

March 14, 2014

Dear Local Presidents,

The events of the past few weeks have made it clear to all of us that this will be a challenging round of bargaining.

Our contract in the OPS expires this December. If past bargaining rounds are any indication, we expect negotiations for the contract's renewal to begin in November.

We have a lot to do between now and then to get ready. The first step is local demand-setting. This is the time when all members come together to choose the issues our bargaining teams will negotiate on our behalf. We need maximum participation to make sure we accurately reflect our members' priorities.

Please note: Do not use the employer's e-mail system to contact members. All local demand-setting materials will be available online at [www.opsbargaining2014.org](http://www.opsbargaining2014.org).

## **Bargaining survey**

For the first time in the OPS, members will be able to complete the bargaining survey online. Members will have from **March 17 to March 31** to fill it out. **On March 17**, we will e-mail the link to OPSEU members and post the link on the web. We ask locals to contact members to encourage them to fill out the survey. We will have a poster for you to put up on all union bulletin boards. Members will use their WIN number as secure identification to access the survey. Survey responses are anonymous. They will not be attributed to individual WIN numbers – the WIN number is to verify the respondent is an OPSEU member and to ensure there are no duplicate responses. However, we will ask members to verify and/or correct their Local number, classification, ministry and workplace address. The survey is quick and easy to fill out and will provide the bargaining teams to be elected later in the spring valuable information about our members' priorities.

## **Local demand-setting meetings**

The results for your local will be tabulated and e-mailed to you within a week of the survey's closing date. You will have from **April 7 to May 30** to hold your local demand-setting meetings where you will prioritize your members' demands and elect delegates to the Regional Bargaining Conference on June 7. To get you started on organizing your local demand setting meeting, here are some suggestions:

- Book the date, time and location of your demand-set meeting in consultation with your Staff Representative. Select the best time and place to maximize participation. Make sure the location is accessible to all members. Plan to offer food. Arrange for child care, if requested.
- Send out reminders to members at regular intervals in the two weeks prior to the meeting. A template meeting notice (*an editable PDF*) is available online.
- Know your quorum number as per Article 29.8.2 of the OPSEU Constitution. Because this is a General Membership meeting, it can only proceed if there is quorum. Go to <http://www.opseu.org/constitution/index.htm> for a copy of the Constitution.

We are finalizing the materials for the meetings. We will post them on the OPSEU website and send them to you. Please contact your Staff Representative to confirm the delegate entitlements for your local. **The deadline for submitting your local's prioritized demands to your Regional Office, including any special cases, and delegates' information is Friday, May 30.**

## **Regional Bargaining Conferences and Central Bargaining Conference**

The Regional Bargaining Conferences will be held **Saturday, June 7**. The Central Bargaining Conference will be held **Saturday, June 21** in Toronto. We are in the process of finalizing the locations for these meetings; you will be notified as soon as possible. In addition, this information will be posted on the OPSEU website.

## **Insured benefits, termination pay and wages under attack**

We can't ignore the signals coming from the Ontario government, signals that we will face major concessions at the bargaining table.

# OPS 2014 Bargaining STRONGER TOGETHER



As we all know, the Wynne Liberals imposed changes to retiree benefits that will cost our members more when they retire on or after January 1, 2017. Members will have to pay 50 per cent of the benefit premiums and they will have had to work 20 years, up from the current 10, to be eligible for retiree benefits.

The government has proposed major concessions at the bargaining table with AMAPCEO regarding paramedical and drug coverage, LTIP, termination pay, merit pay and Compensating Option Credits. (<https://www.amapceo.on.ca/mediareleases/news/EmployerRenewsAttacks.php>).

As well, the government imposed changes to the benefits of non-bargaining employees, including cuts to paramedical coverage and capping termination pay as of December 31, 2015.

It's likely the government will propose capping termination pay (as they have at the AMAPCEO table) and freezing progression through the wage grid (they have tabled a concession with similar impacts at the AMAPCEO table.) You may remember that we fought off and kept progression through the wage grid in the last round. It's also possible that the wage freeze will be extended.

We need to start organizing our fightback now. There are three ways we can do this in the coming weeks:

- 1. Show support for AMAPCEO members.** AMAPCEO is the first group of OPS employees to feel the sting of the proposed takeaways by the employer. They are currently mobilizing their members to orchestrate a coordinated defence to the attack on their contract, primarily benefits. Each Wednesday, AMAPCEO holds events for their members to support bargaining. Ultimately, their fight is OPSEU's fight. Please support these events if possible.
- 2. Encourage all members to e-mail the Premier about retiree benefits** by going to <http://www.opseu.org/ops/ops-retiree-benefits-2014-02.htm>
- 3. Encourage all members to fill out the bargaining survey and attend your local demand-setting meeting.**

For the last several years, it's been clear the government doesn't want to offer employees a long-term career with regular opportunities for professional development except for a favoured few. As a result, we've seen more outsourcing, more layoffs, and more technological change. With an expected exodus of thousands of members retiring prior to January 1, 2017, new hires and mid-career members will bear the brunt of the employer's takeaways. **We need to fight back not just for ourselves, but also for meaningful, decent employment for the younger generation.**

Our slogan for this round of bargaining is "Stronger Together." Maximum participation in local demand-setting is the first demonstration of our strength. Together we can build a strong resistance to the government's attack on our contract and a cohesive force for positive change in the public service.

In Solidarity,

Warren (Smokey) Thomas  
President

Roxanne Barnes  
Chair, Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee

