



FRONT *lines*

Information for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service • February 14, 2006

Job evaluation project set to start

Every OPSEU member in the OPS is getting a new job description. But not right away.

Under Appendix 34 of the new collective agreement, OPSEU and the Ontario government agreed to update the job classification system in the OPSEU bargaining unit.

“There is no question that our current job classification system is out of date,” says John Watson, an OPSEU member on the joint working group that is taking on the project. “Technology has changed, management has changed, and jobs have changed. These days, job descriptions don’t reflect the work we actually do.”

The Job Evaluation Project, as it is being called, will not create new pay rates. Pay rates will be negotiated during the next round of contract talks.

The current collective agreement expires at the end of December 2008.

No pay adjustments will happen before then unless required to maintain pay equity.

The union hopes for a better outcome this time than what happened with the Bargaining Unit Overhaul (BUO). That attempt at fixing the classification system crashed in 1999 after OPSEU members filed over 10,000 grievances about it.

“This time around it will be a joint union-management process,” said Marg Simmons, another union member on the joint working group. “Union involvement with the BUO ended when Mike Harris got elected in 1995. This time around, all decisions are being made by consensus, and so far we’re off to a good start.”

OPSEU and the employer are in the process of hiring a consultant to help with the project.

For a full explanation of the Job Evaluation Project, read the Question-and-Answer document at <http://www.opseu.org/ops/frontlines/frontlinesfeb142006attach.htm>.

“A huge leap forward”

Court workers get some respect

The people who run Ontario’s courtrooms are about to get some respect.

In contract talks last year, the employer agreed to convert over 1,400 unclassified courtroom workers to classified “Flexible Part Time” positions. The conversion plan will be rolled out in the spring. Conversions are expected this fall.

“The creation of Flexible Part Time jobs recognizes the hard work of courtroom staff who have been slaving away in sweatshop conditions for years,” said Julie Weber, OPSEU Chair of the Ministry Enforcement and Renewal Committee (MERC) for the Ministry of the Attorney General (MAG).

“Now, our people will know in advance the number of hours they’ll work in a year. They’ll also get benefits pro-rated to those hours.

“It’s a huge leap forward,” said Weber, president of Local 228.

Weber and her team of MERC member Paul Myers (Local 526) and OPSEU Job Security

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Kingston workers push back on closure of card centre

The people who produce Ontario's health cards and driver's licences aren't going without a fight.

The 30 OPSEU members at the Kingston Card Production Centre found out in January that their work would be sold off to the private sector. The Ministry of Transportation, which runs the program, said it would issue a "Request for Proposals" (RFP) on Feb. 3 to start the search for a private operator.

The members got busy.

They talked to their MPP, Municipal Affairs Minister John Gerretsen, and they told their story to

the news media. When Gerretsen didn't answer their questions, they staged a rally where he was speaking and confronted him there, with reporters watching.

When the employer asked them to decide whether they would go work with the private operator, they said no. All of them.

On Feb. 2, the government announced it was delaying release of the RFP.

"Our members are totally awesome," said Kathy Smith, president of Local 468. "It's the strongest solidarity I've ever seen. Everyone is banding together and working together to keep their jobs, and their work, in the OPS."

The government has been unable to clarify why outsourcing is a good idea, said Smith.

"The employer has told us it's not about saving money, but aside from that, no one seems to know the rationale," she said.

"This isn't just about 30 people losing their jobs, this is about your personal information, and the security of your identity, and the fact that we're not going to be able to guarantee the security of your information if card production leaves the OPS.

"Everybody in the province should be concerned," said Smith.

The 30 Local 468 members are not giving up the fight, especially since MPP Gerretsen has told them that the sell-off is "not carved in stone."

"Our members thoroughly enjoy the work they're doing, and they're very conscientious and very hard-working," said Smith. "The people who should be doing public service work are the public service workers who are doing it right now."

Court workers from page 1

Officers Judith Marion and Stephen George have been hammering out details since the contract was signed last year. Here's what will happen:

- This spring, MAG will assign each courtroom worker to one of five categories based on hours worked from June 2004 to June 2005. The lowest category is 720 hours a year; the highest is 1,500.
- MAG and OPSEU reps will visit all 162 court locations in Ontario to explain the program. (Some visits will be by videoconference.)
- Conversions will take place this fall.

The Flexible Part Time arrangement is covered under Appendix 32 of the OPSEU collective agreement in the OPS.

Watch for a detailed question-and-answer document to be published soon.

Still no answers on MoHLTC regional office closures

Union, employer to meet Feb. 16

The employer still hasn't provided any answers about its plan to close regional offices of the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MoHLTC).

MoHLTC announced the closures On Jan. 16, but declined to provide details except to say that 160 OPSEU members and at least 140 other employees would be affected.

"We've provided the employer with a long list of questions about these closures, but the lack of response has been very frustrating," said Kathleen Demareski, OPSEU Job Security Officer. "For our members, the threat of job loss is bad enough without the stress of uncertainty added on to it."

The union committee assigned to the issue will meet employer reps on Feb. 16. Any answers obtained will be reported to members as soon as possible.

The union has filed a policy grievance on the matter.

OPSEU Board sets aside cash for successor rights fight

The OPSEU Executive Board has approved funding for a campaign to regain "successor rights" for Crown employees.

Successor rights allow unionized workers whose work is sold or transferred to a new employer to move with their work. They keep their jobs, their union, and their collective agreement. The Conservative government of Mike Harris stripped Crown employees of these rights in 1995.

In 2003, Dalton McGuinty made the following pledge – in writing – while running for the

Premier's job: "Public employees should have the same rights as employees in the private sector, and, as Premier, I will restore successor rights for Ontario government employees."

Two-a-half-years later, McGuinty still hasn't kept his promise.

The loss of successor rights has caused a huge amount of stress and economic hardship to OPSEU members since 1995. Thousands of workers have lost their jobs, and most who have kept their jobs have had to fight tooth-and-nail for wages, benefits, and pension rights.

Watch for campaign details down the road.

"I put my trust in OPTrust": Campaign aims for pension plan change

Many OPSEU members whose jobs have left the OPS have been able to follow their jobs to their new employer, but not all have been able to keep their pension plan. A new OPSEU campaign aims to help members stay with the OPSEU Pension Trust when they move with their jobs.

The campaign's goal is to convince Gerry Phillips, Minister of Government Services, to support "grandparenting" of pension rights for all plan members when they move with their jobs. (The new employer would still have to agree to keeping employees in OPTrust.)

By staying with OPTrust, plan members would have better pensions than if their pensions were provided under two separate plans.

The OPSEU Pension Trust, with over \$10 billion in assets, is run jointly by the government and OPSEU. Keeping more members in the plan keeps the plan strong for all 74,000 plan members and pensioners.

Postcards and campaign buttons are available at all OPSEU regional offices. Full information on the campaign, including speaking notes for OPSEU locals, is on the web at <http://www.opseu.org/campaign/optrust/index.htm>.