

Join the campaign – you've got a right to get involved!

OPSEU president Leah Casselman is calling on all OPSEU members to play an active part in the current provincial election campaign.

“The Oct. 2 election is a critical moment in our ongoing fight for quality public services and quality public sector jobs,” she said. “In the next four weeks we have a chance to get rid of the Eves government and replace it with one that cares about our issues.”

Every OPSEU member has the legal right to get involved in the election campaign, she said.

“Some members have been told that, because they are public employees, they can't do anything in the election,” said Casselman. “This is not true. No matter where you work, you are still a citizen with democratic rights.

“As a citizen, you can put up a campaign sign. You can volunteer on a candidate's campaign. You can talk to your friends, neighbours, and co-workers about election issues. You can raise money for candidates. You can run for office.

“Most of all, you can take

part in the OPSEU campaign around the election. Please do so – the more volunteers we have, the fewer Tory MPPs we'll have to face over the next four years.”

Limits on political activity

Under Ontario law, there are a few things that **some** OPSEU members may not do during an election. It depends on where you work.

OPSEU members who work for private companies, community hospitals, municipalities, school boards and other non-governmental agencies have the same rights as every other Ontarian.

It's a bit different if you work in the Ontario Public Service, a community college, or at certain agencies, boards and commissions. Political rights for these “Crown employees” are modified – **slightly** – by the *Public Service Act*.

The Act says that Crown employees cannot engage in partisan political activities **in the workplace** or **while in uniform**.

“Outside the workplace,

with your uniform hung up in the closet, you can do just about any election activity,” said Casselman. “Volunteer on an OPSEU phone bank. Hand out leaflets on the street. Go to a campaign barbecue. You're free.”

The *Public Service Act* also bars Crown employees from making public comments on political issues that are directly related to their duties.

“Union representatives have a right to speak freely and publicly about union issues,” Casselman said. “OPSEU leaders do it all the time. The main thing is, don't speak out publicly unless you are an elected OPSEU official, and if you do speak out, wear your OPSEU hat and speak directly about your members' workplace concerns.”

But 99 per cent of campaign work is out of the public eye, she said.

“The main work of our OPSEU campaign is going to be talking on the phone and in person to fellow OPSEU members. Every single member is absolutely free to do that.”