



OPSEU ActionFax is an electronic publication of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union

## Restore tax levels to rebuild public services: Casselman

Ontario's Liberal government should restore taxes to "civilized levels" if that's what it takes to rebuild the province's shattered public services, OPSEU president Leah Casselman told a government committee hearing in London yesterday.

"Ontario has a revenue problem, not an expense problem," Leah Casselman told the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. "If we have to restore tax levels to rebuild our public services, then we should do it.

"It is idiotic to deepen the public service crisis when the problem lies on the revenue side."

Government revenues for 2003-04 are forecast to be \$13.3 billion lower than they would have been if the Harris-Eves tax cuts had not been implemented, Casselman noted. The government has many options for raising revenues in addition to restoring tax levels, she said, such as:

- collecting unpaid corporate taxes and closing corporate tax loopholes;
- hiring more tax auditors;
- reducing the use of high-priced consultants in the Ontario Public Service;
- reducing staff caseloads at the Family Responsibility Office to help get more families off welfare;
- improving accountability at provincially-funded transfer payment agencies;
- abolishing the Ontario Innovation Trust, a \$500-million slush fund created by former Finance Minister Jim Flaherty; and
- ending exemptions to the Employer Health Tax.

"By adopting these measures, the Liberals could certainly hold any tax increase to a few per cent," Casselman said. "Most Ontarians wouldn't even notice the change.

"Chopping public services is simply not an option," she said. "One thing we know about the Tories is this: if they didn't cut it, it couldn't be cut."

To read the full text of Casselman's remarks today, visit the OPSEU web site at <http://www.opseu.org/news/AxFax98/remarks.PDF>.

Casselman urged OPSEU members to get the union's message out by any means possible.

"Talk to your friends and family, write letters to the editor, call in to radio phone-in shows," she advised. "If you are in the Ontario Public Service, get your ideas in to the government's 'Ideas' campaign. If the Liberals' 'citizens' juries' come to your town, figure out how to participate."

### **Board members to coordinate lobby**

The OPSEU Executive Board has authorized a campaign to lobby all 79 Liberal and NDP MPPs in February, while the government is making plans for next year's budget.

"Public services depend on government revenues," Casselman said. "If the government doesn't take action to rebuild revenues, they won't be rebuilding public services any time soon, and for OPSEU members, the situation at the bargaining table won't improve. We have had too many years where employers thought that zero, zero and zero was a reasonable wage offer. That has to end, and we have to lobby to end it."

Contact your regional Board members to get plugged in to the lobby campaign.

