

News for OPSEU members at MPAC from your leadership team

# Impact

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## Competition grievance info deadline is July 7

OPSEU members with competition grievances as a result of the Futures restructuring project must have all their supporting information in to the union by early next month.

Completed fact sheets and prep files should go to OPSEU Grievance Officer Anne Lee. Send them by e-mail ([a.lee@sympatico.ca](mailto:a.lee@sympatico.ca)) or mail them to Anne at the OPSEU Oshawa Regional Office, 1333 Thornton Road South, Unit 1, Oshawa, Ontario L1J 8M8. If you have already sent Anne your information, do NOT do it again.

**IMPORTANT: Your grievance information must be e-mailed or post-marked no later than July 7, 2003. Grievances that are NOT backed up by full information by the deadline will NOT go ahead to mediation or arbitration.**

All grievors will receive a letter in the next two weeks detailing exactly what information the union needs.

Hearings into as many as 800 competition grievances will start in February.

"Many members will be disappointed to learn that their grievance will not be heard right away," said OPSEU union-management committee chair Jennifer Reid. "Obviously we would like these hearings to start tomorrow. However, the team believes that this is the quickest route to resolving all these grievances. The arbitrator we have agreed to is fast, effective, and fair. Another arbitrator might start sooner, but we believe the one we have will rule quickly."

Scheduling of the hearings was delayed

because individual grievances could not be dealt with until policy grievances about the process were heard. Those policy grievances were settled when employees ratified the new OPSEU collective agreement on Feb. 7. The union and the employer met right away after the March 2003 layoffs to set up the process. Settling layoff grievances remains the union's top priority.

See page 2 for a competition grievance timeline. MPAC delegates to this weekend's BPS conference can get a full update on grievance issues at a grievance update meeting on Friday, June 6 at 1:30 p.m.

## BPS Conference set for June 6-8

Over 350 OPSEU members will converge on Toronto this Friday and Saturday for the annual Broader Public Sector conference. So far 33 members from MPAC are registered.

The BPS conference is a great opportunity to share stories and strategies with members from across the province. It's also a chance for MPAC members to caucus. The MPAC caucus will meet on Friday, June 6 at 1:30 p.m. for a grievance update and again on Sunday, June 8 for a general meeting. Registration for the Sunday meeting is from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. Delegates will elect two new members to the OPSEU Sector Executive Committee for MPAC (Bill Robertson and John Durley are stepping down) and discuss other business.

# MPAC balks at giving out municipal survey results

MPAC still doesn't want anyone to know what municipalities think of the service it's giving them.

MPAC says it won't release the results of a "Municipal Customer Satisfaction Survey" conducted in March 2002. OPSEU asked for the results in a Freedom of Information (FOI) request on July 18, 2002. The union is appealing the refusal.

MPAC has so far released a number of almost-entirely-blacked-out pages, the cost of the survey (\$29,960), and the blank survey itself. But not the results.

"It's pretty clear that if the survey results made MPAC look good, they would be telling the world," said Jennifer Reid, OPSEU chair of the union-management committee at MPAC. "MPAC just doesn't want to confirm what the union has been saying all along – that severe staffing cuts and a botched restructuring have actually had a negative effect on the quality of service we're able to provide."

The survey asks municipal officials to "rate the staff you deal with" based on several criteria, including:

- "Time required to provide you with an answer to your question";
- "Knowledge of your municipality";
- "Effectiveness in resolving your problem";
- "Having the authority to satisfy most of your needs without assistance";
- "Knowledge of tax related issues"; and
- other factors.

The survey also asks municipalities to rate "the way that MPAC conducts its business with you." It asks questions on:

- "Availability of staff";
- "Flexibility to meet the needs of your municipality";
- "Keeping you informed of changes";
- "Timeliness of supplementary/omit assessment";
- "Serving the needs of the taxpayer"; and
- other issues.

