

June 1, 2004



# TableTalk

Bargaining information for OPSEU members  
in the Ontario Public Service

## It's a bargaining year

***Contract expires  
Dec. 31, 2004***

OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service are heading into bargaining for a new collective agreement.

Under new procedures passed by the OPSEU Convention in April, OPSEU members will:

- ✓ complete the demand-setting survey in June;
- ✓ set bargaining priorities at local demand-setting meetings in September;
- ✓ elect bargaining teams in September and October; and
- ✓ start contract talks in November.

**This issue of *Table Talk* has the information you need to start shaping your next contract.**

**This is your  
bargaining survey**



**Spend an hour  
on your future**

The second half of this *Table Talk* is your demand-setting survey. The survey is your chance to let your bargaining teams know your priorities – the improvements you hope to see in your next collective agreement.

Please complete the survey. Here's all you have to do:

1. Read through the survey and circle the items that are most important to you.
2. Record your TOP TEN ONLY on page 23.
3. Fill out the short form on page 24.
4. Tear off the back page and give it to your OPSEU steward or local president.

**NOTE DEADLINE FOR  
RETURN OF SURVEY:  
June 15-17, 2004**

Ontario Public Service Employees Union  
100 Lesmill Road, Toronto Ontario M3B 3P8 [www.opseu.org](http://www.opseu.org)

*Ce document est aussi disponible en français au site Web [www.sefpo.org](http://www.sefpo.org).*

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# Fairness is the key to rebuilding our public service

Dear friend:

Several years ago, OPSEU members told the world it was time to rebuild the Ontario Public Service.

Tory cuts, privatization, and downloading had created a crisis. The public service had reached the point where it could no longer do the work it needed to. “Learn from Walkerton,” we said. “Rebuild our public service.”



We have not changed our message. Not through nine months of bargaining in 2001-2002. Not through a bitter 54-day strike. And thanks to the determination of OPSEU members, the need to rebuild

public services became the theme of the October 2003 election.

The May 18 Liberal budget does invest more money in health care, education, and certain other services. But we need to rebuild *all* public services. And the rebuilding needs to start *now*.

Rebuilding the OPS must start with the foundation of the OPS, and that is people – the OPSEU members on the front lines. We’ve suffered through some pretty shabby treatment over the last 10 years. In the OPS today:

- Workload stress is at an all-time high.
- Wages for most OPSEU members have not kept pace with inflation.
- Outdated job classifications mean thousands of people are underpaid for the work they do.
- We’re paying more user fees for health benefits.
- Unclassified workers still toil without the full contract rights they deserve.

- Privatization and layoffs are still happening.
- High-priced consultants and low-paid temp agency workers are doing our work – and blocking the career paths of many OPSEU members.

This is grossly unfair. Over the last decade, OPSEU members have made sacrifice after sacrifice. We’ve given and given, and we’ve given enough. It’s time to turn things around.

It’s time for some fairness.

In the months ahead, we’ll be putting our case forward to the new government. Getting what we need will take some work – from all of us. Setting our demands is the first step.

This document is your tool to tell your soon-to-be-elected bargaining teams what contract improvements would make the biggest difference to you and your family. Please take an hour to read it. Think about it. Then fill out the short forms on the last two pages and hand them in to your OPSEU local by June 15, 16, or 17.

Take a minute to imagine an Ontario Public Service that treats you fairly. Is it a better, stronger public service? Does it do more for the people of Ontario?

You bet it does. That’s why fairness is the key to rebuilding our public service. That’s what this round of bargaining is all about.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Leah Casselman". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a horizontal line.

Leah Casselman  
President, Ontario Public Service  
Employees Union

## The bargaining climate:

# Ontario can afford to treat its employees fairly

“How much money does the employer have?”

Simple question. Complicated answer.

When you're talking about the government, what's in the employer's wallet depends on many factors, such as:

- How is the economy doing?
- What is the inflation rate?
- Does the government have a budget deficit?
- Are government revenues rising or falling?
- How high (or low) are taxes?
- What does the government want to spend money on?
- How does the government feel about public employees?
- How does the public feel about public employees?
- How sensitive is the government to public opinion?

Only the first two of these factors are really economic factors. All of the others are political factors. In other words, the OPS bargaining environment is based on the choices Queen's Park makes – not factors beyond its control.

For example: from 1994 to 1998, the Ontario economy grew, in real terms, by over 20 per cent. But for those five years, the Harris Tories froze OPS wages – the increase for OPSEU members over that time was zero. After inflation, this was a seven per cent pay cut.

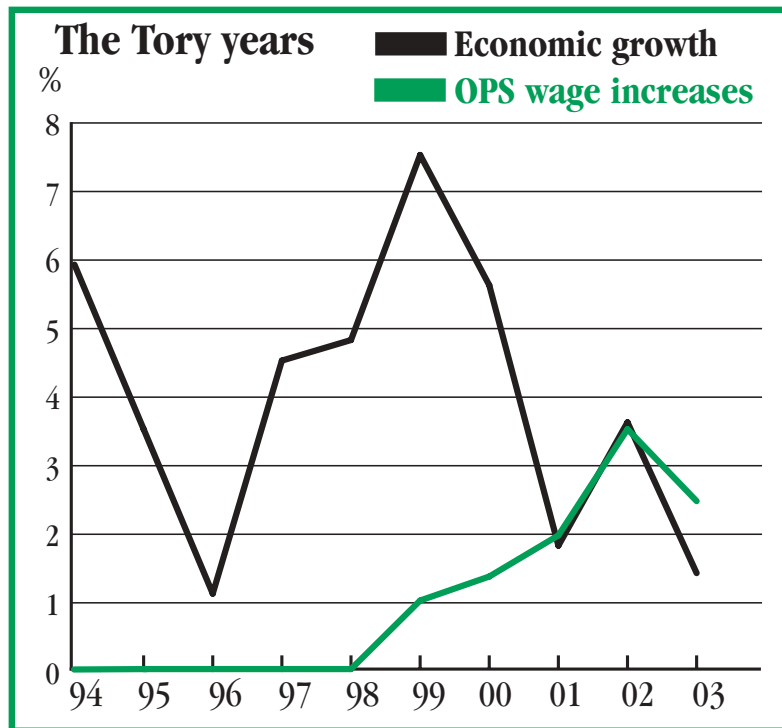
Could the Harris Tories have paid more? Absolutely – the Ontario economy was booming. But the Tories had other priorities. They wanted to cut the public service, not

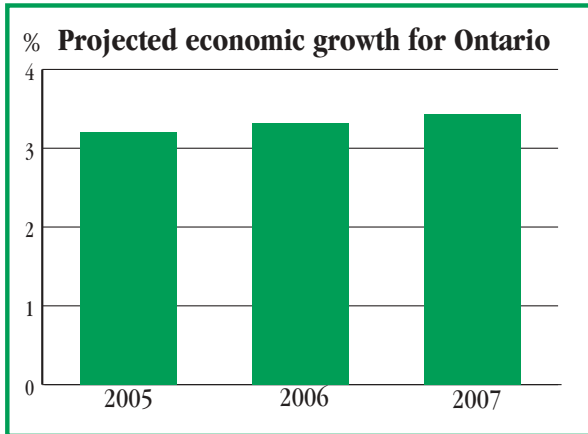
strengthen it. They wanted to spend billions of dollars on tax cuts.

Governments spend money because of political priorities, not economic realities.

## A few 'facts' about 'the economic picture'

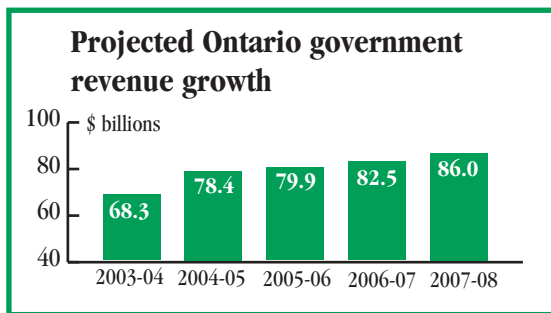
Recently, the Ontario economy has been through a few rough patches, but Sept. 11, SARS, mad cow disease, and last year's power blackout are all in the past. Inflation is low. Interest rates are low. The U.S. economy is doing well, and the Canadian dollar is at a reasonable level. Both are good for Ontario exporters. Check out the facts on the following pages.





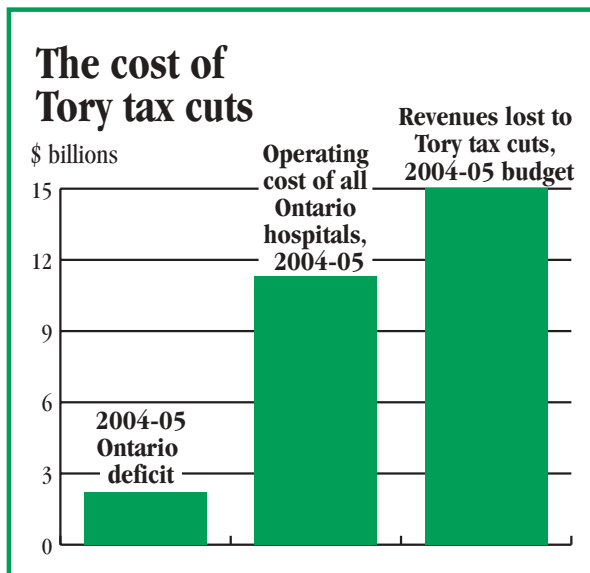
**Fact #1:**  
**Our economy is fundamentally healthy.**

The government expects real economic growth in Ontario (above inflation) to average 3.3 per cent over the next three years. This is a perfectly normal and healthy rate of growth.



**Fact #2:**  
**The Ontario government has never been richer.**

The Liberals say revenues this year will leap by \$10.1 billion due to economic growth and tax changes. The government has never had more money than it has now.



**Fact #3:**  
**Tax cuts, not government spending, caused the deficit.**

The Ontario economy is bigger than ever before. Government revenues are higher than ever before. So why does Ontario have a budget deficit this year? Two words: **tax cuts**.

Government spending is growing every year, it's true. But that growth is minor compared to the money lost to Tory tax cuts. In 2004-05, the Tory tax cuts will cost the Liberal government roughly \$15 billion.

How much is \$15 billion? Let's put it this way: the cost to run all of Ontario's hospitals is only \$11.3 billion. This year's budget deficit is only \$2.2 billion.

Any way you look at it, \$15 billion is a lot of money. Spending on public services did not cause the deficit. Tax cuts did.

# Fact #4:

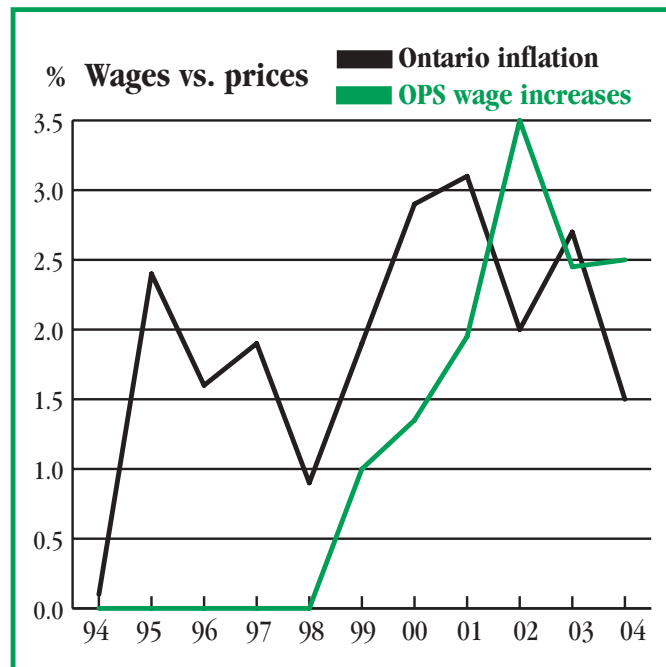
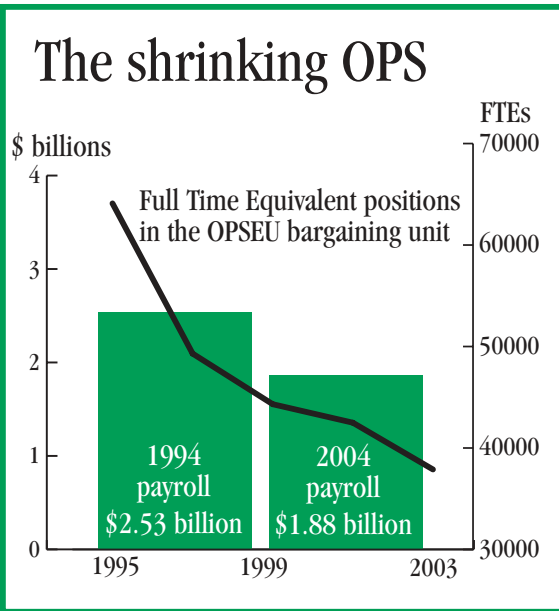
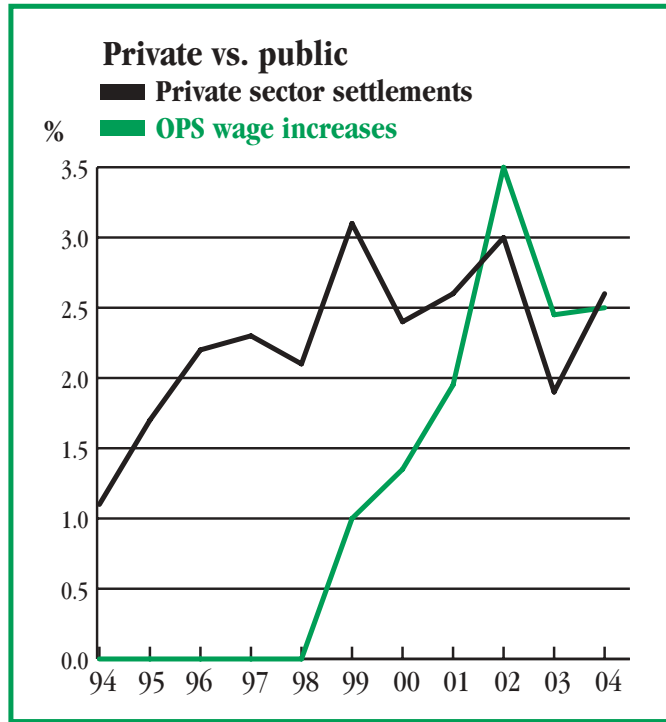
## OPSEU members have already paid their share.

The Harris Tories blamed public employees for just about everything, but OPSEU members are not to blame for the province's money problems. The number of employees in the OPSEU bargaining unit fell by 40 per cent from 1995 to 2003. Total payroll from 1994 to the present is down \$651 million a year, or 26 per cent (see graph below).

Just as importantly, OPSEU members have lost a lot to inflation over the years. **As of March 2004, the large majority of members are earning 5.5 per cent LESS than the 1994 pay rates.**

Over 10 years, OPSEU members in the OPS have lost a total of **\$1.3 billion** to inflation. OPSEU members made **\$1.9 billion** less than they would have made if they had received the same pay hikes as unionized private sector workers in Ontario.

The overall conclusion? OPSEU members are not to blame for Ontario's budget problems. No way.



# Dalton McGuinty and your next contract

When Dalton McGuinty was elected Premier on Oct. 2, 2003, he gave a speech. In that speech, he actually *thanked* the public service. “I value your work,” he said, “and I look forward to working with you so we can provide better services to our public.”

That was a great speech. So how has McGuinty fared since Oct. 2?

For the answer, think about your own workplace. How much has changed since the Liberals came to power?

## Pardon me, Dalton?

On Feb. 11, 2004, Dalton McGuinty stepped out of his office and made an important announcement.

“To protect and improve public services, to protect existing jobs and add more jobs means

MPPs gave up a 2.7 per cent raise, but only after all but four of them had their jobs reclassified to give them a pay hike that was several times greater!

that I’m asking our public sector partners to be reasonable and responsible at the bargaining table,” he told reporters.

The *Globe and Mail* reported that “a senior policy adviser to the

Premier said Mr. McGuinty’s statement was a clear warning that public-sector organizations negotiating wage increases will have to find the money to finance them themselves and not turn to the provincial government for help....”

Ontario’s public sector unions didn’t take long to answer back – and loudly. OPSEU joined nurses, teachers, and other unions to

say, “No thank you, we’ve been making sacrifices for the last 10 years. Forget it.”

Stung by the backlash, McGuinty went away and thought about it. Weeks later, he tried a new tack. He announced that Ontario MPPs would *not* be accepting a 2.7 per cent wage hike suggested by the Integrity Commissioner.

“We think it’s important to send a signal to all our broader public-sector partners that we are acting responsibly in the circumstances and we would ask that they keep their requests in check when it comes to their pay increase,” McGuinty said.

Easy to say for Mr. McGuinty. He makes \$152,835 a year plus expenses. And all except four of his 71 caucus members had already received a nice raise (eight per cent was the lowest) right after the election.

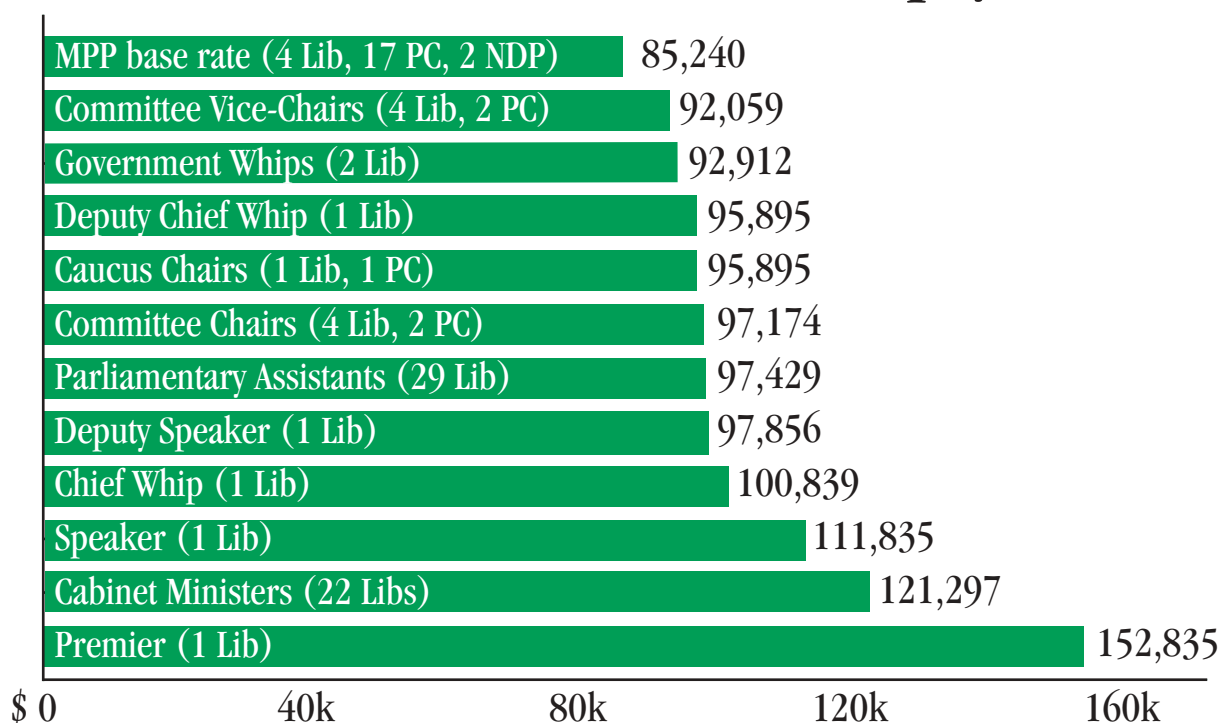
The base salary for MPPs is \$85,240, but they get paid extra for taking on extra duties. All 22 Cabinet ministers, for example, get \$121,297, or 42.3 per cent more than the base salary.\* Parliamentary Assistants – all 29 of them – get \$97,429, or 14.3 per cent more.

In other words, MPPs gave up a 2.7 per cent raise, but only after all but four of them had their jobs reclassified to give them a pay hike that was several times greater!

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\* Cabinet ministers’ pay was temporarily reduced to \$112,283 (32 per cent above the base rate) after the government decided to run a deficit in the May 18 budget. The Premier’s salary fell to \$135,936 (59 per cent above the base rate). This does not count the \$16,000 yearly housing allowance he gets as an MPP from outside the Greater Toronto Area, or the subsidy he gets from the Liberal party on his Toronto rent.

## Effect of reclassification on MPP pay rates\*



\*Does not include positions held only by Progressive Conservative or New Democratic Party MPPs.

## An unusual budget

The 2004-05 Ontario budget, released May 18, is an unusual document.

In the budget, Finance Minister Greg Sorbara announced more funding for some public services, mostly health care and education. That's good.

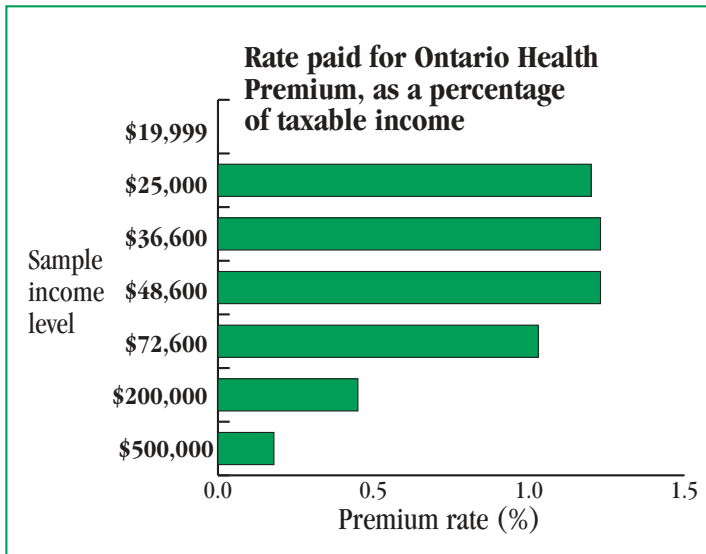
Sorbara also took two big steps to improve the province's revenue picture. First, he decided to pay off the provincial deficit in three years, not one. Second, he introduced the Ontario Health Premium, which will raise \$1.6 billion this year and \$2.4 billion next year. Both of these moves increase the amount of money available for public services in general. That's good.

