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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:** Terry Baxter, OPS Supervisor/Negotiator

**DATE:** October 6, 2006

**SUBJECT:** **Ministry of Northern Development & Mines  
ERC Minutes – September 15, 2006**

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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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President

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att.

cc: MERC Chairs  
Ministry ERC

Terry Baxter  
OPS Supervisor/Negotiator

Ministry of Northern Development & Mines  
Ministry Employee Relations Committee

Friday September 15, 2006  
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  
Sherri Pirkl  
Stephen George (via teleconference)

For the Ministry:  
Cleo Degagne  
Jonathan Barrett  
Louise Brinkmann  
Ross Kelly (via teleconference)  
Scott Mantle (Guest)  
Gary Fildes (Guest)

Recording Secretary:  
Kyla Pinaud

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

**1. Adoption of Agenda**

The Union requested the following be added:

- Ideas Campaign
- Communications at WGMC
- Job Ads/ Northern Recruitment Centre

**2. Business Arising from Previous Minutes**

**Plans at WGMC-New Tenants (Communication at WGMC)** – Management indicated that the ADM's office had been contacted and the problem is getting information from ORC. Management further indicated that they have requested ORC to provide them with information. However, the ministry is only a tenant to ORC and ORC has no legal obligation to communicate this information with the ministry.

The Union asked Management to see if they could send a communication from the ADM to ORC's equivalent.

The Union also expressed the view that communication within MNDM is generally poor at the Willet Green Miller Centre.

**Action – Management agreed to speak with the ADM's office to see if such a communication can be sent.**

**Timing of Audit Report** – Union asked how management was going to address issues contained in the report. It was noted that the report is still being finalized as the auditor is still seeking clarification in several areas.

**Action – Union to contact different areas to attend upcoming meetings to present approach to resolve issues.**

**Safety Boots For Summer Students** – Management reported that the Health and Safety Committee considered this and researched other ministries practices. The Committee decided that they could not support paying for student safety boots as this is not a requirement under the collective agreement and it would set precedence for other ministries. Therefore, students must arrive at work with the required proper footwear.

The Union stated that they did not agree with this as students do not have a great deal of money at the beginning of the field season. Also the lead Ministry for health and safety matters (Ministry of Labour) does provide a safety boot subsidy for students as a matter of policy. The Union sees this issue as one of Health and Safety and across the government equity for students.

Management confirmed that the Ministry will not pay for the boots unless a different decision is made centrally.

**Procedures for Office Renovations**-- The Kenora office underwent renovations in the spring and at the last meeting the Union indicated that there had not been opportunity for timely meaningful input. Management has researched this, as promised, and it is evident based on a series of correspondence that staff were consulted on many occasions and provided ample opportunity to input and in fact much of the changes incorporated in the renovations were a result of staff suggestions. Some staff chose not to respond to calls for input and that was their choice.

The Union contends that the office renovation was not **confirmed** until a last minute date and its implementation was done too quickly to accommodate year end fiscal requirements. The present arrangements could have been better given a longer implementation process.

**Lockdown procedures** -- There have been two lockdowns at 159 Cedar Street. The lockdowns were the result of protests taking place in Sudbury. Management reported that they have since been working with ORC and the Controllershship Office and have now drafted Lockdown Procedures. The procedures will indicate who has the responsibility to do what in similar circumstances, how staff will be communicated to and that HR or Controllershship will take the lead in similar circumstances.

**Action: Management will invite a guest to the next MERC meeting to provide a presentation on the new procedures.**

The Union asked if there will be security measures taken at the WGMC if students begin to be present in the building late at night. Management reported that it has been decided that if students are present past 7:30 pm then a security guard will be present.

**Mould Problem at WGMC**— Last spring renovations took place at the WGMC. As the windows were being replaced, it was noticed that mould was growing in between the glass panes. It was confirmed that mould was in fact present in the windows. Management stated that the problem had been resolved and the Union agreed.

Other problems also arose during the renovations (e.g. Cold air was entering the building and the generator was affecting instruments in the lab). The Health and Safety Committee has drafted a letter that they will be sending ORC indicating all of the issues and impacts and that the contractors should be informed about health and safety precautions.

**Service Ontario ( GICs Turnover of MNR Fish and wildlife Counter Service)** - Management indicated that they were unable to invite a GIC manager to this meeting because one manager has been away and the other has just been appointed.

**Action: Management will invite one of the GIC Managers to attend and give an up-date at the next meeting.**

The Union stated that the following are issues raised by staff that they would like Management to further explore:

- a) Phase 2 MNR Fish and Wildlife training has been accomplished by teleconference but given the complexity of the process this is not sufficient and other training is recommended, to learn the new process.
- b) Workload—Fish and wildlife front counter services as well as other new duties have increased CSA workload dramatically and it is expected to increase even more as we get deeper into the fall hunting season in October. Generally, there are 2 CSA's working at each location. However, there are locations and situations (i.e. when someone is away from the office, back-up can only be called in for a max of 5 hours per day) where one staff person is working. This has made it very difficult to keep up especially with the new services and staff are becoming overwhelmed.
- c) Security – CSA's are required to deposit money (from the different licenses/ services provided). Where possible a fleet vehicle is used. However, staff are often depositing money on their own using their own vehicle. Staff need to be provided with information on the proper procedures. The Union is very concerned about staff safety and how employees are going to be compensated for using their own vehicle. Also the aspect of revenue handling has not been updated or addressed in the job description.
- d) Budgeting -- The Union explained that the CSA's are now accountable for doing their own office budgets/ forecast. Staff do not feel comfortable doing this as they have not received proper financial training. Also, this aspect has not been updated in their job description and/or considered in their classification.
- e) Facilities – The GIC's/ SO counters have taken on many new services. However, the office space has not been renovated/ adapted for these new services. For example, some workstations are set up for only 2 people but at certain times there are 3 individuals that are required to work behind the counter. Some work areas are only set up for one person and two are required to work. Also, in some offices proper counter space is not available for the computer that is for general public use

Management encouraged staff to take these concerns directly their manager(s) first, prior to bringing to MERC. The Union stated that this is being brought forward by a number of staff, suggestions for improvement have been brought forward to the Manager and little action has been taken. Therefore, it is the Union's position that this should be dealt with at this table.

***Action: Management will review the above issues.***

3. **Job Evaluation System** – The Union asked where we are with this matter. Management indicated that a memo had been posted in public folders, which basically indicates that 200 OPS employees in various job classes were randomly chosen to participate in a working group. Union wanted to know if salaries in government are compared to private sector. Management indicated that it is part of the analysis conducted centrally.

#### 4. **New Meal Allowance**

Scott Mantle and Gary Fildes attended the meeting to provide an update to the changes to the meal allowance. The amendments include: if an employee is claiming all 3 meals in a day the allowance is capped at \$40; if an employee is only claiming 2 or less meals they are capped at the per meal rate; employees must claim the receipt amount; receipts are required for all meals; and the employer is responsible for retaining receipts for current plus 2 years. If all three meals are entered separately they are capped at the per meal rate therefore, there is a separate line to enter all three meals together (using the \$40 cap).

The Union asked whether the gratuities are in addition to the meal caps. Management stated that gratuities are part of the \$40 cap. The Union stated that they were not satisfied with this answer and would be bringing this to CERC.

The Union asked if meals exceeding the cap would be honoured. Management explained there must be valid justification for exceeding the cap (e.g. extremely remote areas, where an employee can demonstrate that it would have been more expensive to travel to a cheaper restaurant/ venue). Additionally, out of country meal rates are treated in a separate manner.

5. **2006 Climate Survey Results** – Results have been compiled by the consultant and a meeting is being scheduled to discuss. The Ministry will establish a committee, as with past surveys, representing a cross-section of staff and office locations, to review the findings and make recommendations to HRMC. Targeting December to report to HRMC on the results and will share the information with MERC. Anticipate a ministry-wide report to be ready in early January.

Management noted that in the recent OPS-wide survey, MNDM had the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest participation rate and was ranked first in terms of the scorecard. The Union stated the survey was somewhat conspicuous around learning and workload. Management felt this is a good starting point and will be refined.

The Union pointed out two issues with the MNDM Climate Survey: 1) anonymity; 2) consultant's mailbox was full. They also told Management that there was no formal disclosure and asked that this be done in the future. Management stated that this was discussed at previous MERC meetings [October 2005 and April 2006], but will not be an issue as this will likely be the last MNDM survey since we are now moving to the OPS wide survey.

6. **ADM for Northern Development Division** – No results to date.
7. **GICs** – This item was previously discussed under Business Arising from Previous Minutes – Service Ontario.
8. **REDB – Vehicle and Circle Check Policy** – The policy now has an itemized check list for employees to follow. The Union reported that members were pleased with it, having had a chance to review it. Compliments to REDB (particularly North Bay manager) for the upgrade on this policy.
9. **Unclassifieds and Vacancies** – The Union was provided with a copy of unclassifieds for MNDM, using the format provided by MGS.

The Union requested a vacancy list for the ministry as well, citing that these are provided by many other ministries already. Management reiterated it's position that disclosure is an OPS-wide issue and that this is appropriately determined at the CERC or during collective bargaining.

The Union reminded Management about Article 1.4, in which the Employer must provide the Union with a job description when a new classification is established or a new position is created within an existing class.

The Union pointed out that managers are using vacancy dollars to run their programs. Will it get to a point that the vacancies will be gone because the funds will have to be used elsewhere? The Union felt that these concerns could be addressed by simple communication. There are a number of jobs that have disappeared and our Ministry is shrinking. Management replied they are aware there is a lot of pressure on budgets and that managers are doing their best to work within allocations.

**10. Other Business**

**Ideas Campaign** – Management reported that there was great value to the campaign and some generated ideas have recently been adopted. The Union requested a copy of the ideas submitted. They would like to know what type of ideas the members are submitting. Management replied the information is on MYOPS and invited the Union to view the results on that site.

**Northern Recruitment Centre** – The Union raised some concerns with the advertising process. Some ads did not appear in the public folders. Also, the JobMart url (intranet address) is not commonly known, since staff typically use public folders. Management acknowledged it was aware that one job ad had been overlooked for posting in NDM public folders, but that this had been corrected.

Recently, there was a position advertised for a Resident Geologist that an employee applied for and was selected for an interview. However, given that the employee was in the field using a remote internet address and satellite phone, he was not contacted to attend the interview and only found-out and was able to participate by chance. The union stated that the Recruitment Centre should be mindful of issues relating to contacting employees during field seasons. Management suggested that one additional step to assist with this issue might be for field staff to include seasonal/field contact information in their applications/resumes.

**Action:** *Management will bring this to the attention of the Northern Recruitment Centre's manager.*

**11. Next Meeting** – November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2006

Original Signed by Norm Trowell and Cleo Degagne

  
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Norm Trowell, Union Co-Chair

  
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Cleo Degagne, Management Co-Chair