## Competition grievance timeline (from page 1)

<b>August 2001</b>	"Futures" hits MPAC staff
<b>September 2001</b>	MPAC posts new jobs
<b>Fall-Winter 2001-02</b>	Grievances filed
<b>Spring 2002</b>	Union and employer agree to arbitrator; union files 25 policy grievances on competition process
<b>Summer 2002</b>	Lead policy grievance goes to hearing at arbitration
<b>September 2002</b>	Dates set to hear first individual grievance; individual grievances can't proceed until policy grievance is settled
<b>February 2003</b>	Policy grievances resolved when union members ratify new contract
<b>March 2003</b>	Futures layoffs hit
<b>April 2003</b>	OPSEU and MPAC exchange complete lists of grievances
<b>May 2003</b>	Union and employer agree to settlement process

# Ecker, Finance Officers spank MPAC honchos

Summer can't come soon enough for the big brains running MPAC.

It's been a tough six months or so. Last December, the MPAC Board of Directors was spanked in public after Ontario Finance Minister Janet Ecker found out politicians and key celebrities had been getting special treatment on their property assessments. Then in January, the total number of municipalities opposed to the Futures restructuring project hit 142. Ouch!

In March, the Municipal Finance Officers' Association of Ontario (MFOA) ranked the quality of the 2002 assessment roll as "only fair to average." They said MPAC's 2002 performance was worse than in the past.

"In this regard there would appear to be a fundamental 'disconnect' between what our members are experiencing, and MPAC's self-appraisal of its own performance against International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) standards, as highlighted in MPAC annual reports," said Janice Baker and John Bech-Hansen, respectively the Chair and the Executive Director of the MFOA, in a letter to MPAC.

Finance Officers are very upset with long delays in processing supplemental assessments. "Such is the extent of the problem with supplemental assessments that some municipalities estimate that actual assessment growth in their communities may be double what the (Market Change Profile) indicated," Baker and Bech-Hansen wrote.

Problems with property severances are even worse. MFOA members rated MPAC's performance in this area as "poor to fair."

## Janet Ecker to MPAC: Move over, I'm driving

MPAC Board Chair Peter Hume's face must have been red when he got a letter from Finance Minister Janet Ecker in early May.

Ecker's letter told Hume that she was using her power under the *Municipal Property Assessment Corporation Act, 1997* "to establish

policies, procedures and standards for the provision of assessment services." In other words, "Move over, I'm driving."

Ecker said she'd heard "a number of concerns" about assessment during her

pre-budget consultations. In response, she plans to put a six-point plan in place in time for the 2004 assessment cycle. Ecker plans to (quote):

1. Develop procedures to ensure that the valuation principles established in Assessment Review Board decisions are reflected in subsequent assessment years;
2. Establish standards for issuing supplementary and omitted assessments in a timely manner.
3. Establish procedures to require MPAC to advise the Minister of Finance of new assessment methodologies or new types of assessable properties by June 30 of each year, prior to the implementation of the new policies;

*(please turn to page 4)*



4. Direct MPAC to review the effectiveness of the current Quality Service Commissioner and consider options for strengthening the role of the Commissioner;
5. Require MPAC to convene an annual debriefing on the reassessment process, with the participation of municipalities and the Ministry of Finance, in April of each year to identify improvements that can be implemented by MPAC for the next reassessment and to identify policy changes that can be evaluated by the Ministry of Finance;
6. Introduce an amendment to the *Assessment Act* to authorize the Minister of Finance to prescribe additional information that must be included on the assessment roll. We will be seeking input from municipalities, taxpayers and MPAC about the types of additional information that would be beneficial on the assessment roll to improve the clarity and administrative effectiveness of this document (end of quote).

“The Minister has torn the steering wheel out of the MPAC Board’s hands,” said OPSEU’s Jennifer Reid. “The Board is basically a passenger now. All the real decisions are being made by Queen’s Park.”

Reid welcomed the move to set standards and spell out clearly what MPAC is supposed to do.

“If the Minister is serious about setting standards and having them met, MPAC will be forced to realize that an understaffed organization can never deliver the quality product municipalities and taxpayers deserve.”

## Keep in touch!

To keep in touch with your OPSEU union-management committee, contact the member responsible for communication with your office. Contact us by e-mail at work or at home, as follows:

- **Jennifer Reid (team chair, London):** London, Brantford, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury, Little Current, Ottawa, Cornwall. E-mail: reidje@mpac.ca; queenvic100@hotmail.com
- **Tina Faibish (vice-chair, Toronto):** Toronto, Mississauga, Aurora, Pickering, Scarborough (Milner). E-mail: faibisti@mpac.ca; opseu534@sympatico.ca
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