



# FRONT *lines*

Information for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service • December 2, 2009

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## Welcome to Frontlines!

Frontlines is your source of accurate OPSEU information for all 42,000 members in the Ontario Public Service. With this communication we will continue to build a solid information-sharing format to build union power and enforce our collective agreement between rounds of bargaining.

For the latest news, go to the CERC web page at <http://www.opseu.org/ops/cerc/cercindex.htm>

Looking for information about your Ministry? The listing of all Ministry MERC teams in the Ontario Public Service can be found on the MERC web page at <http://www.opseu.org/ops/merc/mercindex.htm>

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### Joint Labour Relations Training now available

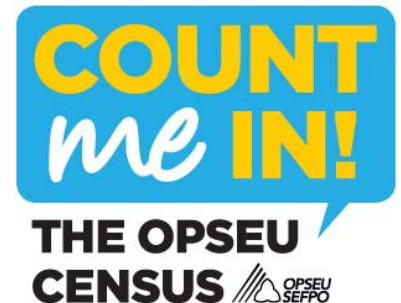
Do you ever feel like you never get anything accomplished at an ERC meeting? Does it seem like communications are broken and every meeting is like a war of attrition. Does it feel like meetings are more about power and control than dealing with issues? If this sounds like your ERC meetings, maybe it's time to sign up for Joint Enforcement and Renewal Committee Training.

These training sessions are being offered around the province. If your LERC would like training please sign up as soon as possible. Information is available at <http://www.opseu.org/ops/Aug27-2009-OPS-Joint-ERC-Training.htm> information. If you are having problems getting signed up let us know at [cerc@opseu.org](mailto:cerc@opseu.org)

### Count Me In! The OPSEU Census is available until Dec. 11

The new census deadline of December 11, 2009 will give OPSEU members across the province a bonus opportunity to count themselves in - if they haven't already done so. The employer has agreed to allow members to use government equipment to complete the OPSEU Census, so you can fill it out at work in your free time.

We encourage every member in the OPS to fill in their Census as soon as possible. For more information about the Census go to <http://www.opseu.org/countmein/index.htm>



# Human Resources Transformation: What does this mean for OPS Local Executives?

How is your local executive dealing with Human Resources Regional Centres? What is the quality of service you are receiving?

The Human Resources Transformation is complete. The employer has broken the province up in five geographical regions, and now some Human Resources Staff will be located in a Ministry Regional Office near you. It is strongly recommended that OPS Local Executives know where the nearest HR Office is located and who the Human Resources contact is for your Ministry. If

you are not aware, please ask your local manager for clarification. If your manager doesn't know, contact your MERC team for assistance.

Under the new collective agreement all grievances are to be forwarded to your manager, not to the Director of Human Resources for your Ministry. It is therefore imperative that every local executive knows who your manager then sends those grievances to.

If you have had any issues arising under the new system, please let us know at [cerc@opseu.org](mailto:cerc@opseu.org)

## OPSEU files Charter challenge for thousands of public sector workers

*OPSEU Press Release - November 6, 2009*

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union has filed a challenge under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms hoping to resolve a long-standing inequity affecting thousands of workers employed directly by the Ontario government.

OPSEU is challenging provisions under the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act (CECBA) which make it illegal for workers to get a binding decision on disputes over job classification. In 1995, the Harris Tories changed CECBA, eliminating the ability to resolve classification issues.

"Sections 51 and 52 of CECBA prohibit access to an independent, final and binding resolution for employees who have a dispute with how their job is classified," said OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas. "For the past 14 years, Ontario government

workers have had no means of addressing their constantly-changing job duties and responsibilities. This has to change."

More than 18 per cent of the province's 44,000 direct employees have disputes over their job classifications. While the government acknowledges that the classification system needs a major overhaul, there is no way to get a resolution without a binding method to decide each case.

"The very foundation of law provides that, at the end of the day, if two parties can't agree there is an independent person to make a final decision," Thomas said. "For well over a decade, our members have not had that option. It is our position this violates the Charter, and we will testify to that fact in Superior Court."

# Underfunded public services can't survive more cuts

*OPSEU Press Release – Oct. 21, 2009*

Public services are already starved for funding and can't take more cuts, says the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU).

