

June 14, 2005

OPSEU



SEFPO

TableTalk

Bargaining information for OPSEU members
in the Ontario Public Service

Lots of gains, and lots of thanks

We couldn't have done it without you!

That was the headline from your bargaining teams in the last issue of *The Source*, and truer words were never spoken.

This contract was all about member support. It was about applying pressure, showing solidarity and sticking together as months dragged on and times looked grim. Mostly, it was about taking our message directly to those who made the decisions...namely, the Liberal MPPs.

From the time we started bargaining, we knew our #1 job was putting pressure on the government -- and keeping it there. And that job was performed to perfection.

MPPs across the province never got used to the "attention" members were paying to them. At times, it was obvious those MPPs were desperate for an agreement. That's what pressure is all about.

This collective agreement is one you can be proud of. There are significant gains in the agreement that will benefit members for years to come. While there are some concessions, we always must remember that we achieved a lot **without** going on strike.

Many members, some of whom were still hurt by previous rounds with the Tories, asked the bargaining teams to do things differently this round. The teams did. Things were different in many ways. From the length of time spent in negotiations, to the timing of votes, your teams wanted you to be sure they were doing everything possible to get to a deal. Mostly, your teams wanted your trust. We believe they earned it.

I want to personally thank the bargaining teams, the member mobilizers, activists, local executives, Executive Board members and staff for the incredible work they have done. I especially want to thank you, the members, for your support and encouragement since last fall. This is your contract. You deserve it.

In Solidarity,

Leah Casselman, President.

**NO
MORE
CUTS**

Rebuild
our public services!

Summary of changes in the 2005-2008 OPS Collective Agreement

This is a partial and general summary only. Refer to the full text of the agreements for exact details which may apply to your particular situation. The full agreement can be found on the OPSEU website at

<http://www.opseu.org/ops/barg2004/index.htm>.

All agreements are subject to ratification by the Employer and the Union.

Central Collective Agreement: Major issues

Contract retroactive to Jan. 1, 2005; expires Dec. 31, 2008.

Major gains in job security

Job security was the number one bargaining issue this round, and this agreement reflects that. Qualified surplus members can now redeploy into different ministries. Employees can now redeploy “up”, to a maximum of five per cent of their pay band. There is now mandatory retraining for members who are not able to redeploy or bump.

A “reasonable efforts” committee is now established for members in the developmental services facilities that are slated for closure. This committee will ensure the affected members get every opportunity available in the new collective agreement, and assist those who leave the OPS.

And, thanks to your efforts, the employer’s proposal to freeze termination payments in Article 53 is **history**.

The (drug) card IS on the table

For years, OPS members have tried to make significant gains in benefits. This round, your team has finally achieved the one benefit that has been so elusive – a drug card. Beginning Nov. 1, 2006, members will have a \$3 per prescription drug card.

That’s not all. Vision care benefits are increased to \$340 every two years and can be used for laser treatment and one routine eye-exam every second year. VDT eye exams are also available every two years, capped at \$50 (slightly above OHIP rates) and this

includes the initial test for new operators. There is also assistance for the purchase of insulin pumps and supplies.

Unclassifieds start getting overdue improvements

Appendix 25, conversion language specifically for the court reporters, court registrars, court monitors, court clerks and court service officers working within the provincial court system has become a reality. Approximately 1,400 unclassified employees will be converted to Flexible Part-time Classified employees.

The new language will entitle these employees to benefits, vacation entitlements and a more standardized work schedule. This program, upon ratification, will be implemented throughout the provincial courthouses by October 2006. Court workers get schedules of work hours that reflect the current reality of their jobs, and if those need to be adjusted, the union has a right to be involved.

Unclassified employees will now have access to a modified bereavement leave provisions and special and compassionate leave entitlements.

One gain that will have significant impact is a newly created Letter of Understanding that will reduce a percentage of unclassified employees within the public service each year for the life of the collective agreement by conversion to the classified service. This language was created to help prevent unclassifieds from being “shuffled” to avoid the 18-month rule for conversion to full time. By preventing this “job shuffle,” more unclassifieds will be able to convert to full time.

Other unclassified improvements include student wage increases that incorporate the increases to the minimum wage over the life of the collective agreement.

Classification backlog will be finally addressed

The employer has agreed to address long-standing classification problems. Mediator Gerry Lee has been appointed to help address the backlog of 4,000 complaints. Work on this project will begin 60 days after ratification.

