

## MEMORANDUM

**OPSEU**



**SEFPO**

Syndicat des Employé-e-s  
de la Fonction Publique  
de l'Ontario

**TO:** All Presidents with members in the Ministry of Northern  
Development & Mines  
All Stewards in the Ministry of Northern Development & Mines

**FROM:** Brian Gould, OPS Supervisor/Negotiator

**DATE:** March 12, 2007

**SUBJECT:** **Ministry of Northern Development & Mines  
ERC Minutes – February 7, 2007**

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Attached, for your information, are the minutes of the above captioned meeting.

Please post or otherwise make them available to the members in your workplaces.

Also attached is a MERC referral form which should be used when referring unresolved local issues to the ministry level. The referral should be sent care of the Job Security Unit with all the supporting documentation, (e.g. minutes, correspondence, etc.), with any referrals.

**PLEASE NOTE: THESE MINISTRY MINUTES WERE PREPARED BY THE  
EMPLOYER.**

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Leah Casselman  
President

/jmh  
att.

Brian Gould  
OPS Supervisor/Negotiator

cc: MERC Chairs  
Ministry ERC

**Ministry of Northern Development & Mines  
Ministry Employee Relations Committee**

**Wednesday, February 7, 2007  
159 Cedar St., 7<sup>th</sup> Fl., Deputy Minister's Boardroom  
Sudbury**

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IN ATTENDANCE

For the Union:  
Norm Trowell  
Michel Lavoie  
Robert Sandgren (t/c)  
Sherri Pirkl  
Stephen George (t/c)

For the Ministry:  
Cleo Degagne  
Jonathan Barrett  
Lisa Zanetti  
Ross Kelly  
Louise Larocque (Guest)  
Cindy Blancher-Smith (Guest)

Recording Secretary:  
Donna Fillier

The Union chaired the meeting that was called to order at 9:00 a.m.

**1. Adoption of Agenda**

The Union requested the following be added under other business:

- Telephone Directory
- Meetings for Mines & Minerals Division

It was agreed that Item #5, 2005-06 Audit would be discussed first.

**2005-2006 Audit** – Management gave an overview of the audit. The purpose was to ensure our Ministry had adequate procedures in place and to assess whether or not we were following them. Management stated after receiving the final audit it was clear that we would not be able to deliver on many of the recommendations given the amount of staff we have. To inspect every site we have, would take approximately 7 years – as a result, we have established a priority inspection list. In another example, it is impractical to strive to remap the entire province every 20 years – rather, focused and prioritized mapping and re-mapping will take place based on resources and best options for success. The auditors are reviewing a very narrow scope of work and further context has been provided in follow-up responses. In summary, 8 areas were looked at, 27 recommendations were made and 12 have been implemented. Management stated they are working with staff to assure them they would not be overloaded, although there will still be some peak times.

**2. Business Arising from Previous Minutes**

**Service Ontario**

**Office Renovations** – Money is available for those offices that are not set-up adequately. The Union asked if there was a priority list of offices. Management replied that we do not have such a list, but there are some projects we want to have done by fiscal year-end and we have identified

additional projects for 07/08. These will be shared with staff once we have received approval to proceed on each specific project. Management stated that staff have been involved by having monthly teleconferences. Lately teleconferences with the New Liskeard office have been weekly as the official opening will be on Monday, Feb. 12<sup>th</sup> and a small celebration is planned.

**Signage/Visibility** – This is a work in progress and we hope to have it done by the end of fiscal. Branding has just been approved, so every location will have new signs as Service Ontario. A road show is planned for across the Province; already happened in Thunder Bay and Sudbury will be later this month. The Union stated this is great for staff but what about the public? It is crucial that they be educated as our name has changed a few times. Management replied that we definitely need to market ourselves under the new name and there is a marketing strategy in place. The Union also had a concern about our listing in the Blue Pages. Much of the public complain that they can't find us in the Blue Pages. It might help if we were listed in more than one area. Management stated that for now it will be status quo but would like to know which offices are having the most complaints concerning this.

