

Perfect storm – or perfect opportunity

David Cox

About 90,000 OPSEU members, working for the 24 Ontario colleges, the Ontario Public Service (OPS), the LCBO, and dozens of smaller agencies, will be bargaining contracts over the next year.

Perfect Storm information meetings were held across the province to bolster solidarity as negotiations got underway for some of OPSEU's largest contracts.

"We call it the Perfect Storm because it is unprecedented in the history of our union to have so many large contracts in play at the same time," said President Thomas.

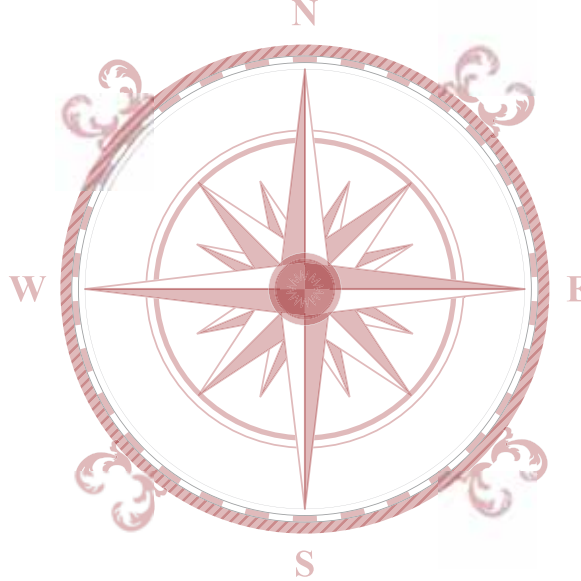
"For OPSEU, it's also a perfect opportunity to discuss how we can work together to

improve the level of public services available to Ontarians, while creating better working conditions and raising the living standards of our members.

"It's the perfect opportunity for the government to live up to its promises to rebuild the public service," said Thomas. "We will bargain hard and we expect they will bargain hard."

Ontario college support staff bargained in the spring and summer 2008, with 45,000 Ontario Public Service workers set to go to the bargaining table in November. LCBO employees start negotiating in early 2009.

www.opseu.org/notices/perfectstormapr92008.htm



It's time to negotiate for the Ontario Public Service

Don Ford

For 45,000 members of the Ontario Public Service, Dec. 31, 2008 isn't just New Year's Eve: it's also the end of a four-year collective agreement.

Starting earlier this year, OPS members have been putting the pieces together to prepare for a new round of bargaining.

This will be a historic round on a couple of fronts. First, the OPS is one of the major players in OPSEU's Perfect Storm round of bargaining (see article). It will also be the first time that the OPS will begin bargaining without first negotiating essential services agreements.

"OPS members want to see their issues given top priority," said Eric Morin, chair of the OPS Central/Unified Team. "We will only negotiate essential services if we can't come



to a deal with the employer on the collective agreement.”

On Nov. 4, the OPS Central/Unified and Corrections Teams will start issue bargaining with the employer. Prior to that, the teams will be reviewing the bargaining demands from the members and formulating their positions at the table.

“No round of bargaining is easy, and this will not be an exception,” Morin said. “There are serious issues with workload, downsizing, employer use and abuse of contingent and part-time workers, and a benefits package that desperately needs improvement. Our teams will also be bargaining in a very tough economic climate.”

However, Morin is confident that there are real gains to be made in this contract. “We have two great teams, and we are all proud to be bargaining for our members. The main goal is to give our members stability and rebuild a public service that every person in the province can count on.”

www.opseu.org/ops/barg2008/

Below: OPS members at Convention 2008



We're all in the same boat!

Solidarity the watchword as LCBO workers get ready to bargain



Photo: Greg Hamara

Elected delegates from the Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED) met May 24-25 to elect their bargaining team and prepare for contract talks. Their collective agreement expires March 31, 2009, but demand-setting is already well under way and the team has begun mapping out campaign strategy. Final demand-setting takes place in November before bargaining next year. With a diverse membership working in retail, warehouse, and head office jobs, solidarity was the watchword as LBED members and

staff put on their “We’re all in the same boat!” t-shirts for this photo.

www.opseu.org/lbed/

