



# TableTalk

Bargaining information for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service

## Careers on the table as contract talks begin

By Leah Casselman, president

As you know, your current collective agreement expires on Dec. 31, 2001. Your OPSEU negotiating teams start contract talks with the Ontario government in December.

Your career in the Ontario Public Service is going on the bargaining table.

You don't hear the word "career" very much these days – at least not in the OPS. In a recent OPSEU poll, three out of four members said that they used to see working in the public service as a career,



but that now they see it more and more as "just a job" after six years with the Harris Tories as an employer.

It shouldn't be that way. Public service is not just a job, it's a calling. Public service workers are guardians of public safety and the public interest.

After the tragedies of Walkerton and Sept. 11, we know – and the public agrees – that we need strong public services now more than ever.

Still, the gang in charge at Queen's Park refuses to see the crisis we face.

It is not a financial crisis. It is a crisis in public services.

Ontario now has *eight* full-time provincial meat inspectors – down from 150 in 1996. We have *zero* fruit and vegetable inspectors. We have *zero* public health scientists at our central public health lab. Overloaded probation and parole officers are lucky to meet with offenders for 30 *minutes* a month.

**In a recent OPSEU poll, three out of four members said that they used to see working in the public service as a career, but that now they see it more and more as "just a job" after six years with the Harris Tories as an employer. It shouldn't be that way.**

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The dangerous policies that set the stage for Walkerton are at work in every Ministry. Ontario Public Service employees today face crushing workloads, work speed-ups, and high stress. Important work is simply not getting done.

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**Your bargaining teams are determined to win improvements to your contract. In the weeks ahead, they will call for your support. If they have it, they will succeed. If not, they will fail. It is as simple as that.**

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Meanwhile, our members' commitment to serve the public is not being recognized or respected by this employer. Low wages and insecure jobs are clear evidence of this.

Staff turnover has never been higher. Staff recruitment has never been harder. Service quality is suffering as a result.

In 1947, the Honourable Roland Michener, the godfather of the modern OPS, said that, to serve the

public well, public employees needed secure jobs and fair compensation. In other words, careers.

I couldn't agree more.

In demand-setting earlier this year, OPSEU members identified what it would take to build OPS careers in this round of bargaining:

- classified status for as many workers as possible;
- secure jobs, adequate benefits and good working conditions for all;
- decent wages and proper job classification; and
- secure retirement options.

Your bargaining teams are determined to win improvements in these areas. In the weeks ahead, they will call for your support. If they have it, they will succeed. If not, they will fail. It is as simple as that.

OPSEU members are committed to providing quality public services. But too often, we set aside our own needs because the public is counting on us. We can't do this forever. At a certain point we have to say, "Enough is Enough."

In this round, your commitment to quality public services must be a source of strength for your bargaining teams. If you can take some of that commitment and direct it towards your own career goals, and those of your co-workers, you will be doing your part to rebuild the strong public service we all want to see.

In solidarity,



Leah Casselman,  
President



# Essential services update

Contract talks are just starting now, but your OPSEU bargaining teams have been meeting with the employer since September. The subject of their discussions? Essential and emergency services.

Essential and emergency services are the services that must be provided in the event of a strike or lockout. The Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act (CECBA) says:

“An employer of Crown employees and a trade union representing employees who have or are negotiating a collective agreement shall make an essential services agreement.”

In other words, it's the law. If we want to bargain a new contract, we must bargain essential services.

Dealing with essential services first makes both parties bargain seriously when contract issues are on the table.

The final details of the essential services agreement were slated to be ironed out in late November.

Some OPSEU members disagree with the whole idea of essential services. They support the total withdrawal of services in the event of a work stoppage.

Unfortunately, this would be illegal. Fortunately, there is a solution.

Under a 1999 arbitrator's ruling, if OPSEU members go on strike in this round of bargaining, essential services will not be provided the way they were in the 1996 OPS strike. Members who must perform essential services are **ONLY** required to do the essential parts of their job, not their whole job.

If a strike happens this time, we will have picket captains inside **AND** outside the workplace. Their main job will be to help members do the minimum required under the essential services agreements.

Preparations to train inside picket captains are already under way.

