

OPSEU



SEFPO

# Frontlines

March 26, 2002

On  
Strike  
Day  
14

## A tough strategic strike

“This is an incredibly successful strike,” said President Leah Casselman.

“Congratulations to everyone on your excellent work. We are running a tougher and more strategic strike than many recent, industrial strikes.”

OPS members are having an impact. The outside lines are strong and the inside strike is pushing the employer to the maximum.

Monday’s focus on the courts has generated a lot of media interest, concern and even outrage at the way “essential” court worker are treated.

Radio, television and newspaper stories have focused on the way these essential workers live from contract to contract, with no access to benefits and no job security.

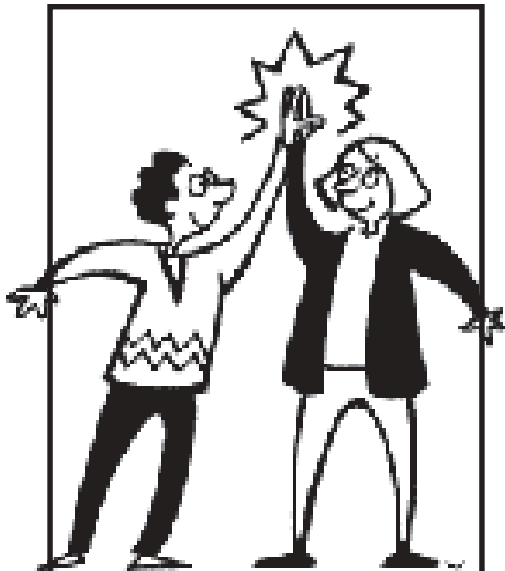
It was an effective strategy to steer attention toward the plight of unclassified workers in every ministry – one of the most important issues underlying our strike.

More events are planned for the days ahead. Get in touch with your Service Area Coordinating Group (SACG) to find out what is happening in your neighbourhood.

The SACGs will hold meetings Tuesday to discuss plans to increase the pressure on the government to return to the table with a fair offer.

In Toronto, Tuesday will feature a “Drum-up” from noon to 1:30

p.m. at 900 Bay Street. Bring a drum, bucket, pail, pots and pans and make some noise along with the multicultural/community of colour organizers of the support event.



### Heroes of the strike

We’ve reported on Patti Arrowsmith of Local 230 who shaved her head when questioned about proper court attire.

Let’s hear about some of the others who have done courageous or outrageous things in support of this strike.

Send your nominees to **FRONTlines**.  
kfitzrandolph@opseu.org or  
1-800-268-7376 (ext 440).

### Steelworkers appreciated

Local 605’s Blair Hollingsworth, wrote in about an encounter in Sault Ste. Marie.

“As I trudged my way down the picket line, in near blizzard conditions, I looked up to see a white “United Steelworkers of America - District 6” van pull up. Four Local 2251 members jumped out of the van, set up a table, grabbed our picket signs and walked the line as we enjoyed their coffee, hot chocolate, bagels, donuts and muffins.

“Never have I seen such a show of generosity, solidarity and support. They couldn’t have imagined how much this picked our spirits up. I’d like to thank these members of Local 2251, you guys are first class in my books!”

Local 605’s Karen Laberge, on staff with MNR since 1975, echoed the thoughts.

“Just when we thought nobody really cared if we were on strike or not because of “essential services” still providing some public services, members of the Algoma Steel union lifted our spirits to heights I cannot explain. I can now continue through this strike with pride knowing that we have not been forgotten by other “brothers and sisters” in the community of Sault Ste. Marie.”

Check the web: [www.opseu.org](http://www.opseu.org) has the latest on everything.

# The news from everywhere

## Let's have fun!

### 1. Fun with paper

Local 645 picket captain Ken Koski and his team stopped a truck making a delivery to the OCWA Water Treatment Plant in Haileybury on Friday.

Turns out the delivery – two cases of toilet paper – was not essential to plant operation. The driver was asked to respect the picket line. He said that he would support anyone who was fighting the Tory government and left.

OPSEU's inside strikers were advised so they could prepare for shortages. The line decided the manager would find out in the end.

### 2. Fun with numbers

Local 546 at the Ministry of Finance, 77 City Centre Drive in Mississauga, has developed an effective strategy to deal with scabbing Tax Auditors. They picket the business that is being audited until they agree to toss the scab out.

### 3. Fun with Tories

Local 713's Mark Roddick reports a successful meeting with local Tory voters on Saturday.

