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# Summer students want government to pay up for holidays

## Handing out leaflets Saturday at two local provincial parks

Posted By NICKI CRUICKSHANK - Sun Media

Posted 39 mins ago

Landing a summer job at one of Ontario's picturesque provincial parks was a dream for Katherine Nunes.

That was until she got her paycheque last month and found it much smaller than she'd expected. Only then was she told the government had exempted itself from paying her and other student employees holiday pay.

"I signed my contract under the impression that I would receive pay for holidays worked," said the second-year University of Toronto student, who is a student employee at Earl Rowe Provincial Park in Alliston. "I worked here last year, and we used to receive pay in lieu of getting stat holidays off. They gave us 8.16 per cent of our paycheque and that was supposed to be higher this year."

Students will be losing an average of \$450 on their paycheques this summer because of the government's decision.

"We were all counting on that money for school, and that's books or part of rent for me," Nunes said. "It doesn't make sense to use why it's illegal for other employers not to pay for vacation and holiday pay and yet we aren't getting it. Student at McDonald's are getting paid more than us and we're government employees!"

This will affect the government's 3,400 student employees this summer, about half of who earn minimum wage of \$9.50 per hour. Many are expected to work the statutory holidays, but the provincial government will not be paying out extra

for that or vacation pay.

More than 80 students working at Earl Rowe and Wasaga Beach provincial parks will fight back by holding a park protest Saturday from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. respectively.

"We'll be at the park giving people leaflets about what's going on and how they can help us," Nunes said. "The word's slowly getting out and I hope we see some change from this."

Student employees at Sibbald Point and Six Mile Lake provincial parks held similar protests last week.

Megan Park, spokeswoman for the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), said that's what she's hoping for, as well.

"We're fighting on the side of the students because they were counting on that money," she said. "I want these kids to get paid and we feel the government must do the right thing here and pay them. They have the power to do it."

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Park said the Ontario government can get away with this loophole because it exempted itself from Part 3 of the Employment Standards Act that require employers to compensate for holidays and vacations.

She said the provincial government told OPSEU back in December about the changes in student pay, and students weren't told until May. Park said OPSEU has received grief over that, but had an explanation.

"When the employer (provincial government) told us they weren't going to give this pay in lieu, we were well into bargaining with them in December," she said. "We were unaware of how many students this would affect, and we were faced with the additional barrier of dealing with an employer who writes and changes the laws as it wishes."

Park said she understands students are angry at both OPSEU and the government, but OPSEU will do whatever it can to get students their money.

"This has pissed a lot of people off, and it's going to be hard to get money from the government," she said.

Guelph resident Ethan Townsend said he packed his bags to come and work in at Wasaga Beach's park and partly regrets that decision.

"I was promised this pay and it said that right on my application," said Townsend, who will attend the University of Ottawa in the fall. "I moved to Wasaga Beach because of this job and its good pay. Now I'm basically losing a month's rent and I turned down other jobs to come here."

Townsend will lead the weekend protest in Wasaga Beach and plans to do more if fellow student workers are willing.

"We're trying to get as many students and OSPEU representatives out as possible," he said. "If the turnout's good, I'll be happy to organize more events."

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