Providing essential services can actually work for us – if we use our heads. Essential services can be a union strategy, instead of a union liability. If the OPS has to go on strike, we will – inside and out.

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## Bargaining timelines: It takes two to tango

Contract talks are just starting now. While your teams want to have the best contract possible as soon as possible, this may take weeks or even a few months. At the same time, it takes two to tango. Under the law, the employer could refuse to bargain

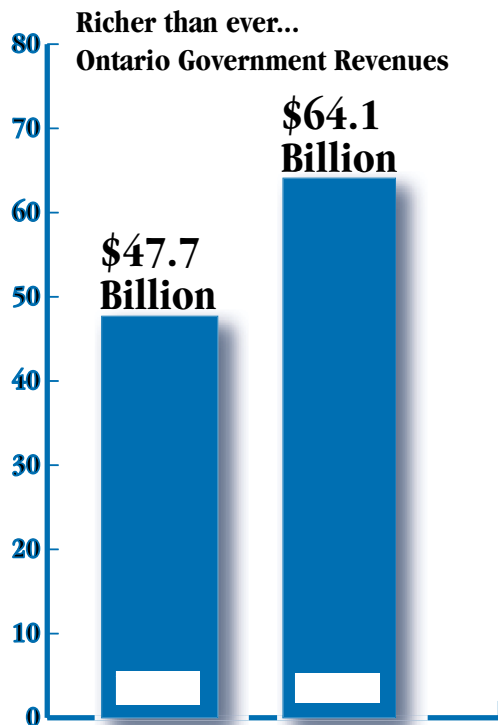
seriously and simply call a vote on its offer – whatever it is. If that happens, look for immediate communications in your workplace.

Your OPSEU teams will work as quickly as possible to reach a new contract.

# Six reasons

## the Ontario government can afford a better deal for public employees

*Economic facts related to OPS bargaining*



Think the Ontario government doesn't have enough money to provide a decent contract to public service employees? Here are a few facts that might help you think again:

### Fact #1:

**The Ontario government has never been richer.**

In 1995, when the Harris Tories were first elected, the Ontario government had total revenues of \$47.7 billion. In 2001-2, the current outlook says they will have revenues of \$64.1 billion. That's a real increase, after inflation, of 19 per cent. Any way you slice it, the Ontario government has never had more cash on hand.

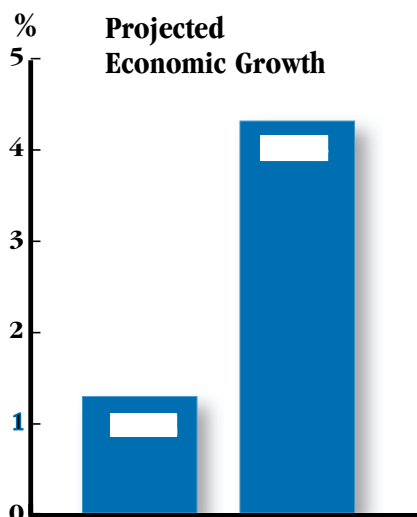
### Fact #2:

**We are not in a recession.**

In his November economic statement, Ontario Finance Minister Jim Flaherty said the Ontario economy would grow by 1.3 per cent in 2002 and by 4.3 per cent in 2003. That's not a recession. A recession is where economic growth is less than zero. It won't be this year. It won't be next year. The economy continues to grow.

Many signs are pointing to a big upswing in the economy in the upcoming year. Interest rates are at a 40-year low. The U.S. government may spend as much as \$100 billion (U.S.) to stimulate the economy. And in October, U.S. consumer spending bounced back smartly. It had slowed following the Sept. 11 attacks.

