

NEWSLETTER TO THE MOE OPSEU MEMBERSHIP:

March 1, 2006

It has been since the last divisional held in November 2004, that you heard form your MERC Team. As you all know, during the negotiations, all MERC teams were asked to shut down business with the Employer, unless we needed to deal with urgent business.

During the period of negotiations, the MERC Team was only required to deal with one urgent issue, which involved the downsizing exercise of the SMOG Unit. Fortunately, most of the positions were vacant and those affected were redeployed within 40 km.

Your MERC team met with the employer on September 21, 2005 for the first time since the new collective agreement was ratified. Attached to this newsletter you will find a copy of the signed minutes of the September 21, 2005 and the December 8, 2005 meeting. Both sets of minutes were signed off at our last meeting of February 16, 2006. These minutes will be posted on the MOE intranet site within the Human Resources link. They will also be posted on the OPSEU Web site in the Ontario Public Service/MERC link. Copies are attached as well as an update of our February 16, 2006 MERC meeting and current OPSEU initiatives that pertain to OPS members.

At our February 16, 2006 MOE MERC meeting the following issues were discussed:

- 1. Unclassified Usage Reports:** The employer attempts to provide the team with such reports about every two months. Your team monitors the employment status of unclassifieds by ensuring that members who are not backfilling a position and have completed 18 months of service are being converted. The most recent report is being vetted by the team.

At the December, meeting we raised several questions on the status of some members who had more than 18 months of service. Most of the positions involved members working under a Canada-Ontario Agreement. Your Team advised the employer that if there is a continuing need for employment these individuals must be converted. Should the employer refuse to convert and illegible member they have recourse under article 31A.15.

- 2. Transformation Agenda:** The employer had no update to provide. Standing item on for the next meeting.
- 3. Nutrient management positions and Program Status:** The employer informed the team that there will be 10 additional FTE positions created as part of the 2005/06 Result Base Planning to address the enforcement policies that recently announced. The classification of the new positions and the locations has yet to be determined
- 4. Inspections, Investigations & Enforcement Secretariat:** The program is always alive. Employer is still working on Investigations Training component along with the other ministries involved and on models of the exchange of work between ministries. No details were available. This item will remains on the agenda for further updates and is also on the agenda at several other MERC tables.

5. **LERC revitalization and training:** An ongoing initiative mandated to the MERC team over the last two Divisional meeting to see that LERCs are in action at all work locations. Corporate Management is on board to see that happens as well. Considering that Ministry of Government Services has been messaging since the ratification of the Collective Agreement that it is time to improve our labour relations. Your CERC Team and your MERC Team view this as positive. To see this happen, LERCs will need to be play a key role. Your team will be surveying the locals to see where there are LERCs and if they are functioning on a regular basis. Based on the results obtained we will explore various options to ensure that revitalization projects will provide end results that will see adequate LERC representation in all offices across the province. Once details are finalized, members will be contacted which will include a joint training session.
6. **Water Management Initiatives:** Rumours were floating around that the Drinking Water Management Division would see some restructuring in the East involving a change in the reporting relationship of some members. The employer confirmed that this had been contemplated by the management team of the Division due to the implications of Regulations 170 and 252. However there are no plans to do so at this time. Various options that had been discussed with staff of the Division may be revisited in the future. The employer was reminded of the disclosure process negotiated between the parties.

There were no updates on the Well Inspection Program

The employer indicated that thus far they have received no direction from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Renewal regarding the recommendations in the Watertight Expert Panel Report. Those recommendations, if implemented, could have major impact on the workforce of our membership working in the sewage and water inspection programs. If you want to learn more on this matter, please read the report at www.pir.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/cma_4_42482_1.html

7. **Compressed Work Week Agreements:** In Operations Division, the CWWA will remain at 4 cycles except for extenuating circumstances were shorter cycles may be entertained. OPSEU confirmed the process for vetting CWWA:
 - all local CWW's will be vetted and signed by the respective OPS Staff Representative.
 - CWW's will no longer require the signature of either the OPS Supervisor or the President of OPSEU.
 - A CWW tracking system is to be developed and maintained in each regional office.
 - Ministry wide agreements will be negotiated and signed by the respective MERC Team and Job Security Officer.

To address the confusion in getting CWWA's for members in the DWMD, the employer was asked if the employer was also seeking to have local agreements and on the same

terms as the Operations Division. The employer will report back at the next meeting.