But some of the things in the budget are not so good.

### The Ontario Health Premium

Prior to May 18, OPSEU members lobbied for a modest increase in the Personal Income Tax and the Corporations Tax to raise money to rebuild public services. The Liberals did not raise the Corporations Tax in the budget. They chose instead to raise all the new money for public services from individuals. That's unfair. But the way the Liberals chose to make individuals pay is even less fair.

The new Ontario Health Premium certainly *looks* like a progressive tax – people who earn more, pay more. Unfortunately, the highest (percentage) rate for the Premium is not paid by those who earn the most. With the Ontario Health Premium, the people paying the highest rates will be those whose taxable income (after deductions) is in the middle.



Because the wealthy will pay a lower (percentage) rate, middle-income people will pay hundreds of dollars more with the Ontario Health Premium than they would have if the Liberals had simply increased income taxes.

### Cuts to public services

While spending more on health and education, the May 18 budget will curb spending across all ministries. Minister Sorbara said the Liberals will limit spending to an average increase of 1.9 per cent increase per year – approximately the rate of inflation. This is not good for overworked, understaffed OPS workplaces.

Worse yet is Sorbara’s announcement that the government is looking to cut costs. Spending will drop or stay the same in nine ministries this year; more reductions are in store in the future, Sorbara says. In the budget speech, he said:

As of tomorrow, my colleague Gerry Phillips, Chair of Management Board, will begin the process of finding further savings and efficiencies across all of our ministries. He has clear targets: \$200 million in 2005-06, \$400 million in 2006-07, and \$750 million in 2007-08.

Clearly, bargaining with this government will not be easy. We’ll need to explain a few things to the Liberals:

- Public employees are the ones who made the sacrifices to keep the OPS running

during the Harris/Eves years. We are not to blame for the province’s budget woes. In fact, the current deficit is smaller because of what we’ve given up.

- Payroll costs for OPSEU members in the OPS are less than three per cent of government revenues – and zero per cent of its budget problems.
- Even the Liberals agree that the Tories wasted at least \$400 million a year on private consultants. Many consultants are still doing the work of OPSEU members, at up to six times the cost. In this round of bargaining, we need to bring that work back into our bargaining unit – and say good-bye to the privateers.
- Aside from the consultants, there’s nothing left to cut! If the Tories didn’t get rid of it, it couldn’t be gotten rid of!
- Every service we provide is valuable to the people of Ontario.
- OPSEU members refuse to accept less than we deserve. We demand fairness.

## Pressure works!

Extending the deficit over three years and introducing the Ontario Health Premium were not easy decisions for the Liberals. In the election campaign, they made big promises not to raise taxes and not to run deficits. Now, all at once, they’ve done both.

The Liberals seem to be saying that public services are more important than deficits and taxes. They’re right.

Lobbying and public relations work by OPSEU and other groups has gone a long way towards making this happen. We’ve been in the news media. President Casselman met with the Premier and several of his ministers. We took part in the Liberals’ “town hall” meetings and pre-budget consultations.

The budget is far from perfect, but it does put (some) money into things that are important to OPSEU members. The chorus of voices speaking out in support of public services over the last year has made a difference.

In the months ahead, it’s up to us to keep the pressure on.

# Making change: building bargaining leverage in 2004

In the 2002 round of OPS bargaining with OPSEU, the Conservative government tried to:

- *gut* our benefit plan;
- *steal* OPSEU members' control over pension surpluses; and
- *limit* all wage increases to less than inflation.

The union asked the Tories not to do these things. They refused – and kept on refusing. We went on strike. After 54 days, OPSEU members had:

- protected our benefit plan (mostly – see page 15);
- maintained control of pension surpluses; and
- won the first wage increases above inflation in eight years.

We also made progress for unclassified workers, boosted shift premiums, won wage adjustments for workers in about 20 job classifications, and improved compensation for Schedule 6 employees for the first time ever.

Still, it was a tough way to get a contract.

No one ever wants to go on strike. In this round – fortunately – we have a new employer at Queen's Park. Hopefully, the new boss does not want a confrontation with OPSEU.

That doesn't mean bargaining with the Liberals will be a walk in the park.

Dalton McGuinty is still refusing to restore taxes to the levels really needed to rebuild crucial public services.

He has stated publicly that providing contract improvements for public employees is not high on his "to do" list.

He has not made good on his campaign promise to restore successor rights to OPS employees whose jobs are privatized or divested.

He has not stopped layoffs and privatization in the OPS.

In the last election, Ontarians – and many OPSEU members – chose change. Public employees have a right to expect that, after 10 years of sacrifice, life at work will get better. The question is, how do we explain that to the new government?

Strike action, and the threat of it, can go a long way towards changing an employer's mind. With the pig-headed Tories, strike action was the only thing that would make them listen. The Liberals, on the other hand, may just be open to persuasion.

A case in point: in April, Premier McGuinty floated the idea of applying provincial sales tax to restaurant meals under \$4. Ontario's fast-food chains

flipped. Within days, every Macdonald's and every Tim Horton's in Ontario had posters up explaining why the so-called "fat tax" was a bad idea. Restaurant owners, the NDP, and food banks blasted the Liberals in the news media. In one week, 100,000 people signed a petition against the plan.

A few days later, McGuinty dropped the proposal. Clearly, Liberals are more sensitive to public opinion than the Tories ever were.

Public campaigns can be hard work. Luckily, OPSEU members are very, very good at campaigning. In this round of bargaining, we'll need all our skills and enthusiasm to win a fair contract and start rebuilding our public service.

It's not enough to choose change. In the months ahead, we'll have to *make* change.

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# Who we are: Basic facts about the OPSEU bargaining unit in the Ontario Public Service

As of Dec. 31, 2003, there were 40,378\* people working in the OPSEU bargaining unit in the Ontario Public Service. The bargaining unit is made up of five bargaining categories:

**Administrative Category.** Typical jobs: Conservation Officer, Environmental Officer, Forester, Librarian, Occupational Health and Safety Inspector, Systems Officer, Tax Auditor, Transportation Enforcement Officer.

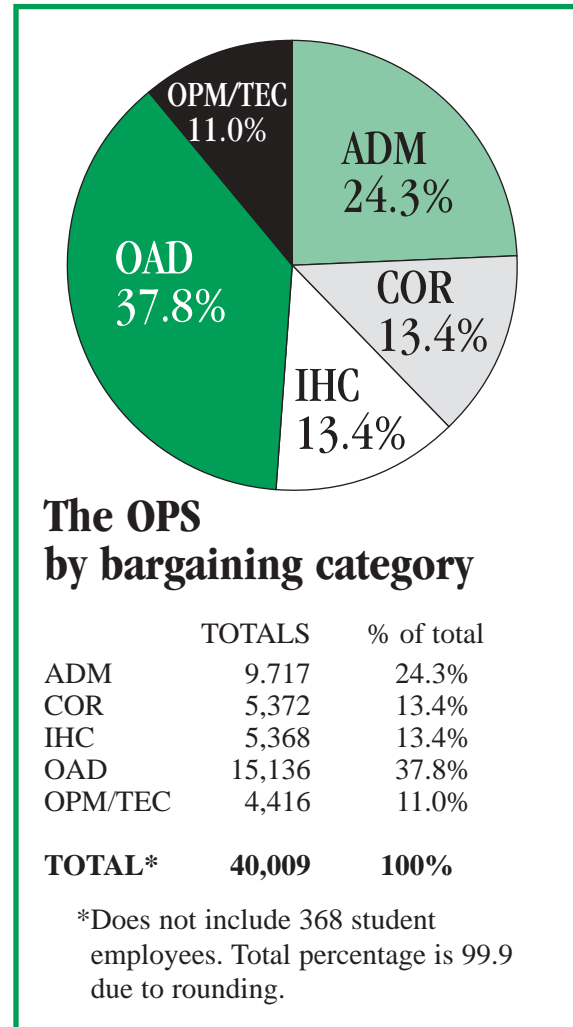
**Correctional Category.** Typical jobs: Attendant (Oak Ridge), Correctional Officer, Probation Officer, Provincial Bailiff, Trade Instructor.