They held an information picket at the PC vote held at the Da Vinci Center in Thunder Bay with more than 100 members.

"We gave the local Tories our view of the strike and how we need to rebuild the public service. The police were on hand in force but our finely tuned picketing machine slowed the Tories up a bit to give them our information."

### Happy Birthday 1

Local 547 reports this instance of management "sensitivity" at Thistleton Regional Centre for Children and Adolescents. A client was celebrating a birthday, so inside strikers asked management to pick up a cake and gift.

**Management:** Bake a cake.

**Inside Strikers:** Not essential.

**Mgmt:** You should have done it before the strike.

**IS:** Cake would be stale now.

**Mgmt:** Should have frozen it.

**IS:** For this client and everyone else too? Who knows how long the strike will last? Lot of frozen cakes.

Management did eventually buy a cake, but no gift.

Local 547 bought a gift (from \$25 a day strike pay) and wrapped it on the picket line. They asked management to take it to the client. They did, but withheld it from the client for nearly seven hours. How caring!

### Happy Birthday 2

Please welcome Ashley Christine, born March 18 to Jay and Sue Wright. Jay is a member of Local 713, MNR in Thunder Bay. She weighed in at 7 lb., 4 oz.

Any other strike babies who need birth announcements in **FRONTlines**?

### On the menu:

Chili at noon Friday in Red Lake. Smoked fish and clam chowder in Sioux Lookout (probably gone).

### Good local website:

[www.littlesquares.com/362](http://www.littlesquares.com/362) includes local press releases and factsheets about members' work. Good ideas here for other local communications people.

### No entry here

Dianne Wilkinson of Local 232 reports good times at the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

"In 1996 everyone got in, but this time around with help from our friends at Local 233 (Corrections) we actually got them stopped."

On Friday they had a picket line at the Wellington County Museum and Archives in Fergus, where OMAFRA has its office.

They kept two vans loads (nine non-essential workers) at bay for about 1½ hours until both vehicles gave up and drove off. "The OPP officer told them that we offered to let them get out and walk across the line, but they declined. So the officer said we could hold them up for the rest of the day.

"Then we pulled a worksite inspection. The manager wasn't impressed by today's activities. It was colder inside the building than it was outside!"

### That's pedalling for your union

Mike Flynn, president of Local 355 at the Catulpa Tamarack Child and Family Treatment Centre has a unique (we suspect) plan to boost morale of OPS strikers.

Mike is planning to pedal his bicycle from Orillia to Toronto for the OPSEU convention.

And he plans to drop in on as many picket lines as he can on the way down. On the fast highway, it's a distance of about 130 kilometres. When you move off the four-laner to more cycle friendly roads and count all the picket lines, it's longer.

# Snippets:

## More excerpts from member communicators

### Dear Mr. Tsubouchi:

I would like to give you some perspective from Local 702, 10 days into the current strike. Observations are fresh from our picket lines, inside worker site visits and the local community of Kenora.

- The determination on the faces of our sister pickets at the Kenora Courthouse in -20 C with 50 km NW winds whistling down the Water Street “wind tunnel.”
- The “poisoned” atmosphere with inside strikers and managers struggling with Essential Services Agreements that cannot possibly cover all situations.
- The generosity of people, businesses, organizations and fellow unionists in Kenora that have supported our lines from Day 1.
- I don’t know of any Ontario Government facility in Kenora that is even close to “business as usual.”
- A marked change from the 1996 strike . . . larger, penetrating issues, deeper and broader commitment from sisters, brothers and the community.
- A few days ago I ran into my Deputy Minister on a picket line in Kenora . . . our common desire was “Let’s get back to work sooner rather than later . . .”.
- The speed and efficiency whereby Local 712 [MNR] erected wind shelter barriers on our lines.

We all want to get back to normal operations. This can only be done by getting back to real bargaining that addresses the main issues.

The health, safety and well-being

of the people of Ontario require an agreement now. Delay exacerbates dangerous situations. We need an agreement that we all can live with to ensure that Ministries can deliver programs effectively in the future.

Each day that we delay means more “broken pieces” that will have to be put back together or forever lost after the strike.

People in this province have died thanks to the cuts made at the Ministry of the Environment. Let’s get back to the bargaining table now and negotiating a contract that ensures the health, safety, and wellbeing of the people of Ontario.

