

CUTS HURT US ALL



JOIN US IN THE FIGHT FOR QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES

Backgrounder: Job Cuts in the Ontario Public Service

Ontario Public Service Employees Union - July 14, 2011

1. How many layoff notices are being issued July 14?

Two hundred and seventy-four (274) OPSEU members will receive a “pre-surplus notice” on July 14 and will receive their actual surplus notice two weeks later. The ministries with the highest percentage of OPSEU members receiving pre-surplus notices on July 14 are:

- Consumer Services
- Economic Development and Trade
- Community and Social Services
- Environment

2. Where are layoffs happening?

All regions of the province are affected. Forty-five (45) per cent of the surplus notices are in the Toronto area, which has the largest proportion of OPS workers relative to population in the province.

3. More detail on job cuts numbers:

In the 2009 Budget, the McGuinty government said it would reduce Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) in the **OPS by five per cent (3,400 jobs) by March 31, 2012.**

In order to meet that target, **1,900 jobs will be cut between now and next March.** These jobs will be eliminated by attrition and layoffs. The government is not telling the union how many of the job cuts will be layoffs.

To meet the March 31 deadline, the government would have to issue all surplus notices by Sept 30 because of the six-months notice requirement. The government is not telling the union if this will happen.

4. Are more job cuts on the way?

Yes. In the 2011 Budget, the government said it will cut another **1,500 jobs in the OPS, beginning April 1, 2012.**

5. What is different about this round of layoffs as opposed to other layoffs that have occurred in recent years?

This is the largest wave of layoffs since the Mike Harris era. This marks the first time in the McGuinty era that programs are being cut altogether or are being severely reduced.

6. What are some examples of program cuts?

The Ministry of Community and Social Services will stop delivering Special Services At Home by March 31, 2012.

This program supports adults with developmental disabilities who are leaving the school system so they can continue to live in the community, usually with their family. **The government claims** 20 transfer payment agencies across the province deliver a similar program called Passport. **We say:** Is the government going to provide more funding to those agencies to take on the additional clients? Or will this be another broken promise from the government which had pledged to put the millions saved from the closure of the developmental services facilities into the community?

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is eliminating the frontline staff that ensure local governments delivering billions of dollars in social assistance are following the law.

Program Review Officers go into the field to review the files of delivery agents (e.g. municipalities and First Nations) to make sure people are getting the benefits they are entitled to and there are no overpayment errors, etc. Our members also recover funds for the province from municipalities who have made errors. **The government claims** a computer program can do this monitoring; it will require the delivery agents to run compliance audits and it will hire external auditors as necessary. **We say:** a computer can't go to a local government and review files; self-regulation is no answer; and contracting with consultants will cost the ministry more in the long run.

Ontario's Auditor General in his 2009 report raised significant concerns about oversight practices for ODSP and Ontario Works, saying it is a challenge due to the financial magnitude, legislative complexity, the number of clients, and the diversity of the agents. Nothing that has happened in recent years suggests we need less oversight of the way public dollars are spent.

The Ministry of Consumer Services is cutting 20 percent of its staff who regulate pay day loan companies, collection agencies and credit bureaus.

The Ministry is laying off two OPSEU members in a unit of 10 staff. **We say:** This Ministry was already severely under-staffed following cuts made by Mike Harris, who brought in self-regulation in several industries. Collection agencies receive the most complaints of any industry according to the ministry's own annual Top 10 complaints list. Why are we cutting staff when we need more of them to protect consumers? Ontario's Auditor General in his 2009 report said more "more rigour is required" for the regulation of collection agencies and debt collectors. Jim McCarter also said: "Problematic industries and repeat offenders need to be more effectively dealt with by the Ministry."

The Ministry of Environment is eliminating all designated facilities inspectors under the Drinking Water lead inspection program.

Regulation 243/07 requires private and public schools and daycares to flush their plumbing and test their drinking water for lead. **The government claims** there is such a high compliance rate there is no need to continue the Drinking Water Lead inspection program. **We say:** The enforcement of the regulation by the designated facilities inspectors in Toronto and drinking water inspectors in the ministry's district offices is why there is a high compliance rate. Did the ministry inspect all 10,000 designated facilities or is it basing the compliance rate on a lesser number of completed inspections? The responsibility for enforcing the lead regulation will fall more squarely on the shoulders of the already-stretched drinking water inspectors in the field. When the ministry keeps adding tasks to the frontlines there is a cumulative effect over time. That's when

things get missed. We also note with concern the elimination of a senior drinking water inspector/issues co-ordinator in the ministry's Safe Drinking Water Branch in Toronto.

The Ministry of Environment is cutting front-line drinking water inspectors who inspect municipal drinking water systems, one from each of these district offices: Cornwall, Ajax, London and Windsor.

Cornwall and Windsor will go from three drinking water inspectors to two. Inspectors covering York and Durham regions will go from six to five and in London, drinking water inspectors, covering much of the southwest, will be reduced from eight to seven. The inspectors' workload will be distributed to the remaining drinking water inspectors in those offices. District offices are short-staffed as it. The loss of the inspectors will cause serious workload pressures for the remaining inspectors and will increase the chance of problems being missed. There will be days when inspectors will only be able to deal with high-risk issues and hope nothing goes wrong elsewhere.

The Ministry of Environment will lay off technical experts in watershed management, ground water and air quality. The ministry is taking away the technical advice and expertise that front-line environmental officers need to protect our air, land and water. Among the positions being eliminated are two hydrogeologists, a water resources specialist, an analytical technologist, and the ministry's sole senior air audit scientist, laboratory services librarian and watershed management specialist.

The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is one of the hardest hit by layoffs.

The ministry's frontline staff has been much reduced over the years as the numbers of managers and excluded staff have skyrocketed. Job losses from earlier this spring coupled with the most recent layoffs have resulted in a **cut of nearly 10 per cent of OPSEU members** in the ministry. MEDT works to attract investment to the province. It helps small and medium-sized businesses grow and create jobs.