

August 16, 2018

Mr. Justin Antheunis
President
Local 58, International Alliance Theatrical Stage Employees
511 Adelaide Street West
Toronto, Ontario M5V 1T4

Dear Brother Antheunis:

I am writing to extend my full personal support, the support of OPSEU's Executive Board, and that of OPSEU's 155,000 members as your stagehands take strong action to defend their 60-year role at the heart of Exhibition Place.

It is disgraceful that Exhibition Place's Board of Governors – all of whom serve at the pleasure of Mayor John Tory – has high-handedly decreed that Local 58 stagehands will no longer work at this historic and iconic Toronto venue. This is union-busting at its worst – and particularly shameful, given that the employer belongs to the City of Toronto's para-public sector.

The Board of Governors would prefer to put the health and safety of performers, staff and visitors at risk by having corporations bring in their own non-unionized, poorly paid, less-experienced and less-skilled workers. The quality of performances and exhibitions may suffer, while visitors will continue to pay the same price. Meanwhile, the highly skilled and experienced workers with Local 58 will lose steady, well-paying jobs that support them and their families.

The only winners are corporations, their shareholders and their friends.

I am proud to say that OPSEU members walked in solidarity with Local 58 in front of city hall on Monday. I know that IATSE members were supportive of OPSEU-represented college staff when they were on the picket lines, for which I am very grateful.

I call on Mayor Tory to put a swift end to this needless lockout. Thousands of visitors are converging on Toronto for the CNE. Tell Councillor Grimes to return to the bargaining table and settle the dispute – before the world learns that this “world class” city has locked out its employees and bused in out-of-province “replacement workers” to steal their jobs. This is clearly not a message Toronto wants to send.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Warren Thomas'.

Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union

c: His Worship John Tory, Mayor of Toronto
Councillor Mark Grimes, Chair, Exhibition Place Board of Directors