

MEMORANDUM

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: November 9, 2007

SUBJECT: **Ministry of Northern Development & Mines
ERC Minutes – September 20, 2007**

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.

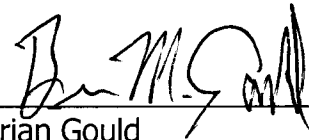
PLEASE NOTE: THESE MINISTRY MINUTES WERE PREPARED BY THE EMPLOYER.

AUTHORIZED FOR DISTRIBUTION:

IN SOLIDARITY,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President



Brian Gould
OPS Supervisor/Negotiator

/fs
att.

cc: MERC Chairs
Ministry ERC

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

**Thursday, September 20, 2007
159 Cedar St., 7th Fl., Deputy Minister's Boardroom
Sudbury**

IN ATTENDANCE:

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

For the Ministry:
Cleo Degagne
Sue Lepage
Ross Kelly

REGRETS:
Louise Brinkmann

GUESTS:
Jonathan Barrett (~~the~~)

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:

- Meal Allowance
- Violence in the Workplace Training

2. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

GICs – The new Senior Manager for ServiceOntario joined the meeting to address some of the on-going issues.

Training – There will be a position in place to come up with a long term strategy for training. The Union asked if the Regional Trainers will continue. Management replied that they were a pilot and now this new position will take over and develop a strategy which should be ready this fall. The Union stated that MTO training is being flagged as a specific item and asked if MTO services will be brought into additional offices. Management replied that there are none scheduled at this time but if it does happen, training will be provided. A Union member told the committee that he has been providing MTO services for nine months and new staff aren't being provided the training; he is expected to do it because he did get the training. The problem is he doesn't have the time to do it. Management stated that as more MTO services migrate to other offices, training will be brought to the forefront.

Procedures and Use of Buzzer Systems – Draft guidelines are being reviewed. We do not have any timelines right now as to when they will be approved. The Union asked if it will include testing of the system. Management replied it will include general parameters as to the types of situations warrant using the buzzer and also testing. Staff are required to wear a magnetic name tag as well as the pendant around their neck for the buzzer. The Union asked if something can be designed that would put the two together. Management did not know, but would look into it.

Action – Management will review current design.

Signage – The signage is not fully finalized, but hopefully, will be soon.

Cash Pick-up – The Union stated that the issue of cash pick-up seems to have been resolved. The only concern now is the amount of cash in the office between pick-ups and whether it is locked-up adequately. Management replied that there is a procedure to call for an extra pickup if needed. It was suggested by the Union that perhaps the offices should be equipped with safes. Management stated that where the cash is held is not just a regular file cabinet with a lock, but a heavy secure cabinet. The Union said that MTO has raised a concern that what we are using is not bolted to the floor. Management replied that there is a process for MTO to voice their concerns but would look into the matter of securing the cabinets further.

Accommodation – The issue is that not enough communication when changes or moves are being made and the Union would like to see this improved. There are rumours that certain offices are being moved, but no information has been communicated to staff. Management advised that the communication issue will be looked at.

The Union requested another update on ServiceOntario at the next MERC meeting.

MERC Training – Co-chairs had discussed using the package from the Ministry of Community and Social Services but agreed there was probably too much to the package for our Ministry and would wait for a one day training session currently being prepared.

Rebuilding Public Services – What the government said it was going to do is a lot different from what is happening. The Union stated that although some OPSEU jobs have been created, there have been more lost. The Union asked if Management knew where all the jobs were that supposedly came to Sudbury. There was a press release stating that there were 430 new jobs in Sudbury. Management replied they were aware of the positions at Ontario Shared Services.

- Student Volunteers in Field Parties** – A student that was going to be taken on with the field crew this summer did not have a SIN card and could not be hired. The decision was made to take the student on as a volunteer until a SIN card could be obtained. Unfortunately, the student incurred a serious injury while on the job and will probably require extensive physiotherapy. As a volunteer, you are not considered a worker and are, therefore, not eligible for Worker's Compensation. As it turned out in this case, the manager had signed a contract just before the injury occurred which gave the student Worker's Comp. coverage. Had the contract not already been signed, this person would have had no recourse. The Union felt that it may not be a good idea to continue the practice of taking on volunteers as it is unfair to them. Management replied that managers have already been asked to address this practice.

On another note, there has been a suggestion that when people other than an OPS employee ride in our vehicles, they will have to sign a waiver. The Union asked if this was going to be used across the Ministry or was this just being done in the Mines and Minerals Division. We should be consistent. A Union member stated he had researched the policy and it doesn't state anything about signing a waiver. Management replied that to their knowledge the waiver was still just an idea and

there was nothing in writing at this point. Management told the committee it would be deferred to the Health and Safety Committee which will probably be meeting by the end of October. The Union requested a copy.

4. **PDPs** – It is felt by the Union that PDPs are not being used for the purpose intended. Employees are not being given enough guidance from Managers on what should be included. They are just told to fill them out and when they meet, it is usually rushed. Most employees view PDPs negatively. The Union stated that the purpose of a PDP is for the manager and staff to have conversation. The manager should be telling the staff what they need to do to improve and then stating what they can do to help them achieve that. This is not happening. As for Training and Development, a lot of courses are being cancelled or staff are told they can't attend because of budget shortfalls, especially if there is travel involved. Money should be set aside by managers to cover training for their staff. Management replied that managers should be budgeting for the training they have agreed to. If there is an issue with shortfall in the budget, there are sometimes ways to work around it. For instance, agree to send two or three people one year and a few the next instead of everyone is one fiscal year. There is also quite an extensive list of courses for the North now and there is the option of doing a lot of them on-line. Management would encourage staff to have an honest conversation with their manager about the feasibility of the courses they would like to take.

The Union suggested that managers could be more active with staff and give them ideas on what courses they would like to see them take instead of leaving them to figure it out on their own. Perhaps there could be some training so staff have a better understanding of what should be in their PDP. Some PDPs look more like a job spec, with no reference to training at all. As far as budgeting goes, this is no longer an excuse a manager can use. The CFLL has a bucket of money that can be accessed for generic courses. This has been in place for a year, but staff do not seem to be aware of it. Management replied that a memo will be going out this week to managers to remind them that mid-year reviews are due and will include suggestions on how to approach the meeting. These are face-to-face where feasible, however, some will have to be done by teleconference due to geographic locations. The Union replied that there may be some face-to-face conversations being done, but it is usually with a hurry up and get it over with attitude.

5. **Wellness** – Issue was raised that some staff are experiencing back problems. The Union asked Management if they could possibly bring someone in for preventative training. There is a Wellness Fair done in Guelph by Agriculture and Food where people are invited to bring their wares and even include qualified medical people to give the flu vaccine. It was suggested that we could do something similar as our Ministry is set-up very similar to Agriculture and Food. Management replied that our Wellness program is well established for many years with flu-clinics, staff days, participation in the National Wellness week (the only ministry to do so annually for at least 4 years now) and many more activities. There is always room for improvement and a look at other options would be beneficial. The Union said that there was no clinic at the WGMC last year. Management will pursue having one for WGMC this year. Management also agreed with the Union's suggestion to promote wellness activities to further include all offices, similar to the "walk across the province".
6. **Compassionate and Other Leave Guidelines** – There have been a couple of grievances relating to this subject. The Union stated that many staff felt managers are making decisions on a whim and not giving the requests serious consideration. The Union asked if managers are aware of the guidelines. Management replied that there are common guidelines shared with managers as issues arise. The Union also asked if there was a standard form for leaves that this ministry uses, as apparently, one employee was asked to fill one out. The Union requested a copy of the form if there was such a thing.

Action: Management will look into the form that was referred to.