8. **Scientist's permanent reclassification:** The employer provided a listing of all members who were permanently reclassified as a result of Letter of Understanding ratified along with the collective agreement. The team is currently reviewing the list and is ensuring that all positions that were temporarily reclassified in 2003 for a 36 month period and any other positions that may fall within the same scope have been reclassified. The team has reviewed the information and has raised questions to the employer. If it is known that a position that should be reclassified has not been, please contact the MERC Team ASAP.
9. **Results Base Planning:** The employer provided an update on the new positions that were filled in the ministry following the 2005/06 business plan announcement. The employer is to follow-up on the status of the planned positions that still remain vacant. The business plan for 2006/07 is currently under review by cabinet and will receive final approval during the budget process.
10. **Environmental Response Program and the EMO Plan:** The employer indicated that the EMO Plan is expected to be signed by the Minister in the very near future. Information sessions about the plan may be included during the Regional Seminars. We were advised that the EMO ministry plan will not result in any changes to the Environmental Response Program.
11. **Successor rights:** Since the employer had not responded to the statement made at the last meeting, a letter was sent to the Deputy Minister. The Deputy responded and indicated that the matter has been communicated to the Minister. Copies of the letters that were exchanged are attached.
12. **Organizational Charts for all Divisions:** The employer is working on providing up to date organization charts.
13. **HR Strategy:** The team expressed concerns about the lack of transparency regarding some recent job posting and provided some examples that occurred in the DWMD.
16. **Meal Claim Policy:** The employer indicated that the policy is being reviewed corporately.
14. **List of OPSEU Vacancies in all Divisions:** The employer indicated that they were still waiting for direction from Ministry of Government Services.
15. **Union Leave:** In order to recognize Union leaves in the work plan of members who occupy Union positions recognized by the Collective Agreement, the employer was provided with an updated chart. The employer is to review and provide feedback.

16. **District Review:** The employer confirmed that a Geographical reorganization District Review is taking place in Eastern Region only. The employer indicated that the review is being done to assess the work distribution within each County, number of issues in Districts, distance from clients to District Offices, Counties boundaries versus District Boundaries. Although this is an ongoing process, the current review which started in December 2005 is expected to end in March 2006. The Union has been reassured that there will be no changes in staff jobs or relocation. We raised concerns on the process that was used in conducting the review and specifically in the way data was being collected and suggested these concerns be addressed with staff by the respective Director.
17. **Seniority List:** The employer is to follow up on the errors noted in the seniority list as it pertains to the work location of certain members.
18. **Use of SIN numbers on Premium Payment Forms:** The Union asked that the employer follow up with an explanation why the SIN# is still required on the form that now requires staff to include their WIN #.
19. **Tracking of Premium Payment:** This matter was referred to the CERC table for resolution since Ontario Shared Services manages this information.
20. **Attendance Management Threshold:** The MOE threshold for 2006 is 8.4 days
21. **Harmonizing of Air Emissions data reported by clients:** The employer is to find out if this initiative will have any long term staff implications.

HEALTH & SAFETY:

1. **Air Testing ORC Policy:** OPSEU provided the employer with a copy of the template lease agreement that includes provisions for biannual air testing of the leased quarters and assessments for environmental contaminants in the building when undergoing renovations. The employer indicated that they were still waiting for direction from Ministry of Government Services and/or Ontario Realty Corporation regarding the communications of such information to the Health and Safety Committees/Representatives.
2. **Tire Policy - Off Road Uses:** The Health and safety Risk Assessment working group responsible for that area of expertise is currently assessing the issue. Update to be provided at next meeting.

3. **Health and Safety Risk Assessment:** Union activist polled were denied participation on the 20+ Program Priority Reviews and the committees are composed primarily of management representatives, there is a clear lack of transparency in the whole process. OPSEU reminded the employer that this same concern was voiced in the initial stages of the exercise.
4. **PPE:** The union cited examples that in some areas, unclassified staff are not being provided with the same level of PPE equipment as classified staff when asked to face identical or similar elements and that such decisions are being made on the tenure of the contract. Management indicated that Managers will be reminded of their H&S duties and responsibilities.

The next MERC meeting is scheduled for May 24, 2006

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE CAMPAIGNS.

“I put my trust in OPTrust”. This campaign was launched by the CERC team in mid February. All local presidents should have received by now pamphlets explaining the reason of the campaign and postcards for members and their beneficiaries to sign. This campaign is all about allowing members to continue participation in the plan when their job is divested more than once. Detailed information is available on the OPSEU web site at <http://www.opseu.org/campaign/optrust/index.htm>

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD BY SIGNING A CARD

“Trillium Drug Program - Keep it public” The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is in the process of contracting out the delivery of the Trillium Drug Program to the private sector. This plan raises serious issues of public accountability, the quality and level of service to clients - including decisions on eligibility - and the security of client's confidential health and financial information. It will also mean layoffs for the 73 OPSEU members who work at the program.

OPSEU Corporate launched a new web site (www.keeptrilliumpublic.org) as part of OPSEU's campaign to keep the Trillium Drug Program public. The site allows members and supporters to send an e-mail (or download a fax message) directly to George Smitherman. Users can also send messages to friends, coworkers and other contacts, with a link back to the site, to help build the number of messages going to the Minister.

To play your part, visit www.keeptrilliumpublic.org and raise the issue directly with the Ministry.

“Successor Rights”: The Campaign is in its early stage. All MERCs were asked to raise it at their respective table and to follow up with a letter to the Deputy Minister if no commitment was reached at the table. As explained above, this was done by your MERC team and a copy of the letters that were exchanged are included in this package. The CERC team, which I am proud to be part of, are now working on the next steps of the campaign. One thing we must all remember, when McGuinty was in the opposition and during his election campaign, he promised to re-introduce successor rights to OPS employees. He needs to keep that promise and we need to remind him of that. More to be reported come as the campaign unfolds.

OPS Divisionals:

Mark your calendars. The Divisional has been scheduled for the weekend of November 25&26, 2006.

That’s all for now.

In Solidarity,
Réal Delaquis,
MERC Chair

Janis Pechinger
H&S Chair

Michael Ladouceur
Member

Sam Chopra
Member