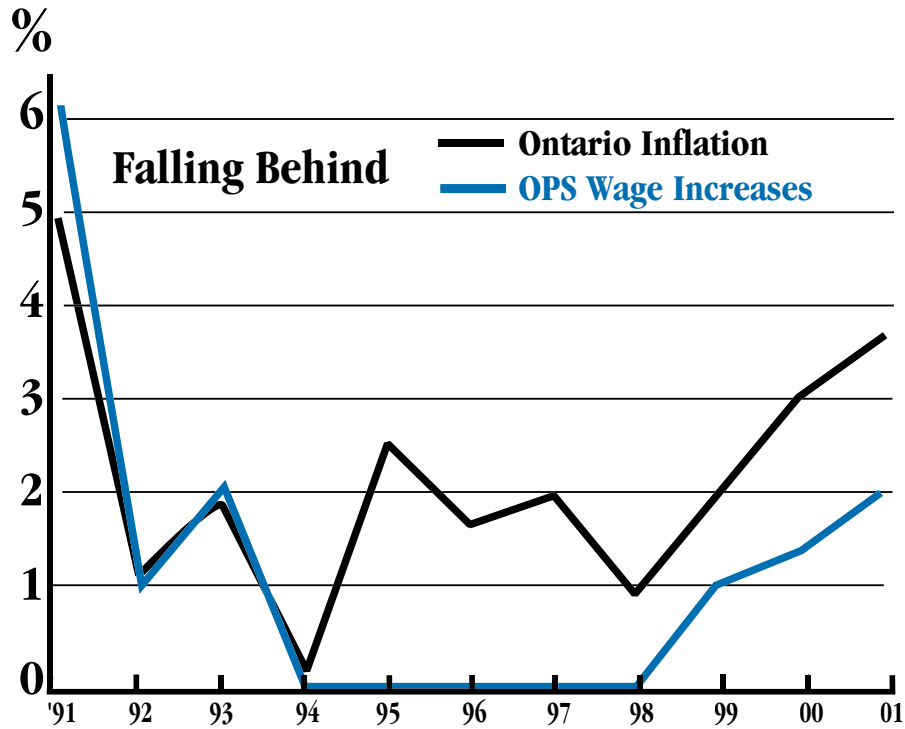
If our next OPS contract is two or three years, most of it will be in force when Ontario's economy will be doing very well, indeed.



### Fact #3:

#### You've already paid for your next collective agreement.

Since Jan. 1, 1994, you, as an OPS employee, have lost over 12 per cent of your buying power to inflation. In total, OPSEU members in the OPS have sacrificed over \$900 million in wages alone to keep the province running over the last eight years. That's a lot of money.



### Fact #4:

#### Premier Harris says a 36.6 per cent raise is "fair" – for him

Of all the things to come out of the mouth of Mike Harris, none compares to his statement that a 36.6 per cent raise for Ontario MPPs is "fair."

That's the total amount MPPs will get if an election is held in 2003. The government's Integrity Commissioner ruled, in August, that MPPs will get three per cent a year until the next election, and then an extra 25 per cent after the election.

The Commissioner justified the increase by stating that:

- MPPs' duties have expanded in the last decade;
- MPPs' workloads have increased;
- MPPs' salaries have not kept pace with inflation;
- MPPs are subject to "unreasonable demands... that border on harassment";
- MPPs have limited job security; and that
- good salaries make it possible to attract and retain good people.

Do any of these reasons apply to you? If so, you may just deserve a better collective agreement!

## Fact #5:

### The cost of our demands is very reasonable.

How much do our demands cost? In the grand scheme of things, not much. The total payroll for the OPSEU bargaining unit in the OPS is about \$1.9 billion. That's less than the \$2.2 billion corporate income tax cut included in the Tories' 2001 budget!

A one per cent pay increase for all 45,000 of us would cost the government just \$19 million a year. A 10 per cent increase would cost \$190 million a year, a 15 per cent increase would cost \$285 million a year, and so on.

Compare these numbers to the minimum \$300 million a year the Tories are giving to parents with children in private schools.