Neither the people who need public services nor the people who provide them should bear the burden of paying down the provincial deficit, said the union in advance of Finance Minister Dwight Duncan's October 22nd Economic Statement.

"Public services have been on life support since the Mike Harris years," said OPSEU First Vice-President/Treasurer Patricia Rout. "During the current recession, demand for services has increased dramatically and yet our members, in virtually every sector, have had to do more with less."

The current funding crisis in children and youth services shows the situation is already desperate for the province's children and families.

"More than 27,000 children and 42,000 families receive care from children's aid societies and one in five children in Ontario need mental health services," said Deb Gordon, chair of the union's Community Services Divisional Council. "Further cuts would be

catastrophic when we're not getting enough funding now from government to help these vulnerable kids."

Twenty union leaders from children's aid societies and children's mental health agencies will meet in Toronto Oct. 21 for an emergency round-table on the funding crisis in their sectors.

Ontario needs a long-term plan to reduce the provincial deficit without cutting public services. The plan should be based on an understanding that the public sector is vital to the recovery of the economy.

"Every dollar spent in the public sector not only provides a service that people need, but also provides income that supports families, communities and local businesses," said Rout.

The union warned against privatizing public services as a quick fix for Ontario's deficit.

"The track record of privatization is one of higher costs, reduced services, poorer jobs and structural deficits," said Rout.

OPSEU represents 130,000 employees of the Ontario government, community colleges, the LCBO and more than 500 employers in the Broader Public Sector.

## The eHealth scandal and the cost of privatization

The complete mismanagement of eHealth Ontario resulted in over \$1 billion in wasted taxpayer dollars. All OPS leaders should be very critical of this issue.

This scandal is a direct result of contracting out OPSEU work to overpaid, unaccountable consultants. If OPSEU members were doing this work, this scandal would have never happened.

OPS members have all the skills and abilities to perform the work at eHealth. More importantly, newly-hired OPS members would get on-the-job skills and experience that would then STAY in the OPS.

It is unfortunate that every successive government in Ontario has to learn the hard way that contracting out government work ALWAYS costs more.

Just imagine if that \$1 billion had of been spent on training and rebuilding quality public services. 1,000 more OPS Information and Information Technology (I&IT) professionals would have been a major boost to the Ontario economy...and, unlike consultants, they would have been accountable for their work.

OPSEU has fought for years to get I&IT work back into the bargaining unit, and, in our new collective agreement, we now have an Appendix to get some of this work back where it belongs.

Perhaps the McGuinty government should start paying attention to OPS members instead of his "consultant-obsessed" advisors. We certainly could have told him some better uses for all that wasted money.

# Taxes are good and public services are a bargain

## Redirecting political spin and taking away the pompoms of the tax cut cheerleaders

We have all had the conversation. You are talking to a relative at a family function and they say over and over again, “I pay too much in taxes and the government has too much red tape.”

That conversation can be difficult, and sometimes you feel alone when standing up for Public Services

## Fact Sheet

Canadians are often sold tax cuts as though they’re the best bargain a government can offer its citizens but the opposite is true. The following points are highlights from the CCPA study.

- The tax cuts implemented by federal and provincial governments over the past 15 years have reduced the living standards of the majority of Canadians.
- The majority of Canadians would be better off if their governments had invested in improving and expanding local public services instead of cutting taxes.
- 75 per cent of Canadians would be better off if their provincial governments invested in public services instead of broad-based income tax cuts.
- 80 per cent of Canadians would be better off if the federal government hadn’t cut the GST.
- 88 per cent of Canadians would be better off without federal capital gains tax cuts.
- Tax cuts aren’t free money. They cost us in vital public services that help make Canada the envy of many nations.

Link to the full resource kit from the CCPA  
[http://www.growinggap.ca/campaigns/public\\_spending](http://www.growinggap.ca/campaigns/public_spending)

and good quality jobs. There is an excellent resource from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) that exposes the real truth about the benefits of paying taxes and how affordable quality public services are. Go to [http://www.growinggap.ca/files/Fact\\_Sheet\\_Public\\_Services.pdf](http://www.growinggap.ca/files/Fact_Sheet_Public_Services.pdf)

## Famous last words

*“No problem is solved via the same paradigm that created it.”*

Albert Einstein, German physicist, 1879-1955

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