



# Frontlines

April 16, 2002

A  
fair  
deal  
now!!

## 10,000 strong OPSEU greets Eves

You've probably seen this on TV...

A high-energy crowd of 10,000 OPS strikers and friends demonstrated for a new collective agreement at Queen's Park Monday to greet Ernie Eves as he was sworn in as Premier.

Wearing stickers saying, "Hey Ernie, we need to talk," they marched up to Queen's Park in two columns from the courthouse at 361 University Ave.

Another group, led by President Leah Casselman, converged on Queen's Park along College Street from the east. A third group arrayed itself in front of the Legislature.

When the two marching groups met at the intersection of College St. and University, at about 2:20 pm, they sat down and blocked traffic in all four directions.

Traffic was soon backed up for as far as the eye could see, and streetcars were rerouted.

OPSEU members were joined by CAW, OECTA, CUPE Locals 79 and 416, OLBEU, CUPW, CEP, ATU, Steelworkers, Labour Council and others.

"We're looking forward to having a new Premier!" President Leah Casselman told the crowd. She called on Ernie Eves to give

government negotiators a new mandate to settle the month-old public service strike.

"Our whole round of bargaining has been about rebuilding public services," she said. "You folks do a fantastic job. [After Walkerton] the rest of Ontario knows the work we do.

"This is about getting the tools to do the job, and getting respect from the employer, and the opportunity to have a career in the public service.

"Ernie, we've had seven years of total disregard for the work we do and we've had enough!"

"Your struggle is not only about your work, it's about the entire province," said Ontario Federation of Labour President Wayne Samuelson. "For seven years you warned the government [about the folly of public service cuts], and they didn't listen. "Then you planted your feet, you took a strike vote, and you said 'Enough is Enough.'"

Peter Kormos (NDP MPP) said the massive demonstration was "just a prelude to what Eves and his gang should expect" if they don't bargain a fair deal. "Victory will be yours!"

Dominic Agostino (Liberal MPP) said he saw "Tory bagmen and fund-raisers celebrating while the

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### Want to reach Ernie?

Here's how:

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Orangeville, ON L9W 3J8

Phone: 519-941-1255

Toll-Free: 1-866-225-3837

## Talking to Ernie

President Leah Casselman was there when Premier Ernie Eves came out of the swearing in ceremony at the Legislature on Monday with his partner Isabel Bassett.

Leah told him that they were going to have to talk, and he replied: "Hello Leah."

She said that this was a good start, as in seven years, Harris had never acknowledged her.

Then Harris came out and was heard to ask quite loudly if someone was going to tell him where he was supposed to go.

"I think we have," said the president.

## Bargaining continues and so does the media blackout.

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

# 10,000 strikers greet Premier Ernie

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real Ontarians are out on the picket line going without paycheques.” He spoke of the need to restore public services.

John Cartwright, president of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council said, “When you take a society ... and rip it apart, one piece at a time, you can’t say you’re a leader.

At Cartwright’s urging, more members took a seat on the street and waited for Leah and the chairs of the Central and Corrections bargaining teams, Marg Simmons and Barry Scanlon, to re-emerge from the Legislative Buildings where they had gone in search of Ernie.

City of Toronto police were in evidence at the peaceful protest, but there was no sign of the OPP riot squad which greeted OPSEU strikers with violence in 1996.

Several police officers commented on how well-organized the rally was. For their part, police acted with discipline and professionalism throughout the afternoon. They watched the

sitdown at the University and College intersection, but did not attempt to oust the brave protesters. The intersection remained closed until about 3:45.

Casselman thanked those who participated in the sitdown for their

discipline and in maintaining a strong but peaceful protest.

More than 90 busloads of OPSEU members took part in the demonstration, coming from Windsor, Cornwall, Sudbury, and points in between.

## History repeats itself

The protest by 10,000 people on April 15 took place on the anniversary of another protest by 10,000 people on April 15 – exactly 130 years before.

