finance, IT, Office

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Administration and Quality Services. The employer didn't identify what jobs would be affected...or where they are located.

Once again, the employer says that employees are "beating down their doors" wanting to work seasonal and part-time. Again, that is certainly news to your bargaining team. The team also notes that under Current Job Postings on the MPAC web site, the employer for the first time has advertised positions for an afternoon shift.

The team believes that the employer wants generic language in the collective agreement that will give them carte blanche to create seasonal and part-time positions. This will allow them to scrap benefits for these employees, and hire cheaper part-time staff. What it really means is that every MPAC employee is threatened.

And despite the employer's apparent wish to reduce staff, we note that the so-called "hiring freeze" (that we predicted was an employer bargaining ploy) appears to be over; MPAC now has 18 positions advertised for hiring. Those include two full-time PI positions in North Bay and Thunder Bay...the same place where they are trying to cut full-time positions.

The employer is also adamant about reducing our benefits, including increasing the length of time between dental visits from six months to nine months and requiring employees to get a doctor's referral for all paramedical services (chiropractor, massage, etc.) The employer is also completely uninterested in reducing the deductible on our drug card, which is one of our priority demands.

Still mum on organizational review

The employer has still not tabled anything on the organizational review. The team has been told that at the January 29 MPAC Board meeting, the employer will present the Board three different organizational models...and ask the Board to select one.

"We have no idea how this employer expects us to bargain when they refuse to reveal their long-range plans," Ivan said. "The employer has told us they want to wrap up bargaining quickly...likely meaning they want a new contract before we find out their plans. That is totally unacceptable."

N-O to CWW

The employer is not interested in a Compressed Work Week (CWW) agreement, one of the key priorities members identified for this round of bargaining.

At the table, the employer stated, "We're a five-day a week operation." The same employer who ALSO stated they want to eliminate full-time jobs and replace them with seasonal and part-time.

Yes – we're confused too. However, this is also the same employer who can't manage their own flex-time policy or their policy that would allow employees the option of working from home two days a week.

A little note to MPAC: If you want to be one of Canada's Top 100 Employers by 2011, try to remember that Top 100 employers usually offer CWW to their employees, among other benefits.

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Stay solid behind your team!

In the weeks ahead, contacts in your office will be handing out “**Not Exactly Top 100**” stickers and buttons. We need **everyone** to show their support. Be visible, be vocal, and send a message that you are serious about your demands!

Your team is back at the table January 29, then again on February 2-3. Stay tuned!

Keep in touch!

To ensure a speedy response to your questions, your leadership team has divided up all MPAC offices in the province. If you have a question or a comment, please contact the bargaining team member responsible for your office. Contact us by e-mail at work or at home, as follows:

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