7. **Drinking Water in Provincial Buildings** – The Union reported that our Kenora office had an incident concerning the drinking water. Again, there was no communication; a sign appeared one day saying “don’t drink the water”, then it disappeared. Staff were not given any information as to why they couldn’t drink it, or how long it was expected to last nor were they told verbally they could now drink the water. Management explained that the Regional Manager of ORC met with the Northern Interministerial Committee (NIC) and advised them he was aware of the communication issue. ORC has developed remedial action plans. When tests results are received they are shared with local Ministry Management reps within one day. Management also stated that a memo regarding testing along with Q&As was sent to all staff on July 27th. Management stated that they will raise the communication issue again with the Regional Manager of ORC.

Action: Management to contact Regional Manager of ORC to discuss the communication issue with our Kenora office.

8. **MNDM Newsletter** – The Union had an issue with the “Corporate Corner” in the MNDM Newsletter. This is where the comings and goings of staff are mentioned, however, it seems to be selective as to who is mentioned. There were a number of staff who left but were never mentioned. The Union asked if this is a way to cover-up vacancies. Management replied that they were not responsible for what went into the newsletter however, Management emphasized the suggestion of hiding vacancies was a stretch and completely false. The Union stated that the Communications Officer usually gets her information from the Public Folders. She had approached Human Resources to get the information and was told they did not keep those types of lists. It was suggested by Management that perhaps branches could take the initiative and send in the information they want in the newsletter to the appropriate person in Communications. The Union felt it was not up to branches, but that Human Resources should be providing the information.
9. **Unclassified List** – Management gave a copy of the list to the Union Co-Chair and informed the Committee the list may now be sent to a union website.

Note: It was subsequently confirmed that the list will continue to be given at regular MERC meetings.

10. **HR Transformation** – Management gave a brief overview on the Human Resources transformation. There will be Enterprise Centres, Regional Offices, and Strategic Business Units, located in ministries. The whole idea is to operate as one employer and managers and employees in all ministries will be better served. In the past, some ministries received very good HR service while others had very little HR services. This new organization is scheduled to be finalized by November 2008, however, it is hoped to be moved along quicker and be in place by early in the new fiscal year. The Director of Human Resources will continue to sit at the MERC table.
11. **Results Based Plan** – There was a disclosure to CERC back in June or July. The numbers presented were for the whole OPS, but for our Ministry there was an increase of six positions for 07-10. The Union stated that our Ministry has a huge unclassified and vacancy list. Management felt that the list had decreased some. The Union replied that it does not appear that anything has changed. Management reported that the OPS has increased by 3,300 from 2003 to 2007. The Union informed the Committee that by the end of next year there will be a loss of approximately 1,800 people, so again, how is the public service being rebuilt.

12. **Other Business**


Meal Allowance – A Union member attended a Federal function and found that federal employees are allowed \$78.00 per day and are not required to supply receipts. Our process is annoying and

time consuming. There is still a problem with managers not being consistent. Management agreed that the process is somewhat cumbersome. Once again Management emphasized that if you feel your manager is being unreasonable, have a good discussion and explain the reasons. The Union stated that if this problem is still occurring by the next MERC meeting, they will be taking it back to CERC.


Violence in the Workplace – The Union asked if our Ministry will be making use of the tool kit that was sent to all HR Directors out of Janet O’Grady’s office. Management stated that while we know that Quebec is the only province in Canada that has legislation to deal with such situations, training has been offered on a case by case basis. The Union reported that there have been some incidents in our Ministry that Management was not made aware of. Some employees actually left the Ministry rather than face a grievance. The Union felt this tool would help and the Ministry should be proactive. Management advised that it is very important that managers are made aware of situations where violence in the workplace is being experienced. Management will review the tool kit.

The Union requested this to be a standing item.

13. **Next Meetings** – November 29, 2007



Norm Trowell, Union Co-Chair



Cleo Degagne, Management Co-Chair

Oct 19/07