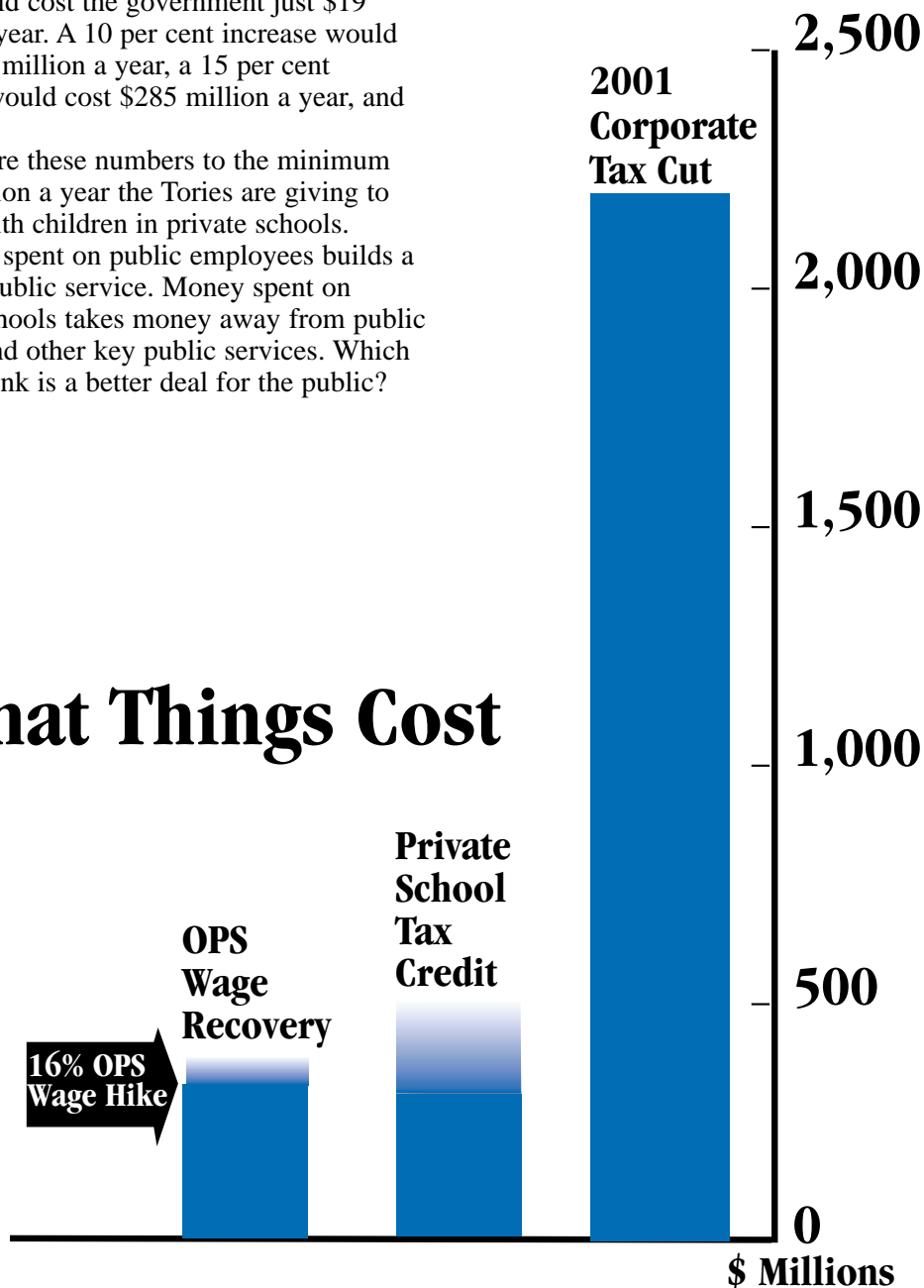
Money spent on public employees builds a stronger public service. Money spent on private schools takes money away from public schools and other key public services. Which do you think is a better deal for the public?

## Fact #6:

### Wage recovery: We're not asking for a big raise.

Given the huge losses OPSEU members have already suffered (see Fact #3), we're really talking about wage *recovery*. With inflation projected at at least two per cent a year over the next two years, we'd have to get paid at least 16 per cent more before it would actually be a "raise."

## What Things Cost



# The employer's agenda

**A**s this is being written, we don't know what specific demands the employer will put on the table. But after six-and-a-half years, and two rounds of bargaining, we've got a pretty good idea what they have in mind for OPSEU members.

Your employer wants to:

- continue to merge government functions, wiping out jobs in the process;
- manage you more aggressively;
- destroy more classified jobs;
- keep exploiting unclassified and other contract workers; and
- privatize, divest, and download more of OPSEU members' work.

In June 2001, the Tory government passed Bill 25, the *Public Service Statute Law Amendment Act*. Bill 25 allows your employer to:

## 1. Create new "term classified" positions.

"Term classifieds" would be a new kind of contract employee, neither classified nor unclassified. These jobs would have some of the benefits of classified jobs, but none of the job security protections.

