



# TableTalk *update*

The latest bargaining and mobilizing  
news for OPS members

November 21, 2008

## Bargaining the focus of OPS Divisional Meetings

Bargaining was the focus for 700 activists who attended the OPS Divisional Meetings, held at Toronto's Royal York Hotel.

OPSEU President Smokey Thomas greeted the delegates and gave a rousing address, the focus of which was on the current round of OPS bargaining.

"The government told us they wanted to do things differently this time," Thomas told the delegates. "Unfortunately, their opening position looks like the same takeaways we've seen since the Mike Harris days."

"We are here to bargain a contract, but we have learned a lot from the past two strikes," Thomas said. "And if this government is out to bargain a strike, let them make no mistake: they will get a strike the likes of which they have never seen before." Thomas received a standing ovation from the delegates.

Central/Unified team Chair Eric Morin assured delegates that the team was very unimpressed with the employer's opening offer. "We didn't come to the table to bargain concessions. We came to bargain improvements." He also asked for members to go back to their workplaces and keep up support for the teams. "Plan an event every week. It can be bake sales. A solidarity walk. Pizza lunches. Anything that brings members together to show support for their bargaining teams."

Corrections Team Chair David Kerr also stressed how important member support is to the teams. "In my opinion, this will be our toughest round yet. We'll need the support of everyone in the union and members back home. You can

count on our support to get the best collective agreement we can. We need your support in your workplaces in order to do that."

On Sunday morning, delegates attended different workshops that were focused on lobbying, mobilizing and communicating during a bargaining round.

*Story/photos at <http://www.opseu.org/ops/barg2008/ops-divisional-review.htm>*

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### Know what's in the offer

The employer's opening position for both the Central / Unified contract and the Corrections contract is on the OPSEU website. Members are encouraged to go to <http://www.opseu.org/ops/barg2008/index.htm> to get familiar with what the employer has on the table, and to keep up to date on the latest bargaining news.

### Benefits in jeopardy

Part of the employer's overall strategy this round is something they call "cost containment." In other words, they want to cut the contract in one area in order to give you something in another area.

One item the government has targeted is benefits. While they haven't tabled specifics, the government wants to reduce the amount they are spending on employee benefits. With an aging workforce, that means the employer wants cuts at exactly the same time when people need their benefits most.

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# It's all about respect

Used a typewriter lately? How about carbon paper?

We didn't think so.

Yet, the class standards (job descriptions) for Office Administration (OAD) **have not been updated in over 20 years**. And it's the class standards that determine your rate of pay.

The classification system is broken and the employer refuses to fix it in a timely fashion. And without the right to arbitration, we have no effective way to ensure that members are getting the right pay for the job they are actually doing.

OADs are one of the groups hit the hardest by a broken classification system.

All members of the Ontario Public Service contribute to making Ontario a better, safer, cleaner and healthier place.

All members deserve recognition and respect for their commitment to providing

excellent public service to the people of Ontario.

But there is one group, Office Administration, which is often overlooked. They are the largest group of OPSEU members in the OPS and the lowest-paid.

OADs are critical to the administration of justice in the courts. They respond to thousands of requests from Ontarians for government documents. They administer payroll and benefits for the entire OPS. They do thousands of other equally critical jobs.

**November 25 is OAD Recognition Day.** Show your support for our 16,000 OAD members. Wear a respect button or sticker. Pick up an OPSEU mug.

**We are all strong when we support each other.**

## Know the offer

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In direct contrast, the Central Team has tabled improvements to benefits, as locals identified this as one of their priority items in bargaining.

It is obvious that this will be a major sticking point at the bargaining table, and an issue where members will have to be vocal in order to get the improvement they deserve.

### Authorized for distribution:



Eric Morin, Chair  
Central/Unified Team



David Kerr, Chair



Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President  
Ontario Public Service  
Employees Union

## Corrections actors stepping down

The Corrections Team thanks all those who have stepped down from acting management positions. However, it is completely contemptible that there are still members refusing to step down, which only hurts the team and all corrections members.

The team reminds members that it will be strength and solidarity that will result in the best possible Corrections contract. Thanks again to all those who have shown their loyalty and support.