



FRONT *lines*

Information for OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service • February 28, 2007

Rebuilding Public Services:

Ontario Can Do Better!

OPSEU members and the people of Ontario have a lot at on the line over the next nine months. This spring, the McGuinty Liberals will introduce their final budget before the next provincial election. The election itself is set for October 10, 2007.

The stakes are high. The future of our public services and OPSEU members' jobs depend on how Ontario votes.

And even though polling day is still months away, one fact is crystal clear: *Ontario can do better.*

Time's up, Dalton

During the 2003 election campaign, Dalton McGuinty promised to rebuild public services. Coming after two Tory governments and eight years of cuts, that commitment was central to the Liberals' victory.

There's just one problem. Three and a half years later, Ontarians are still waiting.

Hospitals and long-term care facilities still face service cuts, staff shortages and excessive wait times.

Boards of education are cutting staff and programs and closing schools. In our colleges and universities, growing class sizes and rising tuition are threatening the quality of post-secondary education.

Funding for other key programs and services has stagnated or been cut even further, from

affordable housing and social programs to child care and environmental protection.

OPS on the front line

Nowhere is the problem clearer than in the OPS. In their first budget, the Liberals announced plans to freeze or cut spending in 15 ministries. Next, they promoted the idea of a "two per cent world" to convince OPSEU members to accept wage increases below inflation. And since the election, the Liberals have continued with Tory-style divestments, privatization and layoffs.

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OPSEU survey asks *you*... 'How's McGuinty doing so far?'

What's happened to the public services you deliver since the McGuinty Liberals were elected? How have the cuts affected your ministry? How has your life at work changed? What should the government do to *really* rebuild public services?

OPSEU wants your input. To have your say, please complete OPSEU's confidential online survey. Just go to: <http://www.opseu.org/ops/survey2007.htm>. Be sure to send in your survey response by March 23, 2007.

Your stories and views will help the *Ontario Can Do Better* campaign make public services the central issue in the upcoming provincial election.

Ontario can do better (cont'd)

OPS cuts since the McGuinty Liberals were elected include:

- divesting the North Bay and Whitby psychiatric hospitals
- closing the last three regional centres for people with developmental disabilities
- contracting out provincial highway maintenance
- cutting budgets for parks and conservation staff
- off-loading the provincial corporate tax auditors to the federal government
- closing the Ministry of Health's regional offices and privatizing the Trillium Drug Program, and
- other cuts to staff and services in ministry after ministry.

Getting political

The good news is OPSEU members have learned an important lesson over the past 12 years: *protecting public services means getting political.*

That is how we helped dump the Tories in 2003. It is how we bargained a fair collective agreement in 2004-05. It is how we restored successor rights in 2006.

And it is why OPSEU is launching the "Ontario Can Do Better" campaign. Over the coming weeks, there will be plenty of ways you can help – in the workplace, in your community, and during the election campaign.

Stay tuned for more details – and check the OPSEU website (www.opseu.org) regularly for campaign updates.