**Institutional and Health Care Category.** Typical jobs: Dietitian, Hospital Housekeeper, Laundry Worker, Nurse, Nutritionist, Occupational Therapist, Pharmacist, Psychologist, Social Worker.

**Office Administration Category.** Typical jobs: Clerical Services, Court Reporter, Data Processing Technician, Office Administration.

**Operational and Maintenance/Technical Category.** Typical jobs: Cartographer, Cleaner, Forensic Analyst, Highway Construction Inspector, Highway Equipment Supervisor, Maintenance Mechanic, Museum Assistant, Pilot, Research Scientist, Radiation Technician, Laboratory Technologist, Steam Plant Engineer.

\*December numbers are the lowest in the year. Summer numbers may be up to 10,000 higher.



## Bargaining teams

In this round of bargaining, OPSEU has two bargaining teams: a Central Team and a Corrections Team.

The Central Team negotiates all Central issues (job security, pensions, etc.) plus all Category issues (wages, shift schedules,

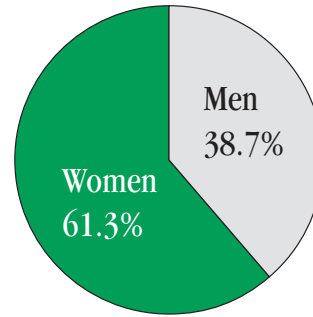
training, etc.) for each Category except Corrections.

The Corrections Team negotiates all Corrections Category issues plus any Central table issues agreed to between the employer and the union.

## The OPS by gender

Female employees in OPSEU (as percentage of total)

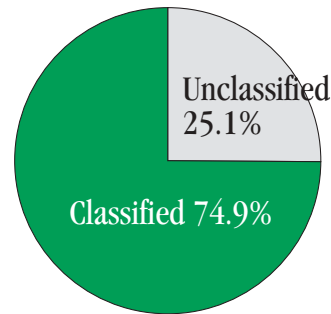
ADM	45.1%
COR	37.2%
IHC	73.2%
OAD	85.3%
OPM/TEC	28.6%



## The OPS: classified and unclassified

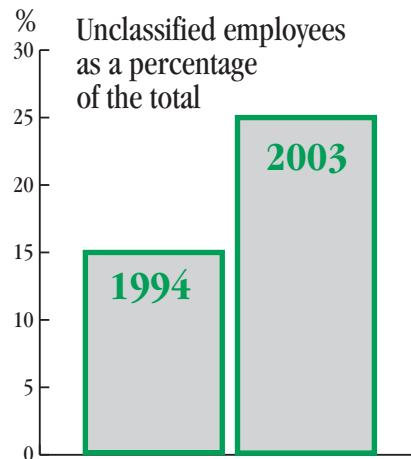
Unclassified employees in OPSEU bargaining categories (as percentage of total)

ADM	13.9%
COR	26.1%
IHC	32.7%
OAD	28.3%
OPM/TEC	21.9%



## The era of the unclassified worker

At the end of 1993, unclassified employees made up 15 per cent of the OPSEU bargaining unit in the OPS. At the end of 2003, that number was 25 per cent. It is possible to run the public service with a larger percentage of classified workers. Based on 1993 numbers, *at least* 10 per cent of the total workforce – 4,000 people – could and should be converted from unclassified to classified status.



OAG average	40,094
OPM/Tech average	45,419
Overall average	47,089
IHC average	47,867
Corrections average	52,562
Admin average	59,668

## Average annual pay by bargaining category

March 2004

\$ 0                      40k                      80k

## Demand-setting 2004:

# What matters most to you and your family?

Getting a new collective agreement starts with setting goals. The process of setting these goals is called demand-setting.

The following pages provide background information on key issues in this round of bargaining. Please read all the information, and follow these steps:

1. As you read through the survey, circle the items that are most important to you.
2. When you are done, record your **TOP TEN ONLY** on page 23.
3. Fill out the short form on page 24.
4. Tear off the back page and give it to your OPSEU steward or local president.\*

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\*Don't know who your steward or local president is? Check below the green arrow on page 24. If your local president is not shown there, contact your nearest OPSEU Regional Office. Visit the web address below for contact info.

## Setting priorities: Some things to think about

- Bargaining is not an all-expenses-paid shopping spree. You won't get everything you dream of.
- When bargaining is over, the employer will end up spending a set amount of money, not an infinite amount.
- The big question in demand-setting is not, "What do I want?", but rather, "What things do I need the most?"
- Ask yourself: what issues are so important that I am willing to spend a lot of bargaining capital to get them?
- Ask yourself: what bargaining goals are low in cost but high in satisfaction for me?
- Ask yourself: what changes to the collective agreement will make an obvious improvement in the quality of life for me, my family, and my co-workers?
- Ask yourself: what action am I willing to take to get what I need? In this round, action might include calling your MPP, talking to your boss, wearing a button, or (yes) voting to reject a bad offer from the employer and give your teams a strike mandate. Nobody wants a strike – not the union, and not (we hope) the Liberal government. However, getting what we need has always been all about building our bargaining power (see page 9).

[http://www.opseu.org/ContactUs/op\\_email/ContactUs.htm](http://www.opseu.org/ContactUs/op_email/ContactUs.htm)

# Your demand-setting survey: Issues and options

**INSTRUCTIONS:** As you read these pages, circle the number of each bargaining issue that is so important to you that it will probably be in your top 10. When finished, transfer **YOUR TOP 10 ONLY** to the form on page 23.

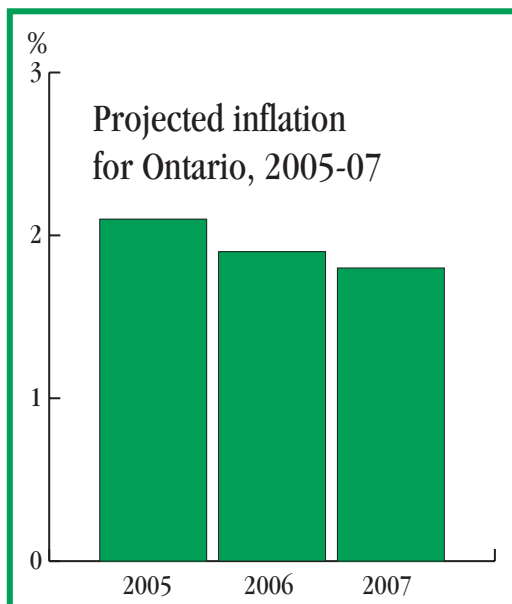
## Wages and pay

See also “Unclassified issues” and “Seasonal issues”

As noted on page 5, wages for OPSEU members in the OPS have fallen behind the rate of inflation. Fortunately, inflation is expected to remain low over the next few years, but it will still increase the cost of living by about two per cent per year for the next three years, according to Ontario budget projections.

To get back to 1994 wage levels, the large majority of OPSEU members would have to be earning roughly 12 per cent more by the end of 2007.

Interestingly, the new Ontario budget boasts that growth in average personal incomes in the province will be 3.4 per cent in 2004, rising steadily to 4.9 per cent in 2007. Should OPSEU members accept less?



There is more to wage issues than a General Wage Increase, of course.

Some wage issues are related to the extra duties or inconvenience that come with some jobs. For example, shift premiums and stand-by time exist to compensate for the extra costs – personal and financial – of irregular work arrangements.

## What matters most?

- 1 General Wage Increase
  - 2 Convert “Maximum Plus Merit” pay to a step on the grid
  - 3 Allow automatic progression on pay grid (remove merit system)
  - 4 Reduce number of steps in pay grid
  - 5 Shift premiums
  - 6 Overtime issues and distribution
  - 7 Schedule 6
  - 8 Call back
  - 9 Stand-by time
  - 10 On-call duty
  - 11 Holiday pay
  - 12 Custodial Responsibility Allowance
  - 13 Other salary allowances and classification notes
  - 14 Bilingual bonus
  - 15 Isolation Pay
  - 16 Headquarters
  - 17 Time credits while travelling
  - 18 Other wage and pay issues (specify)
-

## Classification

If MPPs can be reclassified to get higher pay, why can't public service employees?

That's the question. Thousands of OPSEU members perform duties far beyond the scope of their current job specs – without getting paid more as a result. The OPS classification system is outdated and broken down. That's why we have 3,366 unresolved classification grievances – affecting 5,917 members – in the OPSEU bargaining unit.

There is a system in place to deal with classification grievances. It's called the Joint System Subcommittee (JSSC). The problem is, it rarely resolves grievances. That's because the JSSC consists of three employer and three union representatives. When the two sides disagree, it's a stalemate. Nothing happens.

In the last three rounds of OPS bargaining, OPSEU bargaining teams have tried to get one extra person added to the JSSC. A neutral tie-breaker would help settle classification disputes once and for all.

Frustrated by the lack of progress on classification grievances, OPSEU members in some classifications have tried to win "special case" wage adjustments at the bargaining table. In 2002, close to 100 special cases resulted in improvements for only about 20 groups of workers, e.g., Registered Nurses, Scientists, and Probation Officers. Eighty groups came away empty-handed.

If you decide to submit a special case, you

must do so at your local demand-setting meeting in September. For information on special cases and how to submit them, visit <http://www.opseu.org/ops/bargaining/special.htm>.

### What matters most?

- 19 Create mechanism to resolve classification grievances
  - 20 Increase wages for my job classification ("special case" wage demands)
  - 21 Other classification issues (specify)
- 

## Expenses

You shouldn't have to pay to do your job. When gasoline prices rose 30 per cent this year, it drove home a point: we must make sure that OPS employees are reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses in the course of doing their jobs.

### What matters most?

- 22 Meal allowance
  - 23 Kilometric rates
  - 24 Professional fees
  - 25 Other expense issues (specify)
- 

**Fairness**  
**Demand it!**

*Circle your top 10 priorities and transfer them to the form on page 23.*

# Benefits

Employee benefits were a major battleground during the 2002 strike.

In the end, benefits actually cost the employer slightly more – about \$3 million in total per year. Many members haven't noticed the improvement, however. That's mainly because the losses are more visible than the gains. The employer demanded, and got:

- A \$100 deductible for dental care;
- A “fee lag” that pays for dental care based on the Ontario Dental Association's rates for the previous year;
- An end to coverage for fluoride treatments for adults;
- Dental recall every nine months (up from six) for those over age 12;
- A deductible for drug prescriptions;
- Coverage for the cost of generic drugs only, where they exist; and
- A reduction in coverage for orthopaedic shoes.

On the plus side, the employer now pays:

- 100 per cent of the premiums for Long Term Income Protection (equal to a 0.335 per cent pay increase);
- Wage increases for workers on LTIP equal to those of active employees;
- 100 per cent of Basic Life Insurance premiums (up from 75 per cent) plus Basic Life Insurance at 100 per cent of annual salary (also up from 75);
- 80 per cent of the premium for vision care (up from 60) and a maximum of \$300 (up from \$200);
- 50 per cent of the premium for major dental work (up from 40) and a maximum of \$1,200 (up from \$1,000);
- \$120 a day for semi-private hospital coverage (up from \$75);
- \$1,200 every four years for hearing aids (up from a \$200 lifetime limit); and
- more money for a wider range of paramedical services.

In the May 18 budget, the Liberal government created a new Ontario Health Premium (see pages 7-8) and announced that OHIP will no longer pay for most eye tests, physiotherapy, and chiropractic care. Millions of Ontarians will pay more for health care.

## What matters most?

- 26 Pay Ontario Health Premium
- 27 Provide/improve Basic Life Insurance, Supplementary and Dependent Life Insurance, and Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance for all members
- 28 Restore brand name drugs or make generic drugs optional
- 29 Provide drug card
- 30 Remove deductible for prescriptions
- 31 Pay full cost of semi-private hospital care (remove cap)
- 32 Improve/expand paramedical services (e.g., chiropractor, osteopath, naturopath, acupuncturist, podiatrist, physiotherapist, optometrist, speech therapist, massage therapist, psychologist, psychological associate, Master of Social Work)
- 33 Remove \$100 annual deductible on dental care coverage
- 34 Remove Ontario Dental Association fee guide lag of one year
- 35 Basic dental care coverage, including preventative
- 36 Orthodontics
- 37 Dentures
- 38 Major restorative dentistry
- 39 Vision care
- 40 Hearing aids
- 41 Orthopaedic shoes and orthotics
- 42 Out-of-country coverage
- 43 Extend all group life insurance policies to post-retirement period up to age 65 (same as AMAPCEO and management)
- 44 Improve benefits appeal system
- 45 Other benefits issues (specify)

# Pensions

The OPSEU Pension Trust (OPT) is one of the most successful pension plans in Canada. The OPT's assets hit \$9.6 billion this year after a return on investment last year of 17.3 per cent.

These funds exist to provide inflation-protected pensions for close to 75,000 plan members who are either still in the workforce or already retired.

The performance of the fund in 2003 was excellent, but the OPT, like most pension plans, lost money in 2001 and 2002. The rate of return for the last four years has averaged just 2.9 per cent. While the plan is secure because of its long term success, the OPT will not have money on hand to pay for new temporary improvements such as the "Factor 80" early retirement plan (set to expire on March 31, 2005) or contribution reductions in the near future.

In the past, temporary improvements to the plan have been paid for out of plan surpluses. In 2002, OPSEU members spent \$467 million in surplus dollars to pay for Factor 80 and other improvements, contribution reductions, and a "stabilization fund" to protect against future rate increases.