With access to "term classified" employees, the employer could stop filling classified jobs altogether. There goes your next promotion or transfer!

If you are unclassified, term classified may sound like an opportunity to get benefits. Don't count on it. If the employer wanted to give you benefits, they could do it right now. The "term classified" strategy is actually a benefit *prevention* strategy. It allows the employer to give benefits to a handful of hand-picked new employees. But it allows them to

do it without a) creating classified jobs; b) giving benefits to unclassifieds; or c) converting unclassifieds to classified status.

## 2. Hire new unclassified employees on three-year contracts.

Currently the Public Service Act says new unclassified employees may only be hired on contracts no longer than one year.

## 3. Give authority over OPS employees to private operators or managers in other Ministries.

This change paves the way for shared services and privatization. You could be an OPS employee, covered by your OPSEU contract, but your boss might be a private operator. The private operator could discipline or transfer you or do any of the things your Deputy Minister can do – except fire you. They would have to ask permission to do that.

## 4. Allow OPS managers and private operators to change workplace rules that, in the past, could only be changed by Cabinet.

In cases where your collective agreement is silent, this could give Cabinet-level power over your working conditions to anyone who happened to be your boss (see #3).

All of these issues are subject to negotiation at the bargaining table. Your teams will do everything possible to limit the damage to OPSEU members. With your support, they will succeed.

# Meet your teams

OPSEU members elected their OPS bargaining teams in April 2001.

In this round, OPSEU has two bargaining teams. The Central Team is made up of one representative of each OPSEU region, plus one representative from each of the five bargaining Categories, plus one unclassified representative. The Central Team has 13 people.

The Corrections Team is made up of one corrections representative from each OPSEU region, for a total of seven people.

Central Team chair Marg Simmons and

Corrections Team chair Barry Scanlon were elected by their respective teams.

The Central Team negotiates all Central issues (job security, pensions, etc.) plus all Category issues (wages, shift schedules, training, etc.) for each Category except Corrections. The Corrections Team

negotiates all Corrections Category issues plus any Central table issues agreed to between the employer and the union.



Marg Simmons



Barry Scanlon

## Your Central Team:

- Region 1:** Steve Nield, L. 123
- Region 2:** Marg Simmons, L. 263, Chair
- Region 3:** Laurie Chapman, L. 323
- Region 4:** Jeff Bendig, L. 434
- Region 5:** Teri Breau-Auzins, L. 506
- Region 6:** Serge Valcourt, L. 634
- Region 7:** Joseph Catroppa, L. 736
- Unclassified:** Darwin Lacelle, L. 447
- Administrative:**  
Michel Chaumont, L. 623
- Corrections:**  
Mark Kotanen, L. 128, Vice-chair
- Institutional and Health Care:**  
James Roland, L. 720
- Office Administration:**  
Sandra Noad, L. 101
- Technical/Operational and Maintenance:**  
Peter Wall, L. 638

## Your Corrections Team:

- Region 1:** Jack Hopkins, L. 122
- Region 2:** Barry Scanlon, L. 230, Chair
- Region 3:** Larry Cripps, L. 309
- Region 4:** Jim Bothwell, L. 467
- Region 5:** Dave Graves, L. 521,  
Vice-chair
- Region 6:** Rick Dagenais, L. 642
- Region 7:** Len Mason, L. 737

## Contact your teams

The simplest way to reach your bargaining teams is at the Bargaining Centre in Toronto.

Call the Centre at (416) 815-0284.

E-mail the Central Team at [centralteam@opseu.org](mailto:centralteam@opseu.org);

E-mail the Corrections Team at [correctionsteam@opseu.org](mailto:correctionsteam@opseu.org)

# Your teams are talking to you...

- **In the workplace**

Your OPSEU Local is responsible for two-way communication in your workplace. Your Local is working to expand its network of information stewards.

- **By mail, by e-mail, by web site**

*Table Talk* is mailed out to all OPS members for whom we have correct mailing addresses. If you have co-workers who have not received this issue, it is because we do not have their address! Get correct addresses to your Local Executive Committee members. They can forward them to your OPSEU regional office to be input into the OPSEU database.