**Cash Handling and Safety** – A scheduled time frame will be in place, hopefully by end of fiscal in all locations. Wireless distress buttons are being ordered, as we speak, for all offices. The Union asked if there are any safety plans being developed, ie. if approached by someone threatening will they have training on how to react? Management replied that there is already something in place in most locations and will be revised to reflect the new technology. The Union felt what was in place does not cover a lot of situations the staff in these offices may be faced with. Management replied the plans would be reviewed when making the revisions.

**Vehicle to get Mail and Deliver Money to Bank** – The Ministry is looking at secure cash pick-ups for all locations. We are also investigating courier service to deal with mail pick-up and delivery so staff do not have to leave the office.

**Training** – Face to face is provided when appropriate, however, updates are usually done by teleconference. All staff were asked to identify their learning needs recently to our new Provincial Trainer who will develop a training plan. Two in-house regional trainers have also been recently hired by our Ministry, one for the Northwest and one for Northeast. They will ensure each region gets the customized training they need.

**Workload Issues – Backup/Call-in** – The Union had a concern with back-up staff being called in on such an irregular basis, that they do not feel confident in their knowledge when dealing with clients. Management told the Committee they are looking at bringing in back-ups more often so that they are kept current, but have not decided on a specific number of hours. A provincial team is looking at this and will recommend some strategies to best address this. Also, when training is provided to staff, would like to bring in the back-ups right after it occurs so staff can pass on the training while it is fresh in their minds.

The Union also mentioned that there is only a temporary agreement with the Passport Office and now that there is so much activity with passports, we should probably be looking at a service agreement. Management agreed and stated that discussions had already taken place.

The Union asked if there will be any change to the sick day threshold since our staff are working along side other ministries that have different thresholds. Management replied that a review is in progress. The 2007 threshold for our Ministry will be the same as last year, which is 6.8.

**Reports and Stats** – The Union was concerned that staff are overwhelmed with the amount of stats that need to be kept over and above their regular workload. Management replied that they are looking at ways to streamline and are reviewing the reports, but statistics are definitely part of the duties and responsibilities of our Customer Service Representatives.

**Lockdown Procedures** – We now have lockdown procedures in place for 159 Cedar. The Ministry Health and Safety Coordinator met with Controllershship and the building leads and came up with a protocol which was released in November. The Union asked if any thought had been given to updating the original Emergency Procedures Manual. Management replied it will definitely be updated on-line. The manual can be found on the MNM intranet:

**Manual:** [http://www.ndm.gov.on.ca/documents/Emergency\\_Procedures\\_Manual\\_Sept\\_2002.pdf](http://www.ndm.gov.on.ca/documents/Emergency_Procedures_Manual_Sept_2002.pdf)

**Emergency Program:** <http://www.ndm.gov.on.ca/emergman/default.asp>

**Action:** *Management will update the Emergency Procedures Manual on the intranet.*

**Communication with ORC** – A memo was sent out in early October to ORC asking for better communication. An ORC representative attended the last Health & Safety Committee meeting at the Willet Green where the Committee expressed their concerns. Seems we may have made a little progress as we have been informed of a couple of things lately. Also, we now have an agreement with ORC that anytime construction is planned, they will put a sign in the lobby stating what will be happening and the timeframe.

