

## 1. What is happening?

Due to budget cuts, the Ministry of Natural Resources is restructuring how the ministry operates. It is changing its field structure, reducing over time the number of activities under legislation that require approval and re-organizing its divisions.

As a result, MNR will today announce its intentions to:

- Cut 102 jobs in 24 district offices, including administrative support staff, digital mapping staff, regulatory compliance staff, foresters and biologists.
- Plan to hire for 250 jobs, a combination of new and vacant positions\*, in regional and district offices.
- Move the jobs of 40 field staff to new locations, including removing all field staff from the Chatham, Clinton, Espanola, Gogama and Manitouwadge area offices and the Terrace Bay and Tweed work centres. The Tweed centre will be closed.
- Dissolve its science division and move its functions to other divisions.
- Centralize communications in Toronto, resulting in the loss of two jobs, and reorganize its corporate management division, resulting in the loss of one job.

*\*Many of the vacancies are the result of more than 130 OPSEU members in MNR taking a government buyout package, available only in ministries that are downsizing.*

## 2. Where are the layoffs happening?

Below are MNR district offices grouped by geographic region with the number of front line staff being laid off in brackets:

**Northeast:** Chapleau (3), Cochrane (2), Hearst (2), Kirkland Lake (4), North Bay (6), Sault Ste. Marie (2 in Sault Ste. Marie + 1 in Blind River), Sudbury (4 in Sudbury + 1 in Espanola) Timmins (2) and Wawa (3). For a total of 30 lay offs. Further, a total of 13 field staff in Espanola, Gogama and Manitouwadge area offices are to be relocated.

**Northwest:** Dryden: (7), Fort Frances (2), Kenora (3), Red Lake (2), Sioux Lookout (2) and Thunder Bay (7). For a total of 23 lay offs. Field staff from Terrace Bay work centre are to be relocated.

**East:** Kemptville (9) and Pembroke (7). For a total of 16 lay offs. 1 field staff in Tweed work centre to be relocated and work centre closed.

**Central:** Bancroft (2 in Bancroft + 1 in Minden), Midhurst (5), Parry Sound (3 in Parry Sound + 3 in Bracebridge), Peterborough (4 in Peterborough + 1 in Kingston). Further, there will be 3 lay offs at MNR head office in Peterborough. For a total of 22 lay offs.

**Southern Ontario:** Aylmer (5), Aurora (4) and Guelph (4 in Guelph + 1 in Clinton). For a total of 14 layoffs. Further, a total of 4 field staff in Chatham and Clinton area offices are to be relocated.

### 3. What will happen on Tuesday, August 13?

Early in the day, about a third of MNR's 2,100 full-time staff will receive letters regarding employment changes:

- 105 OPSEU members will be told their jobs are being eliminated.
- OPSEU members in the same work unit will be notified of the layoffs.
- OPSEU members in the same job functions will have the opportunity to volunteer to resign, thereby opening up their job to a laid off employee.
- 40 OPSEU members, most of them in area or district offices, will be notified that their jobs are going to new work locations, 40 km or more away.
- 214 OPSEU members, many of them in the Science and Information Resources Division (SIRD), will be notified of a change in who they report to, as the Science Division will be dissolved and its functions moved to other divisions.

Later that day, a memo will go from the Deputy Minister to all ministry staff about the changes.

### 4. Are front line staffing levels being reduced at MNR?

It **appears** that overall staffing levels and, specifically, field staff levels will not be reduced if the Ministry follows through on its promise to hire for 250 jobs at the regional and district office level. However, the type of jobs the Ministry intends to hire is changing. The administrative

support and digital mapping positions targeted in this round of layoffs are not coming back. As well, staffing levels are clearly being reduced in five area offices and two work centres.

## 5. What is the impact of the layoffs and restructuring?

More than one-third of the layoffs affect the administrative assistants to district managers and business services clerks. The elimination of these key jobs will leave front line staff spending more time on paper work and less time in the field fulfilling core functions such as collecting data and ensuring that resource users comply with Ministry legislation.

Geographical Information System (GIS) officers comprise more than 20 per cent of the layoffs. Mapping is the basis of all resource planning and maps are to take into account all “values” on the land such as roads, lakes, pickerel spawning sites, moose calving sites, traplines and First Nation burial grounds. If this data base is not kept up-to-date, future activity could put land, water, fish, wildlife, and heritage features at risk.

The removal of field staff from five area offices and two work centres will result in a diminished MNR presence in those communities. As well, front line staff will have to travel greater distances to do their compliance work.

The layoff of 15 resource management technicians (RMTs) in nine communities is a cut to front line regulatory compliance in those communities. RMTs are in the field doing a multitude of tasks including compliance inspections on forestry operations, inspections of crown lands and fish surveys.

The elimination of nine foresters in nine locations and four biologists in four communities could result in a critical loss of technical and scientific expertise at a time when the ministry is re-organizing its field operations.

As well, the layoff of six communications positions suggests the ministry is cutting back its communications to the public.

Overall, OPSEU will closely monitor these employment changes to make certain MNR lives up to its promise to hire for 250 jobs in the field and that these positions are in the OPSEU bargaining unit. The sustainable management of the province’s land, water and forests and conserving the biodiversity of its fish and wildlife are the core responsibilities of the

MNR. It takes staff in the field to do this important work.

At the same time, OPSEU will closely monitor the roll-out of the ministry's new on line approvals process. Activities will be categorized within four groups according to the potential risk to natural resources. One group of activities will require no approval, one group will only require individuals to go on line to read the rules, one group will require individuals to register the activities and the final group of high risk activities will require review and approval by MNR staff. This shift to self-regulation for many activities is of concern to OPSEU members. As well, OPSEU members have questions about how an automated system will be able to capture more complex activities.

## 6. What is the size of the budget cut?

Following the 2012 Ontario budget, MNR staff were told their ministry's budget was being cut by \$70 million over three years, or a 10 per cent cut. MNR cut \$10 million last year from the closure of 10 provincial parks, cuts to the Bear Wise program, the elimination of the Ontario Ranger Program and other program changes. (Three parks were subsequently re-opened, but the operating dollars and staffing fell to municipalities to pick up the costs). More than 100 seasonal employees and 22 full-time employees lost their jobs as a result of these cuts. The 2013 Ontario budget restored \$40 million to the ministry. As a result, OPSEU calculates MNR has to come up with \$20 million in savings.