At critical times, bargaining happens fast. Mail isn't always fast enough to keep you up to

speed. Your OPSEU bargaining teams have been publishing weekly newsletters since September. The *Real Deal* is the official publication of the Central Team; *the Correct View* is the newsletter of the Corrections Team. You can read them in the OPS bargaining section of our web site at [www.opseu.org](http://www.opseu.org), or we can send them to you by e-mail or fax.

- **Get on the list!**

**To receive bargaining bulletins directly, e-mail a message to [lwilliams@opseu.org](mailto:lwilliams@opseu.org) or fax it to Lesley Williams at (416) 443-1762. Please include your name, correct mailing address, and local number (if you know it). Indicate that you want to be on the OPS list. Please indicate if you want to receive *the Real Deal*, *the Correct View*, or both.**

For e-mail addresses, both home and work addresses are good. For faxing, you must have a secure fax on a dedicated line, i.e., it can't be a fax that someone has to answer first.

[www.opseu.org](http://www.opseu.org)

# Your teams are listening to you

It's not enough for the bargaining teams to send out bulletins and newsletters. Two-way communication means helping members get their views and opinions to the table.

Your bargaining teams take their cues from you. Earlier this year, OPSEU members kicked off OPS bargaining by working, in their locals, to create demands for this round of bargaining. Here are some of the other ways your teams are listening to you:

- **Member Opinion Polling**

Professional polling gives our negotiating teams a scientific tool to listen to members throughout the bargaining process. If we have your correct phone number, you may be called to respond to future polls. Please do so!

- **“Plug Yourself In”**

This on-the-ground mini-poll has been distributed to every OPSEU local in the OPS. It has reached thousands of members and replies are still coming in. Information from “Plug Yourself In” is compiled and goes directly to our bargaining teams.

- **The OPS Mobilization Video**

Together, OPSEU members have an amazing story to tell. An OPSEU camera crew has been interviewing OPS members in various areas since Sept. 22. By bringing members together to talk about their issues, this video will help OPSEU members listen to each other. It should start to reach OPSEU locals at about the same time as this *Table Talk*.

# Are you ready?

## Five things you can do to get ready for bargaining

### 1. Get connected!

Do you know an OPSEU person in your workplace who provides you with information about bargaining? If not, you should.

Plug yourself in to your Local. Talk to someone from your Local Executive about how to do that. If there is no one in charge of communication between your area and the Local, volunteer! You don't have to be a steward to play a key role in letting your co-workers know what's going on – and letting your bargaining teams know what your co-workers are saying. You just have to do one thing: communicate.

### 2. Save your money.

Your bargaining teams are bargaining a contract, not a strike. But in the event of a strike or lockout, you'll want an extra cushion on top of your strike pay. Money is always scarce, but if you can delay any expenditures, delay them. If there is no strike or lockout, you can spend it all at once when bargaining is over.

There are many ways to get ready. For example, you could contact your bank, credit union, landlord, or daycare provider to discuss your options well in advance of a work stoppage.

### 3. Unclassified? Get converted!

If you are an unclassified worker, now is the perfect time to see if you are already eligible for a classified job. Right now, Article 31.15 of your OPSEU contract says that unclassified

workers who work for two consecutive years may be entitled to be converted to classified status. Talk to your steward about your rights.

### 4. Talk it up: “You support me, I support you”

Talking to your co-workers about bargaining is very important.

Everyone has different improvements that they want to see in the next contract. There is one, and only one, way that all OPSEU members can make progress no matter what their issue: mutual support. “You support me, I support you” is the way to go.

### 5. Take action!

All action around bargaining is about letting your employer know that you are serious. This could be something as simple as wearing a button, or getting all your co-workers to wear one on the same day. It could be an information picket.

**For help, contact your Local Executive Committee, your OPSEU regional office, or the OPS mobilization hotline at 1-877-561-8692.**

Whatever you do – or don't do – you can be sure that the employer bargaining teams will hear about it.