**Meal Allowance** – No further information.

**Unclassified List** – The list was provided to the Union Co-Chair.

3. **Rebuilding the Public Services** – This item will be raised by the Union at all MERC tables. The Union stated the Premier had promised to rebuild public services, but the opposite seems to be happening. For every new job, 1.5 is being lost in OPSEU. Not only are we losing staff, there is flat-lining and outsourcing. When you measure that against the HR plan, it makes you wonder where this government is heading. This is not only affecting bargaining unit, but non-bargaining unit as well. Management pointed out that in the recent OPS survey, MNM was ranked first in terms of engagement. The Union replied that we should be commended, but that does not make you exempt from what is happening. The Union stated they will be making a stand against the cutting of services and would like Management to take this message forward to the Premier's office.
4. **Retirement Surge** – The Union talked about a retirement surge in the near future where some departments will lose up to half of their staff in a short time span. Has the Ministry or the OPS put a strategy in place to address this? Management replied that there are a few things in place: we still have commitment to the Internship Program; the new Youth and New Professionals Secretariat has a mandate in this area; lifting the age 65 retirement, to name a few. The Ministry did initial work some years ago on an Emeritus Program to return retiring scientists in a teaching/research capacity and may look to this program again as retirement emerges.

The Union pointed out that one huge deterrent is that when budgets are presented and shows that vacancies are being used to run the programs, it is hard to convince young people to stay when there doesn't seem to be a future for them.

5. **Audit** – Discussed previously.
6. **Staffing/Program Delivery** – This is tied together with Item 5. The Union stated that we have programs we can't deliver all aspects of because of budgets. There seems to be a disconnect between Toronto and us. Management replied that, while indeed fiscal resources are tight, we have benefited from central funding approvals in several areas (e.g. project funding for Grow Bonds and the Diamonds Team, core funding for NOHFC and Groundwater, and the \$15M Far North Mapping Initiative).

7. **Labour Relations Training** – CERC and MGS are talking about putting together training for MERC's and LERC's. It was suggested perhaps it might be a good thing to take as a committee. The Union stated that Community & Social Services has quite a good package that might be a good starting point for us. Alternatively, we could look at a consultant. Management and the Union are looking at this now and we have heard they may have already settled on using this package in a few locations as a pilot. CERC is meeting today, so we may hear the decision very shortly. It was felt by the Union that we should be pro-active and go ahead with the training ourselves.
8. **Bill 18 – Changes in Insurance Coverage** – The Union stated there are still a lot of questions from staff regarding this Bill. Management told the Committee a memo was sent out on November 28<sup>th</sup> from the Controllership Office explaining the changes to insurance coverage. The only real change is for certain scenarios with rented vehicles, where you used to be insured for all liability, but now your own liability coverage would be utilized first. If staff are still not clear on the changes, they should get advice directly from the Controllership Office.

The Union asked that this be a standing item.

9. **Other Business**

**Telephone Directory** – There will no longer be a printed version of the Government Telephone Directory and the Union asked if the Ministry had any plans to provide anything in print. Management replied there are no plans for this, however, it is their understanding that PACE should provide you with information on any person in the OPS as well as departments and services. The Union stated they did not find this to be a very user friendly system and it doesn't give the same kind of detail the printed directory does. It was suggested that something be put on the public folders to let staff know there will no longer be a printed version and how to find this information on-line. The Union made it clear that they feel it is a mistake to eliminate the printed directory as it is a very useful tool at your fingertips.

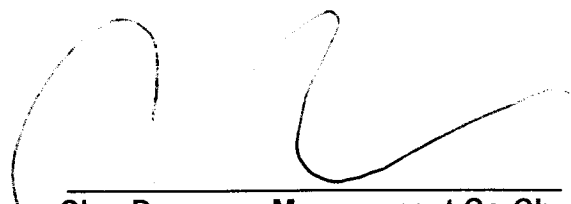
**Postmeeting Note:** Management made inquiries and the on-line version is actually through Info-Go at: <http://www.infogo.gov.on.ca/infogo/mainPage.do>

**Mines & Minerals Meetings** – Staff have voiced their concern over cost-effective meetings. It was suggested that there would be more savings if the Sr. Manager came to them, instead of bringing staff in.

**Defibrillators** – The Union asked if we would be getting defibrillators. Management replied we would not be getting any at this time.

10. **Next Meetings** – May 3, 2007  
Sept. 20, 2007  
Nov. 29, 2007

  
Norm Trowell, Union Co-Chair

  
Cleo Degagne, Management Co-Chair