



At the Table

Bargaining information for OPSEU members
at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation

Issue 3 • February 20, 2006

Bargaining heads for the crunch

Employer files for conciliation

We are moving closer to the crunch in contract talks between MPAC and your elected OPSEU bargaining team. The employer ended negotiations last week by filing for conciliation.

Conciliation means negotiations take place with the help of a mediator. That's not all it means, though. If conciliation fails to produce a settlement, the clock starts counting down to a date when a strike or lockout becomes legal. (A strike cannot occur without a strike vote.)

The two sides plan to meet March 6 and 7 to see if an agreement is possible. Your bargaining team will report back to you on March 8.

In the meantime, we need your support. Workplace actions will start on Feb. 27, one week from now. Talk to the OPSEU contact for your office for more information.

What's at stake

During demand-setting, OPSEU members at MPAC gave serious thought to what needs to be in our next collective agreement. Your bargaining team has made some progress in some areas, but not enough. Here is where we are on the issues that matter to you:

Job security.

"Bargaining in good faith" means the employer is supposed to tell the union of

any plans it has to restructure the workplace.

Unfortunately, MPAC is choosing to be cagey. The employer has suggested that some property inspectors may be converted to seasonal status and that some staff at the Milner site may be converted to part-time status. Beyond that we have few details.

Restructuring is also on the way for our IT staff. We have asked the employer, point blank, if there will be layoffs connected to the rollout of the Integrated Property System computer project. The employer won't say. The employer team says they don't "expect" fewer staff in IT, but that there could be a "redistribution" of staff according to skill sets. There will be **some** impact on **some** jobs. We asked if the employer if this meant people would have to re-apply for their own jobs in a Futures-style restructuring. "We don't know" was the only answer.

Your OPSEU bargaining team says any conversion is a layoff, and should be treated as such. We say layoffs of any kind, where they occur, should occur in reverse order of seniority. The employer says "no way." We say people who lose their jobs should get retraining if necessary so they keep working. The employer won't entertain the idea. We believe that, with the severely downsized state of MPAC since the Futures fiasco, no one in our bargaining unit should be out of work because of changes in the workplace. The employer isn't interested.

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Job evaluation.

Every person who works at MPAC has experienced it: The

employer is continually changing job specifications. Every job has more duties, and more responsibility, than it used to. In many cases, these “other duties as assigned” are not just small tasks that need to be done occasionally. Instead, they are core duties that fundamentally change our jobs.

Your OPSEU bargaining team wants to put in place a job evaluation process that will re-examine every job classification and do an honest assessment of the work involved. A job evaluation process will not guarantee a pay raise for anyone; it will help us achieve fairness. And fairness is **not** too much to ask.

(NOTE: In our last issue of *Impact At the Table*, we mentioned the case of the AD series, which the employer reviewed and upgraded. We were certainly not poking fun at anyone in the AD series. We just think it would be a very good idea if every member in our bargaining unit received the same consideration through a joint union-employer process. That’s what “ADd me to the list” means.)

Benefits.

Since the last round of bargaining, the cost of many benefits, like eyeglasses, has gone up. Other benefits that used to be covered by OHIP (chiropractic treatments, physiotherapy, eye exams) have been de-listed. And the McGuinty government has introduced the Ontario Health Premium, which costs each one of us hundreds of dollars per year.

The employer has thrown a roadblock in front of our plan to achieve benefit improvements at less cost.

Set up in 1996, the OPSEU Joint Trusteed Benefit Fund provides benefits to workers at over 80 employers inside and outside Ontario. The Fund is just like any other benefits company, except for a couple of key differences:

- The Fund is jointly controlled by six union and six employer trustees; and

- The Fund is not for profit – all premiums paid go directly to providing benefits.

By being non-profit, the Fund can shave as much as 10 to 12 per cent off the cost of benefits. That’s money that can go to better benefits OR other contract improvements for workers.

MPAC has refused to give the OPSEU Joint Trusteed Benefit Fund the information it needs in order to do a costing of our benefit plan. MPAC is saying NO to saving money on benefits and saying NO to benefit improvements.

Simply put, they’re jerking us around on benefits.

Wages.

We don’t want to tell the employer in this newsletter what we’d consider a good wage increase.

Let’s just say that so far MPAC is comparing us to some other bargaining units that we shouldn’t be compared to.

Expenses, overtime, parental leave, vacations, etc.

Rates for meals, mileage, and boots should reflect what meals, mileage and boots actually cost. At MPAC, they don’t.

Our members who travel often end up working free overtime. They shouldn’t have to.

Our members with new children should be able to afford to go on parental leave as allowed by legislation. They can’t.

These are important issues for our members. We expect our employer to acknowledge just how important they are.

Solidarity.

One important issue is not on the bargaining table, but it has a big influence on what happens there. By showing solidarity in the workplace, you can help us achieve a contract that is fair for all of us. Please speak to your OPSEU contact.

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 member responsible for your office. Contact us by e-mail at work or at home, as follows:

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