



# Frontlines

April 1, 2002

On  
Strike  
Days  
18-20

## They understand in Walkerton

The mayor of the municipality of Brockton, which includes the town of Walkerton, has written to OPSEU about our members' work.

"It was most interesting to read ... the significant number of agencies, Ministries and workplaces where OPSEU members are employed and responded during the water crisis," wrote Mayor David Thomson.

"Brockton is indeed privileged to have had the support of these agencies and Ministries and the

OPSEU members they employ. I have heard and seen many examples of staff and volunteers going 'above and beyond' to assist the Municipality, in our time of need.

"Unfortunately, I cannot thank each one of these individuals personally, but I ask that you pass on my gratitude to all OPSEU members ... for a job well done during the water crisis. Their devotion to duty and desire to make a positive difference are commendable."

### Our message is clear:

1. We have never left the bargaining table. The government left and we can't bargain alone. It takes two to tango.
2. This is a strike about respect and integrity for unclassified staff.
3. We aren't the kind of union that sells out our members.
4. This is a strike about control over our own pension surplus.
5. This is a strike about rebuilding a public service devastated by nearly seven years of Tory power.
6. This is a strike we will win.

## Claiming space

Strikes have an interesting way of staking a claim to real estate.

First it's just people with signs, but slowly the strike reaches out and takes over.

Shelters are erected and evolve. A fire barrel shows up. Furniture arrives. Coolers and thermoses drift in. A barbecue appears.

Day by day, the space becomes more and more like home. A primitive home, maybe. A home where the fireplace damper doesn't work. But home.

The photo gallery on the OPSEU website shows elaborate structures, interesting plumbing and even large carved signs.

Snow sculptures dominate the art work on display, but there is much other creativity in evidence.

Without becoming a "Homes and Gardens" journal, **FRONTlines** is interested in what makes your line special. In addition to the people.

### Huge respect

"I can only send your union a huge amount of respect for continuing to stand firm against intransigent employers.

"It would be easy for many unions just to cave in and give up."

— Roger McKenzie, Race  
Equality Officer with the Trade  
Union Congress, United Kingdom

# Reflections on the strike

## Pride in taking this stand

“Management Board continues to spend thousands on government ads, full of misinformation about the government offer to us....

“Many folks have learned to be distrustful of the Tory negative media spins which have characterized this government. OPSEU may never win the media campaign – but they are doing a good job. The long-term impact of the distorted media campaign will be an educated, skilled professional workforce that knows the employer lacks credibility and is openly hostile to its staff. Not that the Tories care about any of this.

“Valuing people and good health care is not their goal. These are our goals and why we can take pride in taking this stand.”

– *Local 332 Upbeat News*

## On all our behalf

“Thank you for accepting this gift. I want to support your strike efforts and this seems to be the only way I can do it. (I’m also writing some letters.) Every buck I give you is to support the fight against the injustice and greed of this government,. Thank you for all your efforts on all of our behalf. Hang tough.”

– *From Local 436*

**Clarion News Flash,**

*a note attached to a donation*

## CUPE support

The OMAFRA line in Fergus is grateful for support from CUPE Local 4392, the Association for Community Living – Guelph Wellington. Food and time on the line were much appreciated.

## Make managers unclassified

We have a large component, and growing, of part-time workers.

By being part time, the employee receives no benefits and ends up with a smaller pension, if any.

Managers, on the other hand, are well paid and full time. Probably we could have them work a couple of days a week to set up schedules, as it is the employee that does the actual work. With proper scheduling and interdepartmental co-operation, more full-time employment could be provided.

Compounding the issue, salaries are falling below the cost of living, in spite of the misleading information in ads paid for with taxpayers’ money.

It was the employer that walked away from the discussions and it is past time for them to come back with a fair and workable offer.

– *Mario Alloi, retiree,  
letter to Sault Star*

## Letter advice

The *Toronto Star* offers this advice for letter-writers:

“Letters must include full name, address, and phone numbers of the sender, however street names and phone numbers will not be published. We reserve the right to edit letters, which typically run 50-300 words.”

Most newspapers tell you where to send letters on their letters page by mail, fax and email.

The *Star*’s guideline on length is typical.

## Side by side

*Revised words*

*by Barry Wolframe*

*of OPSEU’s Flying Pickets*

We’re not askin’ for a barrel of ...  
money

They’re bustin’ our union, that’s not  
... funny

So we’re walkin’ the line, carryin’ a  
sign, side by side.

### Chorus:

Through the coldest weather  
What if our polls should fall?  
Just as long as we stick together  
That won’t matter at all.

When the Tories have their trouble  
and have ... parted,

We’ll be stronger than we were  
when we started,

Just carryin’ that sign, while we’re  
walkin’ the line, side by side.

### Chorus:

Oh they think that we have lost our  
am ... bition,

We’ll show them that we haven’t  
gone fishin’

By carryin’ our signs, strong on the  
lines, side by side.

### Chorus:

There’s a lesson to be learned and  
we’ll ... take it!

If we’re caring and we’re sharing  
we’ll ... make it!

So keep holdin’ that line, it’s yours  
and it’s mine, side by side.

Sisters and brothers  
Side by side.

We’re gonna win this

**Side by side!**