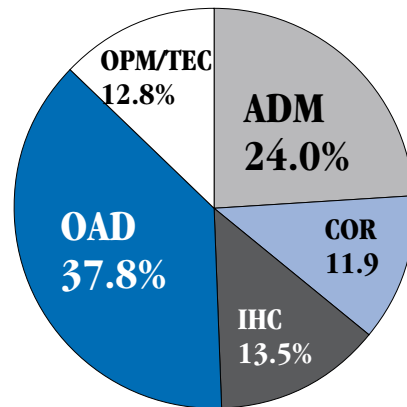


**OPS mobilization hotline:  
1-877-561-8692**

# Who we are: Basic facts about the OPS

## The OPS by Bargaining Category

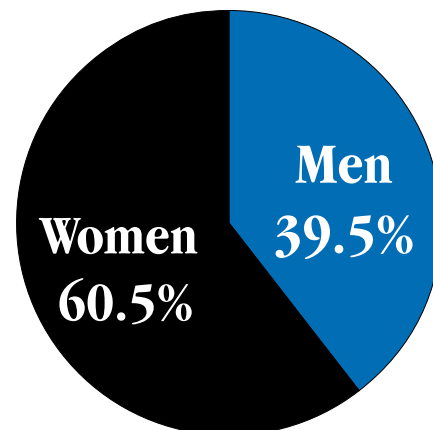
	TOTALS	% of total
ADM	10,909	24.0%
COR	5,389	11.9%
IHC	6,156	13.5%
OAD	17,170	37.8%
OPM/TEC	5,797	12.8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45,421</b>	<b>100.0%</b>



## The OPS by Gender

Female employees in OPSEU (as percentage of total)

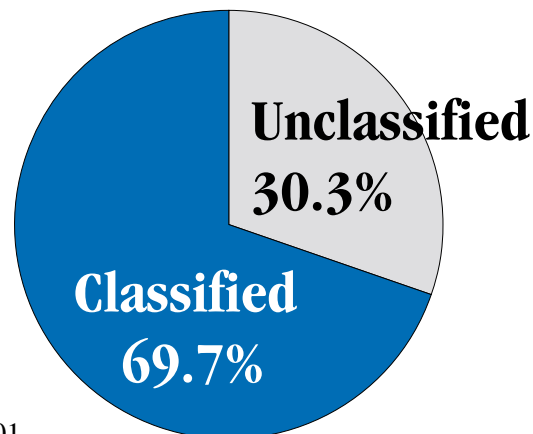
ADM	45.7%
COR	35.4%
IHC	72.1%
OAD	84.4%
OPM/TEC	28.6%



## The OPS: classified and unclassified

Unclassified employees in OPSEU (as percentage of total)

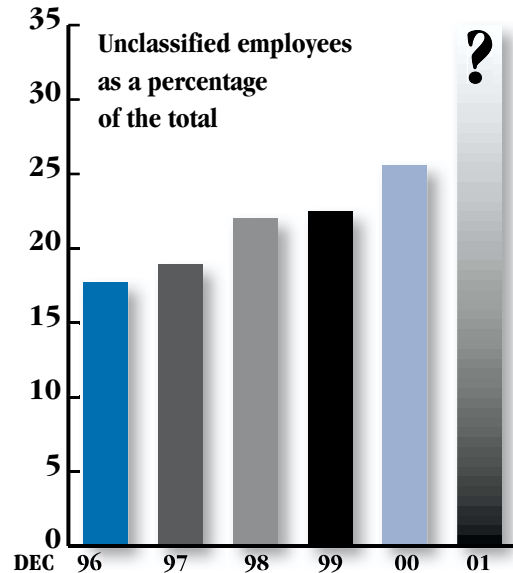
ADM	24.6%
COR	23.3%
IHC	31.6%
OAD	33.4%
OPM/TEC	36.9%



Information on this page is taken from the Management Board "strip list" of Sept. 28, 2001.

## The rise of the unclassified worker

Unclassified employees were 17.7 per cent of the OPSEU bargaining unit in December 1996. In December 2000, 25.6 per cent were unclassified. December 2001 numbers will only be higher.



# The OPSEU Strike Fund: Are we ready?

We've come a long way since the 1996 OPS strike that left OPSEU with a \$13-million debt to pay off. A temporary dues levy paid off that debt. Since the strike, the union has applied 10 per cent of gross revenue to the strike fund, or more than \$4.5 million a year.

Compounding interest, and relatively minor strike activity since then, has resulted in a strike fund to be proud of. The fund will reach \$27 million when our OPS contract expires at the end of the year.