Pay equity plan in place

The union made significant gains in pay equity. There will now be a job evaluation system that is compliant with pay equity laws. Work will now be valued against a common standard that is gender-neutral. Also, seven classifications will receive pay equity adjustments ranging from \$.10 to \$1.40 an hour. These are: Cartographer Technician; Dental Assistant; Hairdresser; Lab Attendant 1 and 2; Operator 1, 2, 3, 4 Microfilm; Pharmacy Technician 1, 2; and Psychometrist 1.

Workload issues recognized

A letter of understanding is now in the collective agreement that says workload issues can be referred to the appropriate MERCs for resolution. This is an acknowledgement by the employer that workload issues are a growing concern in the OPS and must be resolved through mutual cooperation.

MERC Teams enshrined in agreement

Terms of reference for Ministry Enforcement and Renewal Committee are now enshrined in the collective agreement for the first time. This will ensure that all MERCs will be operated more consistently across the OPS, and will enhance contract enforcement and labour relations.

Increase to LTIP Benefits

LTIP recipients will receive an increase to their benefits equal to the general wage increase negotiated.

Bargaining Unit Integrity - More protection

When a new level of work is created, the employer must provide the union with a copy of the job specification.

As well, the employer is longer allowed to re-classify work out of the OPSEU bargaining unit.

Category Issues – Unified Bargaining Unit

General wage increases:

- **Jan. 1, 2005 (retroactive) 2 per cent;**
- **Jan. 1 2006: 2.25 per cent**
- **Jan. 1 2007: 2.5 per cent;**
- **Jan. 1, 2008: 3 per cent.**

Special cases receive adjustments

Over a dozen job classifications will receive special wage adjustments to assist in hiring and retention of employees. These classes are: Air Engineer, Pharmacist Staff, Ambulance Communication Officer, Social Worker, Forester and Biologist, Psychologist, Psychometrist, Occupational Therapist, Scientist, Research Scientist, Pesticide and Terrestrial Effects Officer, Nursing Home Environmental Effects Officer, Operators at the Ontario Clean Water Agency and Workers Compensation Advisors. See the full agreement for details on exact classifications affected.

Schedule 6 to get overtime

Schedule 6 employees will now be paid for all hours worked, and they will get overtime after 44 hours.

Category Issues – Corrections Bargaining Unit

General wage increases:

- **Jan. 1, 2005 (retroactive) 2 per cent;**
- **Jan. 1 2006: 2.25 per cent**
- **Jan. 1 2007: 2.5 per cent;**
- **Jan. 1, 2008: 3 per cent.**

There is also an additional step on the grid equal to 3 per cent above the max for the following classifications: Youth Worker, Attendant 2-3 (Oak Ridge) and Correctional Officer 2

Massive new legal protections

The new Corrections deal contains legal indemnification for correctional employees who are found not guilty of criminal charges or who face civil actions. This is a huge step for people who work in the corrections system and who have been victimized by false charges and lawsuits from inmates. The new article stipulates that corrections members will receive coverage for federal criminal charges, provincial offences, civil actions, public inquiries and coroner's inquests.

Weekend premium increased

Weekend premium was \$8 per shift; it is now \$3 per hour for all hours worked.

Probation allowance increase

For Probation and Probation and Parole Officers, the Probation Officers' allowance increases to seven days from five.

Corrections unclassified seniority rights extended

Improvements to the current unclassified seniority rights are now extended to all facilities, such as Oak Ridge Division, as well as Probation and Probation and Parole Offices.

Some employer takeaways remain

The employer proposal to use "pool hiring" to fill multiple vacancies is now off the table. However, despite the best efforts of the teams, there are some losses in the new agreement. Members told the teams that a strike would be a last resort. The employer made it very clear that members would have to strike to get rid of the following:

Factor 80 – For surplus employees only

Members facing lay-off can now access Factor 80 for the length of the contract. This is a slight improvement over the employer's previous position, which would have seen surplus Factor 80 only until March 31, 2006. The cost of this provision is fully paid for by the employer.

Separation pay eliminated

Separation pay for surplus employees (two weeks' pay for each year of service to a maximum of 12 weeks) has been eliminated. This money will be used for the mandatory retraining of surplus employees. Enhanced severance under Appendix 9 is not affected.

Qualified – not "minimally"

Surplussed employees must now be "qualified" to redeploy to another job, instead of "minimally qualified."

Unsuccessful on successor rights

The employer was not willing to address the issue of successor rights in negotiations. OPSEU will pursue this politically with the Liberal government during their term of office.

Pay for performance language still alive

The bargaining teams were unable to rid the collective agreement of the reference to exploring "pay for performance" that was negotiated by the previous Tory government.