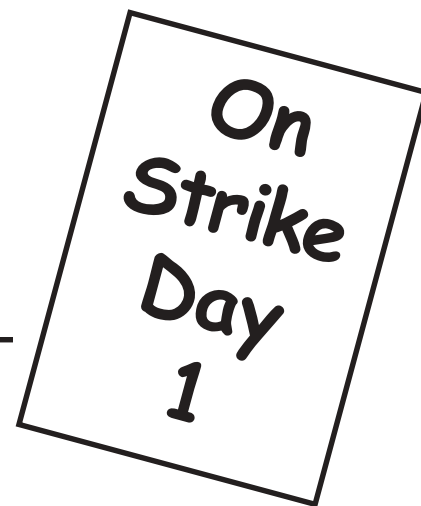




Frontlines

March 13, 2002



It's about the 3Rs!

Respect for our work, renewal of the public service and rejection of takeaways.

We didn't want a strike. We still don't, but the government has left us with no option.

They simply didn't understand that you can't ignore an 88 per cent strike vote.

From the time we returned to the bargaining table until talks fell apart Tuesday afternoon, the government brought only one proposal to the table. And it included everything you had rejected by 88 per cent.

Our bargaining position is fair and reasonable.

This strike is about three things:

Renewal of the public service - the employer has rejected every

one of our proposals to renew the public service.

Respect for employees who do the work - we have proposed wage and benefit improvements that allow employees to keep pace with inflation. We also maintain our commitment to our unclassified members in getting them converted to permanent classified positions. The employer has rejected this proposal.

Rejection of the employer take-aways - the employer has proposed almost \$13 million dollars in cuts to our benefits (based on their costing) in return for their so-called improvements that are worth \$3 million dollars (also based on their costing).

Pay for performance remains on the table, although written differently; term classified positions and the real threat to real jobs that this proposal entails, remain; no to Factor 80 remains; no to our ability to pay for Factor 80 remains.

"This is a two-pronged strike," said OPSEU President Leah Casselman. We're on strike on the picket lines and we're on strike inside with essential service workers. This will be very different from 1996. This time we all know what it means to be on strike, and we're going to hit the ground running."

Today's tips

Be comfy:

That means comfortable shoes, dress in layers, warm socks, long underwear, long-sleeved t-shirts, sweaters and a wind-proof jacket. Find a warm hat. You lose an awful lot of heat through your head. Mittens will keep your hands warmer than gloves. Jewelry is cold and can snag on things. A waist pack is more convenient than a purse.

Encourage support:

At least one sign should ask traffic to honk in support of your struggle. Never pass up a chance for positive feedback! Make some noise. Have some fun.

Think safety:

If your picket line is on a highway or near heavy traffic, make sure you are clearly visible. Reflective tape on signs and clothes, a fire barrel and lights make you visible at night. Bright clothes and movement make you easier to see in the daytime.

Bring music:

It's easier to walk to a beat. Bring a boom box to the line and get some rhythm in your step. Keep up with the news too.

Messages of support

Already OPSEU has had messages of support from the Ontario Federation of Labour and the National Union of Public and General Employees.

Even more important are the emails from across the province saying things like: "We're ready in Kenora."

"I'm the new Local 547 communications chair and I'm looking forward to the challenge."

Check the web: www.opseu.org has the latest on everything.