



FRONT *lines*

Information for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service • April 6, 2006

All highway management jobs at risk as MTO gets set to sell more road work

The job of every OPSEU member in the Highway Management Division of the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario could be roadkill if a new way to privatize highway maintenance goes ahead.

For several months now, MTO has been planning the launch of its first Area Term Contract (ATC) for highway maintenance. Unlike the current Area Maintenance Contracts, which generally last five years and cover only basic road upkeep, the ATC will last up to 20 years and cover not only maintenance but also all road reconstruction and rehabilitation.

“The ATC model is structured so that contractors are responsible for both highway repair and maintenance, motivating them to make good long-term management decisions to keep these roads in good condition,” MTO Assistant Deputy Minister Mike Goodale said in a February letter. “As a result, the ministry may be able to achieve better road conditions sooner, which saves taxpayer dollars and delivers better monetary value.”

A New Zealand consultant who spoke to the Ontario Road Builders Association in February said that ATCs can save governments “up to 25 per cent” on road maintenance costs.

“If you have the right people you can have fun, do business and make money,” Tony Porter told the contractors.

If Cabinet approves the ATC model, the first ATCs could be up and running around Owen Sound and Huntsville by next spring.

Bob Houston, a member of OPSEU’s MTO Enforcement and Renewal Committee (MERC), works in Highway Management in Owen Sound. He says MTO’s record with privatization suggests contractors will make money from ATCs, but that’s the problem: Tax dollars will go to private profits, not better roads.

“In 1999, the provincial auditor found that the existing Area Maintenance Contracts were not even saving their five per cent target,” Houston said. “The auditor said that contractors were getting paid for extra work without tender and getting MTO vehicles and equipment without having to bid against other buyers.

“MTO doesn’t exactly have a stellar record,” Houston said. “The experience of Highway 407 should make Ontarians leery about long-term contracts with the private sector,” he added.

“The 407 sucks money out of Ontarians when they drive,” Houston said. “ATCs will suck money out of their pockets when they pay their taxes.”

Sign the petition!

The members of the OPSEU MERC for MTO are urging all OPSEU members to fight back against the latest job-killing rip-off.

Step one is to get informed; step two is to sign their online petition against ATCs. Go to http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/ATC_Petition to add your voice to those who believe public oversight and public management are the only way to go for Ontario’s highways.