

March 17, 2014

**Dear OPS members,**

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 has two parts.

The first part is that members fill out a bargaining survey to identify your priority issues.

The second part is that your local holds a meeting so members can get together, discuss the issues that members selected as bargaining priorities in the survey, and **vote** on the priority demands your local will submit to the union for consideration at the bargaining table.

The priority demands that are submitted to the union come from the local, they are an expression of you and your fellow members' **collective** priorities, so it's important that you attend the local demand-setting meeting.

We need everyone's participation in both these parts to make sure we accurately reflect our members' priorities.

**Please note:** Do not use the employer's equipment to fill out the survey. Bargaining related materials will be available [opsbargaining2014.org](http://opsbargaining2014.org).

## **Bargaining survey**

For the first time in the OPS, members will be able to complete the bargaining survey online. Visit <http://bit.ly/Oy28NQ> to access the survey. You will have from today, **March 17, to 11:59 p.m. on March 31** to fill it out.

You will use your 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 you to verify and/or correct your 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 Local Presidents within a week of the survey's closing date. Locals will have from **April 7 to May 30** to hold local demand-setting meetings where members will vote on their priority demands and elect delegates to the Regional Bargaining Conference on June 7.

## **Regional and Central Bargaining Conferences**

The election of your bargaining teams is a two-step process that happens at the Regional and Central Bargaining Conferences. 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; this information will be sent to Local Presidents and posted online.

## **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.

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. Visit <http://bit.ly/1dkCsdY> for AMAPCEO's news release.

# OPS 2014 **STRONGER TOGETHER**



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. Watch this video located at <http://bit.ly/1fEPcMf> and e-mail the Premier at <http://bit.ly/1p7mmJL> about retiree benefits**
- 3. 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 the 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,

Handwritten signature of Warren (Smokey) Thomas in black ink.

Warren (Smokey) Thomas  
President

Handwritten signature of Roxanne Barnes in black ink.

Roxanne Barnes  
Chair, Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee