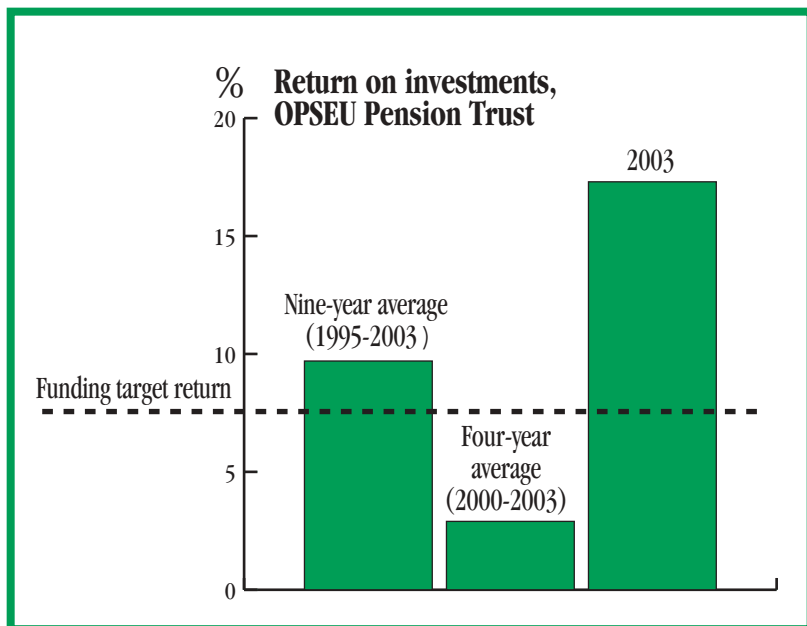
If Factor 80 is extended this time, it will be paid for at the bargaining table, not through surpluses in the plan.

The same is true for Factor 75, which is legal in Canada for Correctional Officers and a few other public safety occupations. And as COs found out in 2002, Factor 75 represents a major cost. Correctional Officers would have paid at least \$2,000 a year for it, and that's *if* the employer had agreed to pay half.

Other (less expensive) pension improvements, such as allowing "buybacks" for time spent as an unclassified worker, on leave, etc., would be very positive for many members.

## What matters most?

- 46 Extend Factor 80 early retirement plan
- 47 Obtain Factor 75 for Correctional Officers
- 48 Add open pension buybacks while keeping payroll deduction
- 49 Make pension issues grievable
- 50 Add leave with pay for union trustees of the OPSEU Pension Plan
- 51 Add automatic membership in the OPSEU Pension Trust for employees of the Crown or Crown Agencies, Boards or Commissions if OPSEU acquires bargaining rights
- 52 Other pension issues (specify)



**Circle your top 10 priorities and transfer them to the form on page 23.**

## Job Security

See also “Career advancement” and “Health and safety, including workload”

The election of a new government has not taken away the threat of job loss for OPSEU members. Since the Liberals took office, we have seen layoffs in the courts, privatization of highway maintenance, and downloading in the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. And the Liberals, who promised to change the law to restore “successor rights” (see #58, below) have done no such thing.

Almost all of the top managers in the OPS today are the same ones that worked for the Tories. They are the ones who implemented the layoffs, the privatization, and the divestment of public services. They are the ones who have been merging services, driving the Attendance Management Program, destroying classified jobs, and exploiting unclassified workers.

There is still room to improve job security protections in the collective agreement. Sadly, there is still a need.

### What matters most?

- 53 Improve notice of layoff to individuals
  - 54 Provide more notice to union of downsizing/restructuring
  - 55 Require employer to negotiate downsizing/restructuring with the union (including technological change)
  - 56 End divestment, privatization, and contracting-out of government services
  - 57 “Contract in” to return work to OPS
  - 58 Where jobs are moved out of the public service, transfer jobs with full collective agreement rights, OPSEU Pension Plan membership, and continued union membership (successor rights)
  - 59 Improve language for transfers out of OPS
  - 60 Increase pay in lieu of notice
  - 61 Increase separation allowances
  - 62 Improve “bumping” (eliminate barriers to full application of seniority)
  - 63 Improve access to vacancies (redeployment)
  - 64 Improve recall language
  - 65 Improve relocation rights
  - 66 Improve retraining for surplus employees
  - 67 Improve severance and termination pay
  - 68 Allow deferral of surplus notice for those close to retirement
  - 69 Maintain Factor 80 for surplus employees
  - 70 Improve Voluntary Exit
  - 71 Improve education allowance to encourage voluntary quits
  - 72 Other job security issues (specify)
- 



***Circle your top 10 priorities and transfer them to the form on page 23.***

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## Career advancement

See also “Job security”

Having a career in the public service means having room to move to more challenging jobs. Yet the Tories blocked the career paths of many OPS employees by hiring high-priced consultant and low-paid temp agency workers to do our work. OPS managers routinely deny lateral transfers and job trades; sometimes they use existing posting rules to hire their friends – or their friends’ children.

Fair access to more opportunities is the way to build careers in the OPS.

The use of consultants to do bargaining unit work is not only unfair; it’s also a huge waste of money. During the 2003 election campaign, the Liberals said the Eves government was squandering “at least \$400 million annually on private consultants.” The Liberals promised to put a stop to it.

How much is \$400 million? Enough for a 20 per cent raise for everybody in the OPSEU bargaining unit in the OPS.

### What matters most?

- 73 End the use of consultants and temp agency workers for bargaining unit work
- 74 End the transfer of OPSEU positions and work to other bargaining units, supervisors, etc. (e.g. AMAPCEO, non-union)
- 75 Restrict external hiring where qualified internal applicants exist
- 76 Training and development
- 77 Posting and filling of vacancies, new positions
- 78 Lateral transfers
- 79 Pay administration issues
- 80 Temporary assignment issues
- 81 Job trading
- 82 Other career advancement issues (specify)

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## Health and safety, including work overload

The Ontario Public Service is a tough place to work, and getting tougher.

Understaffing and work overload are widespread. So is the stress that accompanies them. Injuries from repetitive motions, computer work, and other ergonomic problems are on the rise. In some workplaces, the threat of violence is a daily problem.

Sick and injured workers often find the employer has little interest in helping them get back to work – even though the Human Rights Code requires it.

All workers have the right to a safe and healthy workplace. The bargaining table is one place to get it.

### What matters most?

- 83 Improve workplace ergonomics
- 84 Protect employees against workplace violence
- 85 Reduce stressors, including work overload
- 86 Set minimum staffing complement, by service
- 87 Improve return-to-work accommodation for sick/injured workers
- 88 Workers’ compensation
- 89 Safety shoe allowance
- 90 Other health and safety or workload issues (specify)

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**Fairness  
Demand it!**

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*Circle your top 10 priorities and transfer them to the form on page 23.*

# Unclassified issues

Unclassified workers are the largest group of deliberately exploited workers in the OPS. They do the same work as classified workers, but without job security protection or many other collective agreement rights.

The 2002 round of OPS bargaining saw real steps forward for all unclassified workers. Pay in lieu of benefits rose to six per cent, up from two per cent for full-timers and zero for part-timers. Full-time unclassifieds may now be converted to classified status after 18 months, an improvement from 24.