Just southeast of Queen’s Park, there is a plaque that reads:

### **The printer’s strike of 1872**

*The nine-hour movement of 1872 was a broad labour effort to achieve a shorter work day through concerted strike action. The printers of the Toronto Typographical union went on strike for a nine-hour day in late March. On April 15, they paraded with union supporters to Queen’s Park. Near here, a crowd 10,000 strong rallied in their support. Employers, led by Liberal George Brown of the “Globe,” had strike leaders charged with criminal conspiracy. Seeking workers’ support, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald passed the Trade Union Act which established the legality of labour organizations. Although certain restrictions remained on union activity, the strike won the TTU a nine-hour day and significantly altered relations between workers, employers and the government.*

## No increase in Wolfe Island ferry runs

The government has lost an application before the Ontario Labour Relations Board to increase the number of ferry runs to Wolfe Island, just off Kingston.

In his decision, board chair Kevin Whittaker says that Essential Services Agreements are important. They were seriously and carefully arrived at and they should not be easy to change.

Whittaker agreed with Wolfe Islanders that there were problems.

“There is no doubt that the

reduction in Ferry service to Wolfe Island has caused considerable grief and hardship to the Island’s residents. I accept that for some, their lives have been turned upside down and that there is a palpable increase in stress and frustration within the community at large. Quite clearly, the private and public life of the Island community has been drastically marked by the decrease in the level of Ferry service.”

However, the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act does not

“require that essential services be provided during a strike or lockout in order to prevent serious and real hardship and privation generally.” The provision of essential services is not ‘business as usual.’

“There may be a point where serious and real hardship and privation renders the employer unable to prevent danger to life, health or safety.... I find that the employer has not discharged its onus of demonstrating that this line has been crossed.”

# Why we are Here!

When talk of the strike by OPSEU workers first started, I, a single parent of one, was scared. Scared at the prospect of the “what ifs.” We live from paycheque to paycheque and trying to save has been hard.

We (my 10-year-old daughter and I) have had to cut back on all the little pleasures in life in order to save what little we could in order to prepare for the strike. When the strike was called and I told her that I had a choice between going into work and earning a full day’s wage or walking the line with my fellow workmates, she asked me what I was going to do.

I told her that I was going to walk the line and fight for what I believed in, because if you don’t fight for what you believe, in people will walk all over you and call you a coward.

I was not going to let this Government and those who chose to cross the line take from me what I worked hard for. I told her that I was not a thief and by crossing the line that is exactly what I would be. Crossing the line means taking something that you, yourself, didn’t work hard for. Crossing the line shows that you are willing to steal from others who fought for you.

When she asked, “Why fight?” I told her why. I fight for the benefit package that helps me to buy your glasses in order for you to see what you are reading and help you get an education. I fight for the benefit package that helps me buy the medication when you get sick in order to make you better. I fight for the benefit package that helps keep your teeth clean and healthy so that

*This letter from Diane Angerman, Local 317, to her daughter, written March 29, should be required reading for anyone considering crossing a picket line.*

*Diane is on the line at the Ontario Fire College in Gravenhurst.*

you can eat your food without having to complain your teeth and gums hurt.

I fight against the Pay for Performance that shows favouritism to the workers, who, even though they may only work 50 per cent of their capacity, will get the raises because the Bosses like them better. And those who work 100 per cent will get nothing. I work in a sub-unit of another larger unit and if this Pay for Performance takes substance we will never see any raises for the hard work we do because the larger unit’s members will be rewarded before us.

I fight for the pension package that will help me when I am too old to work. The little bit of money that I will receive from this package (having only worked for the government for three years) will help me pay a small portion of my rent and to not starve to death.

I fight for the jobs that were cut when this government was trying to save money. The jobs of those people who inspect the vegetables, the meats and dairy products that we all eat. The jobs that keep our water safe and free of bacteria. The jobs that will keep the endangered animals from being slaughtered for trophies. The jobs that keep our forests green and healthy so that

you can experience camping among nature’s beauty.

I fight for the contract workers who never know if they are going to have jobs at the end of their contracts. I fight for the contract workers who don’t get paid vacations and sick benefits like full-time workers. I fight for the contract workers who want to have the security (benefits, paid vacations) that full-time workers have.

And last, but not least, I fight for the raise that will help pay the rent, put food on the table and clothe you. I fight for the raise so that I can start saving for our future and your future education. Walking the line, dear, means that we will only get strike pay (\$125 a week plus one dependent).

We will have to cut back some more and do without, but we will make it if we work together.

And, darling daughter of mine, if you and I can make it throughout these trying times, we can at least be proud of ourselves. We can be proud that we fought for what should rightfully be ours, and have not taken what is not ours by crossing the line.

My daughter now understands, and on my recent birthday gave me something that this Government and those who cross the line cannot take from me: Her respect and love.

This letter was posted on Local 317’s website:

<http://local317.tripod.com/>

Local 317 is spread over five different picket lines in Dorset, Gravenhurst, Bracebridge-High Falls and Huntsville.



## Strike Shorts

### Vacationers get paid

If you were on scheduled vacation when the strike started, you are entitled to be paid in full for the period of your vacation. Here's what it says on the Ministry of Labour website about Vacation Pay:

#### “Vacation pay when there is a labour dispute

“If an employer has scheduled vacation time for an employee, and the employee then goes on strike or is locked out during that time, the employer must still provide vacation pay for the scheduled vacation time.”

And here's the website:

[http://www.gov.on.ca/lab/esa/esa\\_e/ib\\_3vac\\_e.htm](http://www.gov.on.ca/lab/esa/esa_e/ib_3vac_e.htm)

### How many judges does it take to change a light bulb?

1. Just one; he holds it still and the whole world revolves around him.
2. Just one, but two lawyers have to explain to him how to do it.
3. None, the clerk does all the work for him.

– Local 727, Dryden

### Fish kill at hatchery

The Blue Jay Fish Hatchery lost 7,500 baby lake trout, reports Local 627.

The trout died because regular maintenance was not being done.

### Paving takes getting used to

A couple of managers at Burch Correctional Centre provided a few laughs at their own expense on Saturday, reports Gary Stonehouse of Local 218.

After using a mud trail to access the institution for 3½ weeks, they got an injunction to permit them to use the main road – with a 10-minute delay of course.

Saturday, two of them took a ministry van out to tell the picket line to anticipate another two managers. Hurt by the cool reception, they tried a three-point turn to go back to the institution.

Unaccustomed as they were to pavement, they went off the road and got bogged down in the shoulder. The pickets loved it.

### OPSEU noses!

Local 230 handed out Happy Face balloons to essential services court workers recently, but they used OPSEU temporary tattoos to give all the Happy Faces OPSEU noses.

The balloons made a nice statement in the court offices.

### Hi Ho! Hi Ho!

So sang court workers in Local 310 as they returned to work after a dispute over scheduling notice. They went back into the courthouse in two lines, singing:

Hi Ho! Hi Ho!

It's off to court we go.

I'm with OPSEU

I'm with OPSEU

Hi Ho! Hi Ho! Hi Ho Hi Ho!

Catchy tune. We're sure the managers loved it.

### Employer a no show at arbitration

OPSEU is still trying to make the dispute resolution process work, in the face of employer objections.

Most recently, OPSEU asked for an order from the arbitrators that they could fix scheduling problems. The employer failed to appear.

An arbitrator chastized the government for that. “To simply ignore the process because [the employer takes] a position contrary to the moving party is both unacceptable and highly destructive to meaningful dispute resolution in the labour relations context.”

### Stronger picketing in Ottawa

Namita Walia-Nault, vice-president of Local 446 is proud of her tenacious picket line at the Ministry of Finance at Blair Place in Ottawa.

After four weeks of diligent picketing, the property manager caved in on Friday and gave permission for the pickets to enter the property and picket all the entrances of the building used by the Ministry of Finance – as long as his other buildings and tenants were left alone.

All staff coming or going now wait their 10 minute turn.

Life has suddenly become much more difficult for those who choose to cross the line. Managers are very unhappy campers about this turn of events.

“Congratulations folks – and sock it to them – lean on those doors.”