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## Community forums talk about solutions

by Megan Park



Ontario is facing its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. No community has escaped the effects. Unemployment is soaring and the economic and social costs of the downturn are taking their toll on families everywhere.

The time has arrived to stop talking about the problem. It's time to start talking about real solutions.

That was the aim behind the union's decision to sponsor a series of forums titled *A Community Response to the Economic Crisis* across Ontario between June 22 and July 21. The forums were held in Windsor, St. Thomas, Sarnia, Thorold,

Brantford, Orillia, Peterborough, Kingston, North Bay, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Kenora.

The forums brought together local leaders from business, labour, education and non-profit sectors to brainstorm ideas for combating the recession.

"The people of Ontario are resourceful, our businesses are creative and our workforce is the finest in Canada," said OPSEU president Warren (Smokey) Thomas. "The purpose of the forums was to bring together local leaders to assess the impact of the recession, assemble ways to fight it, and catalogue what we need from business, government and labour to build on our strengths and stimulate our local economies."

Many good ideas were generated. They include: investing in local business and improving infrastructure, buying from local manufacturers and suppliers, the need for greater co-operation between business, labour, government and the non-profit sector, increasing funding for the social services people rely on in tough times, investing in green businesses and reforming the rules for qualifying for Employment Insurance. For a full list of recommendations, go to <http://www.opseu.org/campaign/lets-talk-solutions/index.htm>.

Many thanks to all of the individuals and organizations who participated in the forums. A full list is available at <http://www.opseu.org/campaign/lets-talk-solutions/schedule.htm>.

A big thank you to the members who organized the forums and to the Executive Board for their leadership and guidance.

The community forums lay the groundwork for the provincial summit of business, labour and government leaders that the union is organizing for next year. 