

**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:** May 7, 2008

**SUBJECT:** **Ministry of Northern Development & Mines  
ERC Minutes – March 27, 2008**

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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.

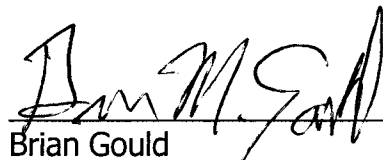
**PLEASE NOTE: THESE MINISTRY MINUTES WERE PREPARED BY THE EMPLOYER.**

AUTHORIZED FOR DISTRIBUTION:

IN SOLIDARITY,



Warren (Smokey) Thomas  
President



Brian Gould  
OPS Supervisor/Negotiator

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att.

cc: MERC Chairs  
Ministry ERC

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

**Thursday, March 27, 2008  
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  
Fred Richardson t/c  
Sherri PirkI  
Robert Sandgren (t/c)  
Stephen George (t/c)

For the Ministry:  
Cleo Degagne  
Sue Lepage  
Louise Brinkmann  
Ross Kelly

Recording Secretary:  
Donna Fillier

The Union chaired the meeting that was called to order at 9:05 a.m.

**1. Adoption of Agenda**

The Union requested the following be added under other business:

- Update on Disclosure for Atikokan/Nipigon Offices

**2. Business Arising from Previous Minutes**

**ServiceOntario** – The Union reported there are still ongoing issues with the ServiceOntario offices. There is concern revolving around under staffing, transferring of new programs without appropriate training and later work hours. We are seeing all these new programs being brought in, but are not getting any more staff. The workload issue is not being addressed as it has been brought to the table several times. Staff still have all their regular duties to do, and now MTO and MNR work has been added without any extra staff. Another issue is that a lot of public start coming into the office after 3:00 p.m. which results in a big line-up. Staff are sometimes staying until 6:30 in order to serve all the public that were lined-up; this results in a lot of CTO time. There was also one case where approved vacation for a CSA was revoked because there was training occurring in Thunder Bay at the same time and she was required to take it. Believe that this particular issue ended up being resolved, but if this is what will be happening, management can expect to see a lot of stress leave occurring because of heavy workloads.

Training for some of the new programs seems like it's being done in an experimental ad hoc way, trying to find the best way as they go along instead of putting thought into it before hand. When setting up a Pilot, a plan should be in place for training before the changes take place, not after.

There is still a lack of communication. For one office in particular, it was all over town that the office was moving and staff were not aware of it. When management was asked about it, the answer was that it was confidential and that nothing was confirmed. How confidential could it be when it was already all over town and the only ones that didn't know were the staff themselves. Just seems that it was not very professional. Management agreed that staff should be kept informed as much as

possible, even if it hasn't been confirmed and would be willing to bring that message forward to managers.

The new management structure that was supposed to be put in place is still on hold. The Union asked if there was any indication when it would be implemented. Management replied they did not know the status, but would inquire.

The Union requested that management bring someone to the table that has answers and can resolve some of these ongoing issues or they will continue to be brought to the table. It was also suggested that someone from MNR or MTO could be invited to speak about the training etc. Management stated that these issues may only be affecting a small pocket of offices as they are not seeing the same thing in all of them. Union replied that it would depend on the time of year; for instance if you go into an office right now, they might not be lined-up to the door, but if you go in at other times say from Sept to Nov. when hunting season is in full swing, it's 10x the workload. Management stated that it would make sense at those times when an increase in activity is expected, extra staff should be brought in. The Union agreed, but this would bring up another issue regarding work area. If you bring in two extra people, the work space is not large enough and there are still only two computers.

***Action: Management will invite the ServiceOntario Senior Manager to the next meeting.***

**Compassionate and Other Leave Guidelines** – Management looked into the form in question and it seems the form was used in isolation in one instance. There is no official form for our Ministry regarding compassionate and other leaves.

**Drinking Water in Provincial Buildings** – The problem regarding the drinking water in the Kenora office is well in hand. If it ever comes up again in another office, this could be used as an example as to how it should be handled.

