



SEFPO

FRONT *lines*

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A bulletin for
members in the
Ontario Public
Service

Ambulance dispatchers heat up fight for wage hike

It's time for the Ernie Eves' government to feel the pressure again from the province's ambulance dispatchers.

There is a staffing crisis at the province's land and air ambulance dispatch centres. The government has told the union its staff retention rate is 30 per cent.

The government is dragging its feet on the solution: increase wages to reflect the current market rate.

This is what its own report recommended – a report the government suppressed during OPS bargaining last year.

Now, the government wants the union to trade off unrelated grievances affecting the whole OPS bargaining unit before it will discuss

a wage increase for dispatchers.

The union has quite simply told the employer, no.

The grievances relate to the employer's restriction of drug payments in two areas: generic substitution and over-the-counter drugs.

"We're confident we can win this battle on its own merits," said OPSEU president Leah Casselman. "The government is at its most vulnerable right now to outside pressure."

"If Ernie Eves is serious about public safety, he will give dispatchers the raise they deserve," Casselman said.

Meanwhile, the union's labour board complaint relating to the

suppression of the government-commissioned report will continue. The union has charged the government with bargaining in bad faith.

"Our message to the Ernie Eves government is quite simple: we're not going away," said Sandy Edwards, vice-president of Local 302 at the Oshawa CACC.

"Our members will be telling the government loud and clear in the coming weeks: stop the games and sit down and negotiate with us," said Patrick Fry-Smith, vice-president, Local 201, at the Hamilton CACC.

"The province's emergency services and public safety depend upon it," he said.

Better jobs campaign gets support

Laurie Chapman, a member of the last OPS bargaining team, has been booked off to work out of the union's head office on the campaign for better jobs in the OPS. You can reach her at extension 704.

Eight other member mobilizers are working out of regional offices in Thunder Bay, Sudbury, North Bay, London, Hamilton, Kingston and Toronto.

They are searching for all the

temporary and fee for service jobs in the OPS.

In every workplace, members should look around and identify all the jobs that are being done by agency staff or fee for service workers.

There was a steward's survey attached to the April 3 FRONTlines. This must be faxed to head office by April 25. It's at <http://www.opseu.org/ops/>

FRONTlinesApr0303.PDF.

The objective is to fold these temp and fee-for service jobs into the OPS. That will strengthen the union. It will also cut off the employer's efforts to create low-wage ghettos in the OPS - a strategy that hurts everyone.

"This is our work, and it should be done by our members," said President Leah Casselman.

Check the web: www.opseu.org

Authorized for publication by Leah Casselman, President