– Fred Richardson

*President, Local 702, Kenora*

### Pennies a week

I am an unclassified employee, considered essential, but not essential enough to get paid for a full day’s wage. When the *Toronto Star* printed the “fact” that court reporters and clerks earn from \$28,410 to \$57,065, I can assure you that no court monitor earns anywhere near \$28,000. Their T4s are typically around \$20,000 to \$21,000. Perhaps your figure reflects full-time hours. We do not work those kinds of hours.

That is one of the reasons why we have rejected the government’s so-called realistic offer of 1.95 per cent. On a salary of only \$20,000 to \$21,000, that amounts to pennies a week, not even pennies a day.

*Linda Fudge*

*Certified Court Reporter*

### Are our highways safe?

*A press release issued by  
Locals 362 and 308*

Is your child’s school bus safe? How tired is the driver of that transport truck coming toward you on the highway? Are his tires safe? Is his load properly secured?

Many employees with the Ministry of Transportation are members of OPSEU and important services are not being provided during the current strike.

Some examples of services which are **not** being delivered are:

**Enforcement** of provincial laws which ensure that vehicles are insured and safe, and that commercial drivers do not exceed set work hours.

**Inspections** of trucks, school buses and other vehicles for mechanical fitness, load security and safety on the highway. MTO staff also check to ensure commercial drivers maintain activity logs and are not driving when they are tired.

**Licensing and Testing** including testing new drivers, renewing licences, conducting demerit point interviews and preventing issuance of licences to drivers whose licences are suspended.

The government has made deep cuts to the Ministry. The shortage of MTO staff means we cannot fully operate weigh scale inspection stations and conduct safety inspections of commercial vehicles. The provincial auditor has found maintenance has resulted in poorer service and higher costs. Let’s protect our front line workers.

# Why are you walking?

## Here's one member's answer

### *To my Friends*

I have never walked a picket line until 11 days ago nor been in a union until a little over two years ago. I have worked under two locals now.

Financially, I am unable to be on strike, yet I do it! Do I realize that we will likely be privatized or something similar within a year? Yes, I do. Do I want it to happen? No, I don't. I can take that one step further. I could very well get back

to work and not have a contract renewal in June. The rights that the unclassified workers **do not** have are staggeringly scary. Why do I walk?

**The fact that**, with one week's notice, the job that I love could be gone.

**The fact that**, I have to pay (from my own pocket) \$87 each month for my personal independent benefit plan while I am granted only \$57 to cover it.

**The fact that**, I am too proud to hide behind the walls of an empty building and collect money for **not** doing my job. If I collect pay, I work for it!

**The fact that**, "Term Classified" positions will very likely do away with Permanent Classified positions.

What does that say to every employer in Ontario? If it is OK for the government, who sets the labour laws, to do away with permanence in jobs and reasonable overtime, then it most certainly must be OK for other employers.

What is it like to work contract out in industry?

For close to 10 years, my husband has had contract after contract position. What that means is you are constantly looking for work. You get as little as one day's notice of the end of a contract. You can never take a holiday because when you are out of work you have not got the money or the time; you are involved in the stressful, heartless task of looking for work.

When you **are** working, you never know when the income is going to end for months at a time (3½ months this time and counting).

You have no benefit plan, no pension, in fact, not even a physical workspace you can call your own. You often end up working in the corner of a cafeteria.

Would you wish this on your family and children?

Not I !

I walk the picket line!

Please join me.

- J.R.

## Local 362 tells it like it is

The Ontario government would have you believe that a strike by OPSEU is only an inconvenience to those who need to renew their drivers licences, obtain birth certificates, register land transfers or go to the Ontario Science Centre.

**Did you know** that OPSEU people are also the folks who keep your environment green?

**Did you know** that OPSEU people provide the science and expertise to manage your forests, your fisheries, your wildlife, your endangered species, your provincial parks?

**Did you know** that OPSEU people enforce laws which protect our environment and our natural resources?

**Did you know** that OPSEU people work with local interest groups in the community to enhance our natural resources and promote sustainable use.

**Did you know** that OPSEU

people manage the activities that occur on Crown land – 87 per cent of Ontario?

**Did you know** that OPSEU people maintain our provincial park network, and protect sensitive areas?

**Did you know** that OPSEU people collect millions of dollars in revenue, derived from the use of our natural resources, for the people of Ontario every year?

**Did you know** that OPSEU people respond to your inquiries about nuisance animals, rabies, hunting and fishing regulations, dredging, filling and other activities on Crown land?

**Did you know** that OPSEU people work hard every day to keep Ontario's land, water and air clean and safe now and for future generations?

Ontario public servants would still be on the job right now, if the government had been serious about negotiating a contract.