



FRONT *lines*

A bulletin for
members in the
Ontario Public
Service

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Ignore those consent forms

The government cannot at this point require members to sign consent forms for security and credit checks.

The Grievance Settlement Board has given the union “interim relief.” This means the government has to prove its case for the necessity of these checks before it can proceed with its plan.

If anyone asks you to sign a consent form, tell them you are waiting until the GSB issues its final

ruling on the matter. You are completely within your rights in taking this stand.

When the issue comes before the GSB, OPSEU will continue fighting for the privacy rights of union members. This case has a lot of life in it yet, said OPSEU President Leah Casselman.

“Obviously we are delighted with the interim relief, and we look forward to Round 2.”

On April 9, FRONTlines told

members that OPSEU and other government bargaining agents intended “to challenge the employers’ position through any available means, including legal challenges, that these checks are an unreasonable invasion of an employee’s privacy, dignity and self-worth and clearly a violation of their Charter rights.”

Today’s victory is the first step in fighting against the government’s Draconian plans.

Security checks put on hold

OPSEU issued this press release

TORONTO – The Ontario Public Service Employees Union has forced the provincial government to back off on its planned security checks on government workers, set to begin today.

Writing for the Grievance Settlement Board, chair S. L. Stewart ordered the government to stop its security and credit checks until the board deals fully with grievances arising from the plan.

“This is a very significant decision in that the board has stopped certain draconian measures which would clearly violate the fundamental privacy rights of many public servants, said Paul Cavalluzzo, lawyer for the union.

“We look forward to defending the employees’ interests when the board hears the case as to whether these measures are legitimate.

Although 9-11 was tragic, it should not be an excuse to suspend our cherished civil liberties,” he said

OPSEU President Leah Casselman said she was delighted members would not be threatened with job loss if they refused to consent to the intrusions into their privacy. “We will put our strongest case in front of the GSB, and I am confident that we will win a major victory when the entire matter is considered,” she said.

In a decision released today, the GSB decided the union had an arguable case against the proposed checks, and the potential damage to union members was sufficiently

serious to warrant putting the checks on hold.

“There is no way to actually reverse a fingerprinting exercise,” the GSB ruled. “The displacement of employees removed from their jobs because of a refusal to consent to a security check or because of an unsatisfactory security check can be remedied on a going forward basis, but not retroactively.

“The questioned integrity of those who may be displaced because of an unsatisfactory credit rating could not be undone,” the ruling said. “The privacy interests of the employees . . . clearly outweigh the interests of the employer.”

For the full text of the decision, go to www.opseu.org/ops/frontlines2/apr1703.htm

Check the web: www.opseu.org

Authorized for publication by Leah Casselman, President