



THE ECHO

Information for OPSEU members in the Liquor Board Employees Division - Issue 10 - November 22, 2006

LCBO must pay its share for casual benefits, committee says

Liquor Board profits could buy full benefits for 200,000 families

A committee of the Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED) says casual employees can only afford group health benefits if the LCBO agrees to pay its share.

"We looked at all the facts from every angle, and the plain truth is that casuals at the LCBO don't make enough money to pay for their own benefits," said Vanda Klumper, a member of the LBED sub-committee set up to study benefits for casuals. "The only way to make casual benefits happen is for the LCBO to chip in a tiny fraction of its incredible profits."

In 2005, John Coones, president of the former Ontario Liquor Boards Employees Union, promised to create a benefit plan for casual employees. The idea was that casuals would use their pay in lieu of benefits under article 31.2 of the collective agreement to buy their own group benefit plan.

Pay in lieu of benefits for casuals is three or four per cent of their salary, depending on when they were hired. This amounts to \$570 a year for the average casual.

"The big problem is, benefits are not cheap," said Klumper. "Benefits for full-timers at the LCBO cost over \$4,700 a year per employee.

"People who work part-time hours just don't have that kind of money."

Earlier this year, the committee sent a survey to all 3,340 casuals working at the LCBO, and 50 per cent responded. Drug and dental coverage are the members' top two benefit priorities, the survey showed.

Unfortunately, even the cheapest drug and dental plan would cost \$1,680 a year, the committee learned.

"For \$1,680 a year we could have a starter plan that would be something to build on for the future," said Klumper. "Unfortunately, that is triple the amount that the average casual gets in pay in lieu of benefits.

"The only solution is for the LCBO to start paying its share of the cost of benefits for casuals the way it does for full-timers."

The LCBO's annual profits could buy full benefits for 200,000 casuals and their families, Klumper noted.

Next steps

The Casual Benefits Committee made its report to the LBED Executive last week. The

Please turn to "Casual benefits," page 3

PLEASE POST and circulate

Ontario Public Service Employees Union
100 Lesmill Road, Toronto, Ontario M3B 3P8
1-800-268-7376 or (416) 443-8888 www.opseu.org

Day of Action set for Nov. 24 to launch agency stores campaign

OPSEU members at the LCBO will be handing out leaflets at 25 LCBO stores across Ontario on Nov. 24 to launch the union's campaign against the spread of private outlets known as "agency stores."

"The public has said NO to privatizing the LCBO again and again, but the McGuinty government keeps opening more agency stores," says Jo Ann Fisher, acting chair of the Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED). "Our campaign is about alerting the public to this back-door privatization and the threat it poses to our kids and our communities."

Privatization by stealth

Almost 200 agency stores sell liquor in gas stations and corner stores across Ontario. Counting the 20 new agency stores announced in May, the number has more than doubled since 2002.

"Every major public health organization in the province says putting the profit motive into selling booze increases the risk of sales to minors, intoxicated customers and people who will drink and drive," Fisher said.

In addition, agency stores undercut the sales and hours of existing LCBO stores, Fisher said. That means fewer hours and fewer jobs for OPSEU members. And by increasing the risk of large-scale LCBO privatization in the future, agency stores put every LBED member's job in jeopardy.

Strict limits

OPSEU is calling on the McGuinty government and the LCBO to:

- **declare a freeze** on new agency stores, pending a full public review of the program;
- **replace current agency stores** with real LCBO stores or kiosks, where sales are high enough;
- **prevent new agency stores** from opening where an LCBO store would be viable, or within 15 km of an existing LCBO outlet;
- **set clear limits on agency store** locations, hours and operations; and
- **require public consultation** and a municipal council vote before any new agency store is approved.

"There are dozens of agency stores with sales that could support a public LCBO store and generate more revenue for the province," Fisher said. "Why shouldn't these communities have the responsible service and better selection that comes with a real LCBO outlet?"

How you can help!

- Pick up a copy of OPSEU's pamphlet, "Kids and Booze – Who's minding the store?"
- Sign a postcard to Dalton McGuinty and return it to your OPSEU steward or regional office.
- Wear an "Our LCBO – Keep it Public!" button.
- For the leafleting location nearest you, please contact your OPSEU steward or local president or call OPSEU Direct at 1-800-268-7376.
- For more information, visit www.opseu.org.

Campaign update

Liberals table successor rights bill

Finally, the message is getting through: Crown employees like OPSEU members at the LCBO deserve the same rights as other unionized workers in Ontario.

This month, the McGuinty government introduced legislation to restore “successor rights” to Crown employees. When passed, the legislation will ensure that OPSEU members keep their jobs, their union, and their collective agreement if their work is privatized through a “sale of business.”

The long-awaited breakthrough followed six months of workplace campaigns and

lobbying by OPSEU members. OPSEU members signed more than 7,000 “same rights” postcards, which OPSEU president Leah Casselman delivered to the government in late October. Some 1,200 of the postcards were signed by OPSEU members at the LCBO.

“OPSEU members at the LCBO will never be totally free of the threat of privatization, but successor rights provide an important protection for our members’ jobs,” said Casselman.

Casual benefits

From page 1

committee asked the Executive to take the issue of casual benefits forward to the pre-bargaining conference prior to the next round of contract negotiations.

The Executive agreed.

“The members of the subcommittee feel very strongly about benefits for casuals, and we don’t intend to just let it drop,” said Klumper. “We are asking all OPSEU members at the LCBO to make casual benefits a top priority when we head back to the bargaining table in 2008.”

The subcommittee’s report will be mailed to the homes of all casual employees in the days ahead. It is available on line now at www.opseu.org/lbed/benefits/cbreport.pdf. The report includes contact information for all sub-committee members.

Get on the list!

You can receive **The Echo** directly by fax or e-mail. Just let us know how to reach you. Give us your secure e-mail address or fax number by calling OPSEUdirect at 1-800-268-7376 or (416) 443-8888.

The Echo is authorized for distribution by:



Jo Ann Fisher,
Acting Chair,
Liquor Board
Employees Division



Leah Casselman,
President