



Katie FitzRandolph photo

Sharks attack the public sector

"This government is destroying the public service," OPSEU president Leah Casselman told about 150 people at Queen's Park May 30.

"It is attacking public employees for the sake of private profit. Brothers and sisters, the sharks are circling," she told a rally in support of an accountable public service.

Inflatable sharks floated overhead, symbols of the private companies that will benefit from Bill 25. "Shark bait" in blood red Tshirts symbolized areas of the public service scheduled for privatization.

Bill 25 would imperil OPS jobs, let private employers boss OPS employees, and let private employers see employee personnel files.

"The measures included in Bill 25 are a direct attack on the work we do," said Casselman.

"But this law also affects every single person who lives in this province.

"The public service is the body and soul of our democracy. And without a body, government can't do anything. Without government, we have no democracy."

Marg Simmons, chair of the OPSEU bargaining team in the OPS, praised the work of OPSEU members.

"The public servants I know are proud of what they do," she said, to cheers. "The work we do is important, and the work we do is valuable."

"When we walk in to negotiate with this employer, we will take with us the pride of the public service, the professionalism of the public service, and the integrity of the public service," she said. ▲

MoE staff assess Ministry and find it wanting

Staffing cuts have limited the Ministry of the Environment's ability to protect the environment, despite the strength of the ministry's dedicated, experienced and knowledgeable staff.

Ancient lab equipment, poorly equipped field inspectors, and the loss of scientific expertise all hamstringing the ministry in its work, according to an OPSEU report.

The report, *Renewing the Ministry of the Environment*, is the result of six union-organized workshops, where ministry staff shared their vision of how the ministry should operate. The report is available at:

<http://www.opseu.org/walkerton/RenewMOE rept.pdf>. ▲

More per kilometre

The OPSEU convention approved an increase in mileage rates for members' use of personal vehicles on approved union business.

Retroactive to Jan. 1, OPSEU is paying 32 cents a kilometre, up from 29 cents. ▲

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Disgruntled OPAC staff take on restructuring

Staff of the Ontario Property Assessment Corporation voted in early June, by a margin of more than 95 per cent to do "whatever it takes" to fight the corporation's planned drastic restructuring.

More than 90 per cent of OPAC's staff have been told their positions no longer exist. There will be some new positions open to competition, but those who are not successful will be terminated. The process is expected to last a full year.

Will Presley, chair of the OPSEU bargaining unit that represents most OPAC staff,

called it an outrageous management move. "I've never seen members more

disgruntled and distressed and determined to stop an assault on their jobs."



Steve Daynes photo

OPAC's team wore black to meet with management over a reorganization that would jeopardize almost all jobs. From the left, OPSEU staffers Carol Whitehead and Louise Rose, Bill Henry, Jennifer Reid, Peter Thachuk, Will Presley and Bill Robertson.

Ambulance paramedics gain 24.65%

Members of Local 277 have ratified a collective agreement with Halton-Mississauga Ambulance that will increase wage rates by 24.65 per cent over the next three years.

The primary care paramedic rates increase by 17.5 per cent April 1, 2001, and by 3 per cent in each of the next two years. Advanced care paramedics will get 12 per cent above that.

"This brings Halton-Mississauga paramedics to wage parity with their counterparts in York, after a very long struggle," said Brenda Wilson Young, chair of the union's bargaining team.

The top rate for a primary care paramedic will reach \$24.94 April 1, 2003.

Kids remain at risk, study shows

A workload measurement study, released Feb. 19 by the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies (OACAS), confirms results of a union study in 1998 that showed excessive workload puts children at risk.

"When you cut to the chase, one fact remains: Kids at risk aren't getting the protection they need," said Dave Calvert, of OPSEU's CAS sector.

Calvert, a social worker with the Ottawa Children's Aid Society, said the OPSEU study was broader than this one, covering support staff as well as front-line social workers.

The OACAS study shows an increase in referrals. Staff levels have not kept up with the increasing work. Higher expenditures have gone largely to computers and

software, Calvert said. "They are essential tools, but they cannot replace people. We are not providing the safest environment possible for kids."

College faculty reject offer

By more than 97 per cent, faculty at all 25 community colleges rejected a current management offer for a renewed contract.

"The members have spoken," said team chair Ted Montgomery. "The faculty have overwhelmingly and unequivocally rejected those proposals."

Bargaining was to resume in June with dates through the summer. The contract covering the 7,500 members in the faculty unit expires Aug. 31.

Simcoe residents are funding a U.S. prison firm's \$1 million tax break.

**Ask MPP Garfield Dunlop:
WHY?**



Citizens Against Private Prisons

OPSEU is not alone in opposing private jails. The Penetanguishene lobby group Citizens Against Private Prisons sponsored a large billboard targeting their local MPP when the government announced the new mega-jail in their community would be run by a firm from Utah.

Privatization of superjail 'a dark day for Ontario'

A government decision to award a U.S company the contract to run the Penetanguishene superjail is a dark day for the province of Ontario, says president Leah Casselman.

The Ministry of Correctional Services announced May 5 that Utah-

based Management and Training Corporation will operate the 1,200-bed maximum security facility located two hours north of Toronto.

Casselman said that this decision proves that the Harris government will stop at nothing to fulfil its goal of

selling off the province to foreign interests.

"There is absolutely no justification to privatize this facility," said Casselman.

We have facilities that are operating cheaper than what the U.S. bid came in at, and we have a track record of running institutions safely.

They chose OPSEU:

Hamilton ambulance paramedics

The Ontario Labour Relations Board has decided ambulance paramedics in Hamilton should have their own bargaining unit, and should be represented by OPSEU.

For Local 256 president Mario Posteraro, the decision is a significant victory for the 200 ambulance paramedics he represents.

"We're ecstatic that the board ruled as we thought was just and right all along, We have the right to choose our bargaining agent," he said.

London hospital health care staff

Hospital medical professionals at St. Joseph's Health Care London voted overwhelmingly in late April to be represented by OPSEU.

There are 79 medical technicians, technologists and therapists at the hospital, who had previously been represented by the Service Employees International Union. They voted to decertify with SEIU, and then

looked around for another union to represent them. Of those voting, the tally was 61 in favour of OPSEU and one for no union.

Waterloo VON workers

OPSEU has won a certification vote for about 150 home care workers with the Victorian Order of Nurses in Waterloo, Wellington and Dufferin counties.

The group includes home support workers, personal support workers and day program workers. Nurses and registered practical nurses at the agency are represented by other unions.

The vote was two to one in favour of OPSEU.

Paramedics in Simcoe County

About 200 ambulance paramedics in Simcoe County voted 85 per cent in favour of representation by OPSEU. The county's seven ambulance operations were combined into one in January.

For more OPSEU news: www.opseu.org