

Local 499 slams privatization as warehouse work shipped to non-union facility

OPSEU Local 499 is mounting a stiff challenge to the LCBO's privatization of certain warehouse work in eastern Ontario.

On Nov. 13, the local welcomed OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas to a demonstration against the company's use of a non-union warehouse in Brockville to accept shipments and make and ship pallets.

"Our message is, 'Keep the LCBO public,'" said Lori Davis, acting president of Local 499. "The day started off rainy, but the rain stopped, and we had lots of cars honking their support. One of the truck drivers pulled over and blocked traffic and became part of the demonstration."

The demo took place at the warehouse near Bank Street and Walkley Road, in a busy part of south Ottawa. It was the third demonstration in four weeks. About 60 people attended.

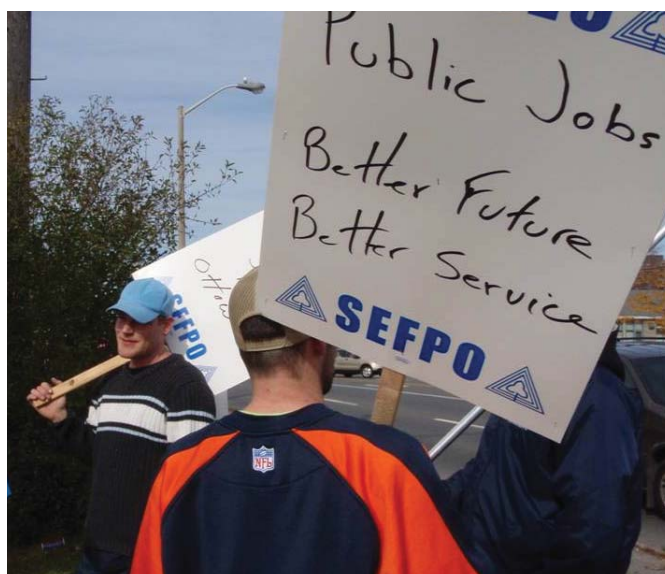
"The LCBO says the Ottawa facility is too small, and it is," said Davis. "It's pretty much downtown, it's difficult for trucks to get in and out, and we've run out of room. But there's no reason that work cannot be done by OPSEU members working under our collective agreement."

Davis estimates the work in Brockville is being done by six to 10 temporary agency workers working at not much more than minimum wage.

"The people doing that work should be LCBO employees getting a warehouse worker's pay," said Davis. "This is just another kind of backdoor privatization, like the agency stores."

All three OPSEU Executive Board Members from Region 4 attended the demo, as Smokey Thomas

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was joined by Regional Vice-President Dave Lundy and EBM Lynn Orzel. Vanda Klumper, chair of the Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED), was also there.

Final demand-setting meeting on Saturday

Privatization – in all its forms – will certainly be discussed at the LBED final demand-setting meeting this Saturday, Klumper said.

“I think it’s safe to say that there is no way we are not going to have a debate on privatization as we set our bargaining priorities,” she said. “I’m really looking forward to that debate. Privatization, and the threat of privatization, doesn’t just affect the warehouses, or rural stores, or any one group – it affects us all.”

Fifty-seven delegates from across the province are registered for the final demand-setting meeting. Watch for a report on the meeting in next week’s Echo.

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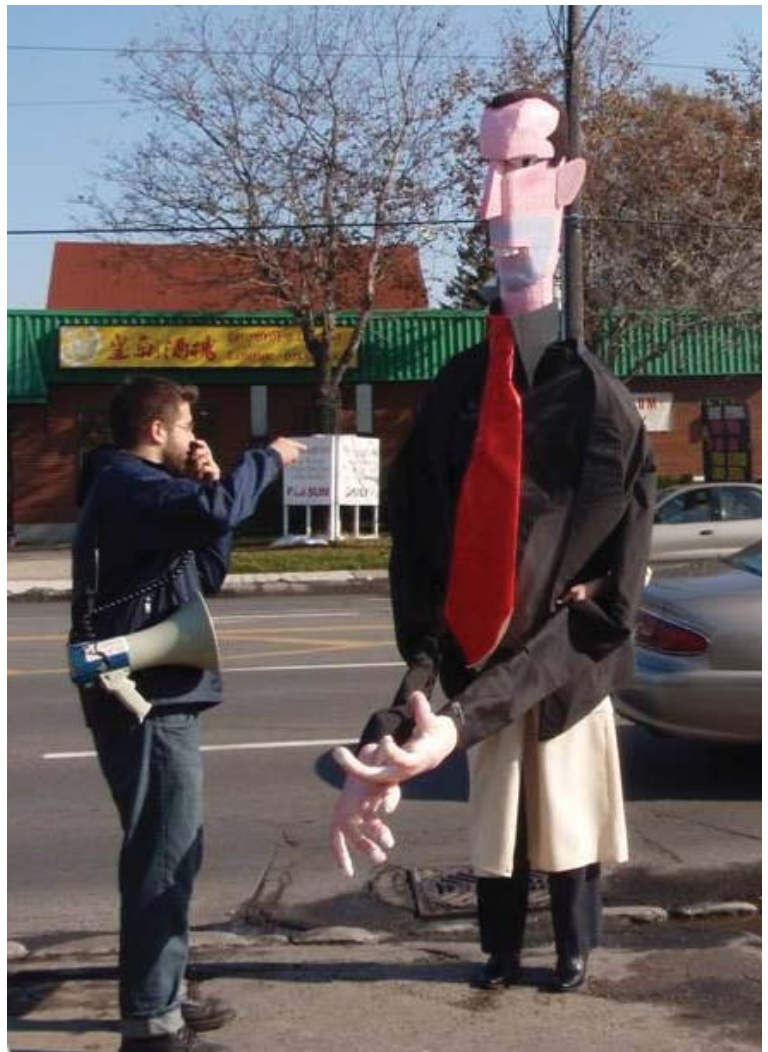
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