



July 27, 2009

**To:** All Liberal, Conservative and NDP MPPs

**From:** Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

**Re: Fairness for student employees of the Ontario government**

A week from today is the civic holiday in many Ontario municipalities. Did you know that student employees of the Ontario government who work Aug. 3 will receive no extra pay beyond their hourly wage?

I am writing today to inform you that the McGuinty government is denying its student employees vacation and holiday pay, money the students would receive by law if they worked for any other employer.

About 3,400 high school, college and university students work for the Ontario government each summer. They work all across Ontario, in provincial parks, road-side travel information centres, tourist attractions and for many other programs.

Many of the government services that Ontarians enjoy in the summer run largely on student labour.

The students work hard. The summer is their only opportunity to work full-time, earning money for the coming school year.

This summer, for the first time, the McGuinty government will not pay students vacation and holiday pay.

This decision will cost students between \$400 and \$600 over the summer, the equivalent of one month's rent or the cost of textbooks for one semester. Students were counting on this money. They accepted their positions with the government on the understanding they were getting it.

Job ads placed in the spring by the Ontario government listed the wage for a position being the hourly rate plus 8.16 per cent in lieu of vacation and holidays. Many students signed contracts in May that included the vacation and holiday pay only have to have the government subsequently send out a memorandum rescinding the payments.

The McGuinty government's action has caused great distress among students and their parents. Many families as it is are struggling to cope with the rising cost of post-secondary education.

How was the government able to stop abiding by the same labour standards that it requires all other employers to follow?

The government's own legislation, the Employment Standards Act, exempts the Crown from a number of minimum labour standards, including the vacation and holiday pay provisions.

**This means that students who work statutory holidays, as they are required to in the provincial parks, will receive no extra pay beyond their hourly wage.** At least half of the government's student workforce in the summer earns Ontario's minimum wage, \$9.50 an hour.

As a result of the denial of vacation and holiday pay, students making minimum wage for the government now **earn less** than if they worked for any other employer in Ontario.

This is disgraceful. The Ontario government should be a model employer, especially for the students who are the future of the province.

**Please help us restore vacation and holiday pay for the most vulnerable employees of the Ontario government.** Tell Premier Dalton McGuinty and his Minister of Government Services, Harinder Takhar, to do the right thing.

Visit our website for more information

<http://www.opseu.org/ops/campaigns/StudentWorkers/index.htm>

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren Thomas', written in a cursive style.

Warren (Smokey) Thomas

President

WT/mp

CC: Roxanne Barnes, OPSEU Chair, Central Employees Relations Committee

OPSEU Executive Board