**PDPs** – The Union felt managers and staff have different views on what a PDP actually is. Some view it as a checklist, others as career development. It would be beneficial if the Ministry could have a presentation on how the PDP should be used. Management stated there was a special session at the last management meeting where three skit scenarios were presented and were well received. The Union said management was to be commended for this, but this still does not help the non-management staff. How do they become aware of their responsibilities so that their PDP is done effectively. Management replied the website will be updated in the near future and that there is a complete package on our website that is quite well explained and also monthly links to courses are available on our newsletters. The Union stated that using the internet is not always enough and the least the Ministry can do is put on an hour presentation so staff can have a better understanding of what is expected.

Management stated that for the past number of years, we have had 100% compliance for PDPs and we have also tracked the percentage of courses completed. The Union replied that is not the issue. There are two types of staff, professional and non-professional. We are hearing that the professional staff are benefiting more; how do we level the playing field? Also, there is still the problem of staff being told they can't go to courses agreed to because of budget constraints. This should not be happening if it was agreed to in a learning plan. Management replied that they track completed courses through the learning plans and can review the stats to see what the percentage is regarding courses completed for professional and non-professional staff.

Management informed the committee that there will be three bear pit sessions in April for Managers to raise issues and will allow them to ask questions about the process. The Union said this was commendable, but at the end of the day, this still does not help the staff themselves. They need to have some level of knowledge to know how to approach their discussion with the manager.

Management replied they are taking a serious look at the information on the orientation site for new employees which would also apply to all staff. The Union asked if the documents reference the bargaining units, and if not, could it be included. Management stated they would take it into consideration.

**Action: Management will provide information on completed course stats as soon as report is completed.**

**Violence in the Workplace** – A package was rolled out to Managers at their February meeting; the meeting included a skit on this topic. The package is being refined for employees and will be ready hopefully by next week. There will be a workbook with exercises included. Managers have been asked to complete by the end of June and they have the discretion as to how it is rolled out. The Union asked if it will be mandatory. Management replied it will be mandatory and the Union will be provided with a copy. This will also be included in orientation and will be part of the Health & Safety training session for summer field staff.

**Action: Management will provide the Union with a copy of the package.**

**HR Transformation** – Management gave an update on the progress. Other Recruitment Centres across the province will be established by June 30<sup>th</sup>. As of April 1, Health & Safety/Wellness and Labour Relations will now be out of the Centre of Excellence. There will, of course, be some disentanglement, but essentially these services have been taken over by the Centre. Next steps will be the setting-up of the Regional Offices; will be five, one of which will be in Sudbury. This would be where the HR consultants will be housed.

The Union stated that every Ministry has disclosed to OPSEU individually, except for MNM and wanted to know why. Management replied it was their understanding the disclosure was done corporately. The Union stated that was done, but each Ministry is also supposed to submit. The Union put Management on notice that disclosure must be done as soon as possible and accompanied with the proper documentation.

**Action: Management will look into the matter of disclosure.**

3. **2008 Sick Leave Threshold** – The MNM threshold is 6.7, which is the same as last year. It is currently under review. The Union stated they would hope it would be more responsive to needs and less punitive.
4. **Corporate Disclosure for ServiceOntario** – The Union requested an update on the status of security checks and have there been any issues.

**Action – Management will provide answers before next meeting by e-mail.**

5. **MERC Training** – A new date was set for the training that was cancelled. The training will now be on May 27. Management addressed the issue of committee members not getting approval to attend this type of training or MERC meetings. As soon as dates are known of mandatory training/meetings managers should be approached for approval. This way the Manager has plenty of time to plan. If there is still a problem getting the approval, please let the Management Co-Chair know immediately so it can be addressed. The Union added it would be a good idea to copy both MERC co-chairs.
6. **Requests for New Job Descriptions at MERC** – Management stated the process for providing new job specs to the Union. The Union stated they are aware of this process, but asked why there is still nothing posted for the new Aboriginal Unit. Management replied they were posted this

morning as per the memo received. The Union told Management this was not how the memo was worded and should read it again. Posting the morning of the MERC meeting is not acceptable.


**Action: Management will review the wording of the memo.**

7. **Attendance of MERC Members at Meetings/Events** – Covered under agenda item #5.

8. **Other Business**

**Update on Disclosure for Atikokan/Nipigon Offices** - Disclosure for Nipigon/Atikokan was done.

9. **Next Meetings** –      Committee Training – May 27  
                                 Meeting – May 28  
                                 Sept 18  
                                 Dec 4

  
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Norm Trowell, Union Co-Chair

  
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Cleo Degagne, Management Co-Chair