



# "Now is the time to lead"

*A message to all OPS members from OPSEU president Leah Casselman*

March 8, 2002

Happy International Women's Day! Today is a day to recognize the struggles of women everywhere. And as the clock ticks down towards our strike deadline, now is a perfect time to take inspiration from some amazing Canadian women.

After the Canadian women's hockey team beat the heavily-favoured U.S. team and won the gold medal at the Olympics Feb. 22, Canadian coach Danielle Sauvageau talked about what it took to win. She talked about Responsibility. Determination. Courage.

These are the same characteristics that OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service need to win the collective agreement we deserve.

Our strike vote is very impressive. It gives your bargaining teams more bargaining strength than ever before. In 1996 and 1999, there were two members supporting the Central bargaining team for every one who did not. Today, that ratio is not two to one, but seven to one. At the Corrections table, it's an astonishing 49 to one.

The vote is fantastic. Over the next few days, we must back that vote up by showing our employer that we have the responsibility, determination and courage to use it if necessary.

If we are bargaining against Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's vision of the world, which is all about cutting even more of our crucial public services, then there is a good chance that we will have to go on strike to win the things you sent your bargaining teams to get. But if there really are some in the government who realize that there is a public service crisis, and that we **must** rebuild the OPS, then we will likely have a collective agreement before our strike deadline of 12:01 a.m. on Wednesday, March 13.

Your teams will use all the creativity, judgment, flexibility, and determination at their disposal to get a deal without a strike. But it takes two to tango. If the employer will not dance, then we will go on strike. Your demands are too important to be dropped at the last minute just because the employer wants us to.

---

**"You're going to go through tough times in your life. Come back with responsibility, determination and courage. And don't ever, ever give up on you."**

**- Danielle Sauvageau**

---

***Responsibility. Determination. Courage.***

The door is open for the boss, Management Board Chair David Tsubouchi, to negotiate a deal and avoid a strike. If he chooses not to, then our strike will take place

---

**“Remember: If this government can afford a 36.6 per cent raise for MPPs, they can afford to recognize the hard work of the people who really make this province run”**

---

in the 10 days immediately prior to the provincial Conservatives’ leadership vote. In that event, the advertising campaign that began March 6 will intensify.

The Tories are hoping that the end of their leadership race will be a glorious coronation of their new leader. They are hoping for a cheerful “bounce” in public support as they dump Mike Harris and (they hope) all his

baggage and replace him with a squeaky-clean new Premier.

If we are on strike after March 23, the Tories have our guarantee that the bounce they want will not occur. The new Premier will take office under a heavy bombardment that will make the new leader fully accountable for all the destructive decisions of the last seven years. They will not shake the legacy of Mike Harris.

We have a strong strategy. Our job now is to maintain our focus and be ready to implement that strategy. No matter where you are or what you do, now is the time to be a leader. Be informed. Find out what you need to do to prepare. Help others get ready. Do not lose your focus on the goal – a better collective agreement for you and all your co-workers across Ontario.

In the days ahead there will be many distractions. For example, you may have heard the employer “crying poor” of late. Ignore this background noise. Employers always cry poor at contract time. The facts are that the Ontario government has more money, and far fewer employees, than at any other time in history. Despite erroneous and misleading statements by Jim Flaherty, top economists say the economy will grow very briskly in the year ahead. And don’t forget that your contract will run two or three years into the future. Even Flaherty says the economy will be booming next year (For a full analysis of the current economic situation, see my March 5 presentation to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, available on our web site at <http://www.opseu.org/news/Press2002/mar05speakingnotes.htm>).

Remember: If this government can afford a 36.6 per cent raise for MPPs, they can afford to recognize the hard work of the people who really make this province run.

Responsibility. Determination. Courage. Remember these words. They are the stepping-stones on the path to an “A” contract.

In solidarity,



Leah Casselman  
President, OPSEU

---

***Responsibility. Determination. Courage.***

---