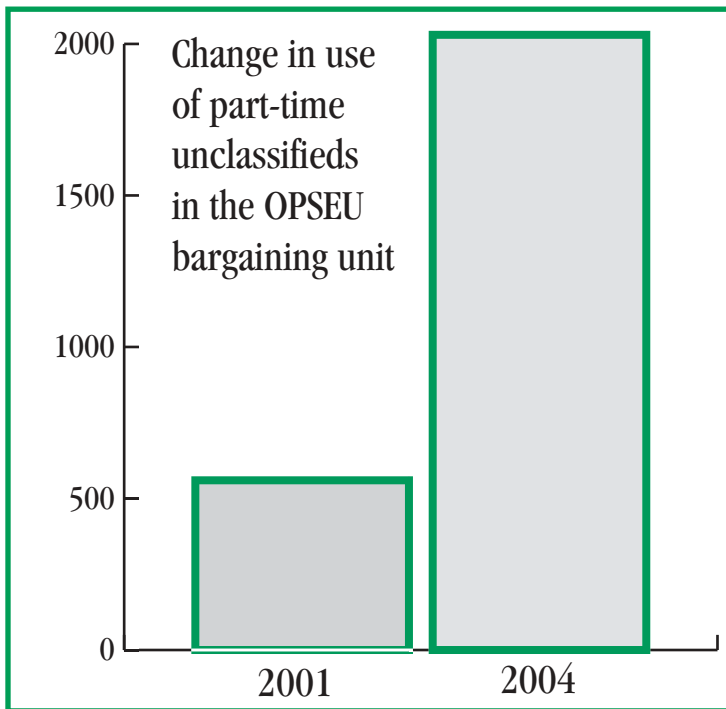
Nonetheless, the employer is still exploiting too many unclassified workers. And in the last three years, the employer has nearly quadrupled its use of part-time unclassifieds, from 560 in March 2001 to 2,030 in March 2004. The employer is clearly taking advantage of the fact that part-timers do not yet have the right to convert to classified (Regular Part-Time) status.

Employer dodges to avoid treating unclassified workers with the respect they deserve must end.



## What matters most?

- 91 Provide quicker conversion to classified service
- 92 Convert unclassified employees who are not yet eligible for classified status to “term classified” status
- 93 Allow conversion of part-time unclassified to Regular Part-Time status
- 94 Allow part-time unclassifieds to progress on wage grid
- 95 Allow unclassifieds to grieve job competitions
- 96 Improve “reporting pay” for unclassifieds
- 97 Increase pay in lieu of benefits
- 98 Provide the same vacation entitlements as for classified employees
- 99 Provide holiday pay (when worked) for Schedule 6 employees
- 100 Provide termination pay based on years of service
- 101 Provide notice of pension rights, including buyback option, upon conversion to classified service
- 102 Other issues for unclassified employees (specify)



**Circle your top 10 priorities and transfer them to the form on page 23.**

# Fairness Demand it!

## Seasonal issues

Seasonal workers are (technically) unclassified workers, but their real job status lies somewhere between unclassified and classified. Their work is an integral part of the public service for many months every year. The collective agreement could do more for seasonal workers.

### What matters most?

- 103 Define “seasonal” to include part-time employees
  - 104 Improve benefits to classified standards
  - 105 Improve vacation entitlement based on seniority
  - 106 Improve termination pay based on seniority
  - 107 Improve overtime to classified standards
  - 108 Add language on shift schedules and call back
  - 109 Other issues for seasonal employees (specify)
- 

## Student issues

Many public service employers hire students, but not all treat them the way the OPS does.

Student workers often do the same work as regular employees, but their wages are scraping bottom and few collective agreement articles apply to them.

Saving money to pay college or university tuition? Not on minimum wage, you’re not.

### What matters most?

- 110 Eliminate GTA differential and move all students to GTA pay levels
  - 111 Improve pay
  - 112 Provide holiday and vacation pay
  - 113 Provide pay in lieu of benefits
  - 114 Provide access to more articles in the collective agreement
  - 115 Other issues for student employees (specify)
- 

## Regular Part-Time issues

Regular Part-Timers are an endangered species in the OPS, partly because the employer is not converting part-time unclassifieds to classified status. In September 1994, there were 1,734 RPTs in the OPSEU bargaining unit. In September 2003, there were just 841.

Generally, what these workers get from the collective agreement is the same as what full-timers get, but pro-rated (roughly) to the number of hours worked.

Public service contracts in some provinces offer full-time benefits to part-time workers, and why not? Those who work part-time *live* full-time.

### What matters most?

- 116 Increase employer share of benefit costs
  - 117 Other Regular Part-Time issues (specify)
- 

**Circle your top 10 priorities and transfer them to the form on page 23.**

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## Hours of work

Can your workday be shaped to give you a better life? Yes, it can. Hours-of-work issues can have a huge impact on family life. How flexible your workday is may even determine if you are able to work at all.

### What matters most?

- 118 Hours of work
  - 119 Shift schedules
  - 120 Compressed work week
  - 121 Flextime
  - 122 Job sharing
  - 123 Other hours of work issues  
(specify)
- 

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## Time off: vacation, holidays, and leave

No matter how much you love your job, there is more to life than being at work. Vacations and holidays restore your energy. Special leaves help us welcome new babies and say good-bye to dying parents – if the collective agreement makes such leaves affordable. Union leave helps OPSEU activists learn more and represent members better.

### What matters most?

- 124 Improve vacation entitlements
  - 125 Increase number of paid holidays
  - 126 Increase paid leave for union activities
  - 127 Expand union leave options
  - 128 Add paid educational leave for union stewards, activists
  - 129 Extend parental leave top-up to cover full period of EI benefits (up to 52 weeks)
  - 130 Add 10 emergency leave days as per the *Employment Standards Act*, but with pay
  - 131 Provide compassionate care/family medical leave top-up to cover full period of EI benefits
  - 132 Improve bereavement, special and compassionate leaves
  - 133 Improve sick leave, i.e., Short Term Sickness Plan, Long Term Disability Plan and Attendance Review Program
  - 134 Other vacation, holiday, and leave issues  
(specify)
- 



**Circle your top 10 priorities and transfer them to the form on page 23.**



**Fairness**  
**Demand it!**

## Basic fairness

The collective agreement is all about fairness: fair wages, fair benefits, and so on. However, not every issue fits into a neat category. This section gives you an opportunity to list any issue not covered earlier in this survey.

### What matters most?

- 135 No discrimination/employment equity
- 136 Calculation of seniority
- 137 Grievance procedure
- 138 No discipline for refusing to cross a picket line
- 139 Other basic fairness issues (specify)

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### Sources:

Information in this edition of *Table Talk* comes from Ontario budget documents, Management Board Secretariat, the *Legislative Assembly Act*, the OPSEU Pension Trust, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, the *Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, and the OPSEU Research unit. Contact OPSEU Communications at (416) 448-7441 or 1-800-268-7376 ext. 441 for further details on sources.

**Circle your top 10 priorities and transfer them to the form on page 23.**

# Your bargaining priorities

Complete this form to hand in to your OPSEU steward or local president



From the issues you circled in the demand-setting survey (pages 13-22), choose your 10 highest priorities and list them below. **Please record the number and the name of each issue. Forms that do not use the numbers will not be processed by your local.**

You do not have to list your priorities in order. Ranking of priorities will take place at your local demand-setting meeting in September.

**Number**      **Name of issue**

<input type="text"/>	_____
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**Comments:**

*Please turn over and complete the form on page 24.*

# Tell us about yourself

Please complete the following:

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Job classification \_\_\_\_\_

OPSEU local \_\_\_\_\_ Work location \_\_\_\_\_

Job title \_\_\_\_\_ Ministry \_\_\_\_\_

## Your bargaining category

(Check one)

- Administrative     Correctional     Institutional and Health Care
- Office Administration     Operational and Maintenance/Technical
- Don't know\*

\*If you don't know your steward or local president, look below the green arrow on this page. If your local president is not shown, contact your nearest OPSEU Regional Office. For complete contact information, see [http://www.opseu.org/ContactUs/op\\_email/ContactUs.htm](http://www.opseu.org/ContactUs/op_email/ContactUs.htm)

Once you've completed this form and the one on page 23, **TEAR OFF THIS PAGE** and give it to your OPSEU steward or local president by June 15, 16, or 17 (whichever is the deadline for your local).

Your local president:

