

It was our fault, says gov't lawyer

Charges against Casselman dropped

Criminal contempt charges against OPSEU President Leah Casselman were stayed Monday morning in a one-hour hearing in Newmarket Provincial Court.

Casselman was cited for contempt of court Friday after an inmate from the Metro West Detention Centre failed to appear. When the judge asked why the inmate was not in court, he was told it was because of the OPSEU strike. So he cited her for contempt.

In Monday's hearing, Chris Riggs, a lawyer for the Ministry of Corrections told the court that the inmate's delay was because of a management decision at the Metro West. He filed three rulings from the Ontario Labour Relations Board dealing with Essential Services Agreements and board orders to enforce them.

One of the orders made it clear that the employer had not allowed essential service workers to enter.

Riggs told the court that supervision of inmates was restricted to management staff and the resources of the ministry were stretched to the breaking point.



Leah talks to a reporter on the cell phone after the court victory in Newmarket Monday

Judge Alfred Stong said that the "elements in play" which had prevented the court appearance now seem to have been addressed by the appropriate authorities.

"The criminal contempt charge against Leah Casselman is based on information he (the judge hearing the case Friday) did not have at his disposal.... And since the decision not to send the inmates to court "did not emanate from Leah Casselman herself," he stayed the proceedings.

This means the charges are dropped.

Wear the t-shirts

Inside workers should remember to wear their inside strike t-shirts. Now more than ever!

Messages of support A tough stand

Congratulations to you and your members for taking so tough a stand in your negotiations.

Your members have experienced disappointment, frustration, and even anger during bargaining. In the end it will be the courage they have shown in taking a stand that will make all the difference.

Please assure members that the thoughts and best wishes of ETFO's 65,000 members are with them. We know the vital role OPSEU members play in providing public services to the people on Ontario.

– Emily Noble, first vice-president Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

Incomprehensible!

Like millions of citizens of Ontario, I find it incomprehensible that this Government continues its assault on public service workers and the critical programs they deliver. At a time when major investments in public services are desperately needed, the Harris government has chosen to make matters worse.

– Steve Hindle, President, Professional Institute of the Public Service.

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

The news from everywhere

Shake what your mama gave ya!

It looked suspicious.

Last Thursday, picketers at Whitby Mental Health Centre watched a woman park her car and walk to a secluded area near the lake with a Tim Horton's donut box.

When she hid the box in some bushes, Local 331 picket captain Tom Lawrence sent two pickets to investigate. In the box was a guinea pig in distress.

"The woman had put a few carrot sticks in the box for its last meal," said local president Joan Gates.

Members recorded the car's licence number and reported it, with the guinea pig, to the Humane Society of Durham Region. The guinea pig has been treated and is recovering nicely. At last report, the Humane Society was contemplating legal action against the woman.

Hello? Hel-lo?

Claire Rowett nominates a manager at MTO (Keele and 401) as dummy of the week. He left three messages for Local 542 president Brenda McCullagh on her **work** phone. Even though he had her **home** number on his contact list.

Missing the basic concept of a strike, that lad.

Really essential!

Local 635 in North Bay reports many clients who crossed their lines being turned away at the door by a rentacop. Management has hired a rentacop to turn away the same clients they argued needed our essential services.

Flammable snow?

North Bay City Council has outlawed burn barrels – and any other outdoor burning within city limits. On Day 3, with a minus 24 wind chill, fire trucks were sent to douse the barrels.

Has the lack of MOE enforcement officers to monitor toxic emissions caused the local snow in the city to become dangerously flammable?

Fire fighters were upset at having to attend to such a frivolous call.

Prose poem from North Bay

by an unidentified scribe

In our meager Garden of Eden, a sole tree broke the chilling wind. Wrapped in scarves, toques and hoods, strikers unveiled their identities with warm greetings. I don't think any of us had ever, literally, worked so closely together before.

Stoked, a barrel of fire burned hot, a few yards away from a hefty woodpile, while barrels of laughs by strikers stoked morale. Everything from inside striker horn honks, transport turn-arounds, megaphone messages, truck tunes and group cheers bellowed overwhelming support for the strike:

"What do you want? **A contract!**

When do you want it? **Now!"**
And in the background...

"What do you want? **A better contract!**

When do you want it?
Yesterday!"

Essentially waste

Local 520 President Ron Marciniak reports that worksite visits at 777 Bay Street are giving him and Nancy Shepherd an eyeful of government waste.

It's a typical office in downtown Toronto with no essential workers. Managers, directors, ADMs, senior management staff of all rank are just monitoring picket lines and doing no work. "This Government that purports to be responsible is anything but," says Rick.

No thank you!

Managers at the Chatham Jail tried to tempt picketers there with alcohol.

"They came out and offered us alcohol on the picket line," reports Gino Franche.

The local declined. They didn't want to be set up for a booze-induced picket line incident.

Picket line play

Walking in circles can get tiresome after a while, even if you change direction and walk the other way to keep your leg muscles evenly exercised. So here are some diversions:

1. List 20 creative uses for doughnuts. **FRONTlines** will publish some of the best entries.
2. Come up with a new word that describes the way you feel when you are walking a picket line. We won't accept "defeated."
3. Write new strike words for On Top of Old Smokey.
4. Design a local contest with prizes and everything.