



# FRONT *lines*

Information for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service • January 15, 2007

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## Successor rights back in effect for Crown employees

After a 10-year fight and last-year's province-wide "same rights" campaign, OPSEU members in the OPS have finally won back successor rights for Crown employees.

"This is a big victory for the thousands of OPSEU members who signed 'same rights' postcards, distributed flyers, buttons and mugs at work, and lobbied their MPPs," said Eric Morin, OPSEU co-chair of the Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee.

The result is stronger protection for members whose jobs are transferred out of the OPS to another employer. Successor rights ensure that members can move with their work – and take their collective agreement, seniority, pay and benefits and their union with them. These rights were stripped from

Crown employees by the Harris Tories in 1995.

In December, the Liberal government finally lived up to its promise to restore successor rights by passing Bill 158. The Bill also includes a number of changes to the *Public Service Act*, including whistleblower protection for OPS employees.

Successor rights came into force when this section of the Bill was proclaimed on December 20.

Whistle-blower protection and other *Public Service Act* changes are not yet in effect. They are expected to be proclaimed once the government has developed regulations and made the necessary administrative changes, likely in mid-2007.

The full text of Bill 158 is available at: [www.ontla.on.ca](http://www.ontla.on.ca).

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## Proposed public health agency raises more questions than answers, OPSEU working group says

The McGuinty government's plan to create a new Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion is raising more questions than answers, according to a group of OPSEU members in the Ministry of Health's public health labs.

Under Bill 171, introduced in December, the new agency will be set up in spring 2007. If the bill passes, the ministry plans to divest the 12 public health labs to the agency sometime in 2008-09.

"The 2003 SARS crisis showed the need to repair the damage caused by a decade of funding cuts in the public health labs," says Patrick Fry-Smith, OPSEU Co-chair of the MOHLTC MERC.

"It's not clear how creating a new agency will do that. But moving the agency outside the OPS threatens to undercut the minister's direct responsibility to the public for the labs and the health protection system as a whole."

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## **New public health agency raises questions (cont'd)**

Members of OPSEU's public health labs working group have flagged key issues the government needs to address – before Bill 171 is passed – to ensure the new agency helps strengthen Ontario's health protection system:

**Successor rights** – Avoiding service disruptions means protecting members' jobs, wages and benefits, seniority, and collective agreement rights during and after the transfer. With the return of successor rights for Crown employees, the government now needs to confirm that successor rights will apply to the PHL transfer.

**Pensions** – Members need to know their OPTrust pensions will be protected. It's time for the government to sign off on the "grandparenting" amendment to the OPSEU Pension Plan. This will allow members who are transferred to the new agency to continue contributing to the OPSEU Pension Plan.

**No layoffs** – With plans to relocate Toronto's central public health lab and questions about changes to the work of the regional labs, members are calling for a commitment that there will be no layoffs in any lab, in any classification.

**No contracting out** – Bill 171 has sparked concerns about possible contracting out to private labs, downloading work to hospital labs, and/or including the public health labs in the ministry's plans for regional hospital lab mergers. The ministry needs to commit up front to maintaining the integrity of all 12 public health labs and protecting the work they do.

For more information, contact a member of the OPSEU public health labs working group:

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Working group members for Locals 412 (Ottawa), 432 (Kingston), and 628 (Sudbury) will be named soon.