



Municipally Speaking

Summer 2020

Dear friends,

It has now been almost four months since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. I want to express my gratitude and thanks to all of you because regardless of the job you do, it's been all of our responsibility to ensure ourselves, our families, and our communities stay safe during this incredible time. We are all in this together. I am proud of the way OPSEU members have led the way in setting healthy examples and practices, and being part of the recovery.



We have achieved a great deal this spring to protect jobs and ensure the proper safety equipment is made available to front-line staff. We have done this largely through constructive dialogue with government and employers but when necessary we have taken tough measures to hold some unreasonable employers to account.

There is still a lot of work to ahead of us but OPSEU and its members are up to the job. Keep up the good work, and be safe!

In solidarity,

Warren (Smokey) Thomas,
OPSEU President

Your executive

Elections were held at Broader Public Sector Conference (BPS) for your Executive Committee. We are happy to announce that all committee members were re-elected.

Municipalities Divisional Executive

Tara Langford, Chair, tlangford70@hotmail.com

Theresa O'Connor, Vice-Chair, theresaconnor59@yahoo.ca

Dwayne Ebbers, Secretary, jan122000@hotmail.com

Pam Schmidt, Treasurer, schmidt1967@gmail.com

Kerri Wells, Communications, kerriwells8734@gmail.com



(Standing l to r): Dwayne Ebbers, Local 496, Secretary; Pamela Schmidt, Local 496, Treasurer; Kerri Wells, Local 266, Communications; (Seated l to r): Tara Langford, Chair, Local 435; Theresa O'Connor, Vice-Chair, Local 266.



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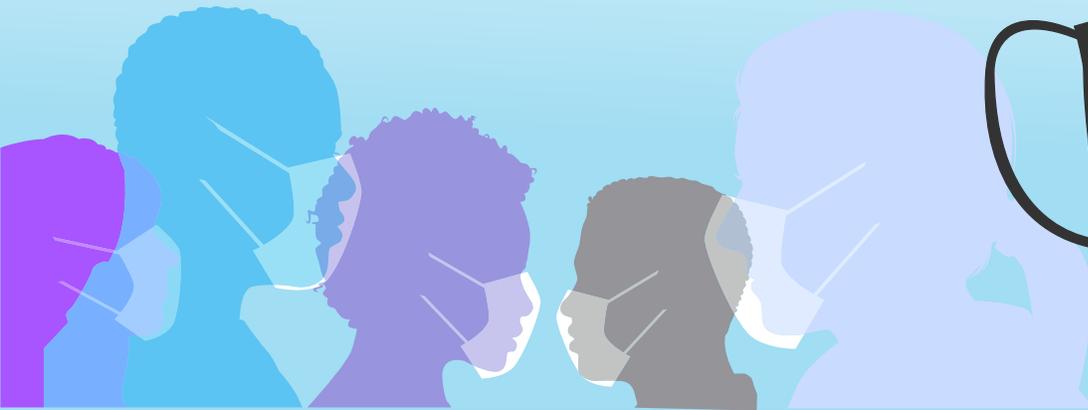
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OPSEU face masks

OPSEU is offering 100 per cent cotton, Canadian union-made face masks to members at a reasonable cost while supplies last. These masks are comfortable, breathable, reusable, and they proudly display the OPSEU/SEFPO logo. They are non-medical masks intended for personal use in the community and are not intended to replace N95 surgical masks or other personal protective equipment that employers provide.

You can get your mask through OPSEU Locals. Locals can order them by sending an email to facemask@opseu.org indicating the number of masks required and delivery instructions. The cost (\$3 each) is being subsidized by OPSEU. To make it even easier, locals can have the cost of their order deducted from their local rebates.



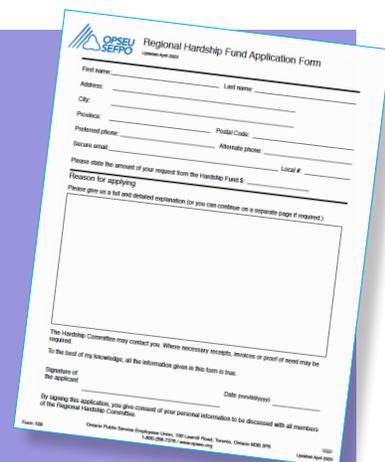
Hardship fund

The regional hardship fund is available to assist OPSEU members in good standing who are experiencing unexpected and/or temporary financial hardship. It provides emergency financial assistance to eligible OPSEU members based on need, duration, and available budget.

When the pandemic hit earlier this year, the OPSEU Executive Board passed a motion increasing the money available to our regional hardship funds. If you are finding yourself in a position of needing some additional financial help, please reach out to the committee and

submit a request. These are challenging times for everyone and we are here to support each other in a time of need.

https://opseu.org/information/tools-and-resources/opseu-forms-and-documents/11248/#member_forms_and_documents





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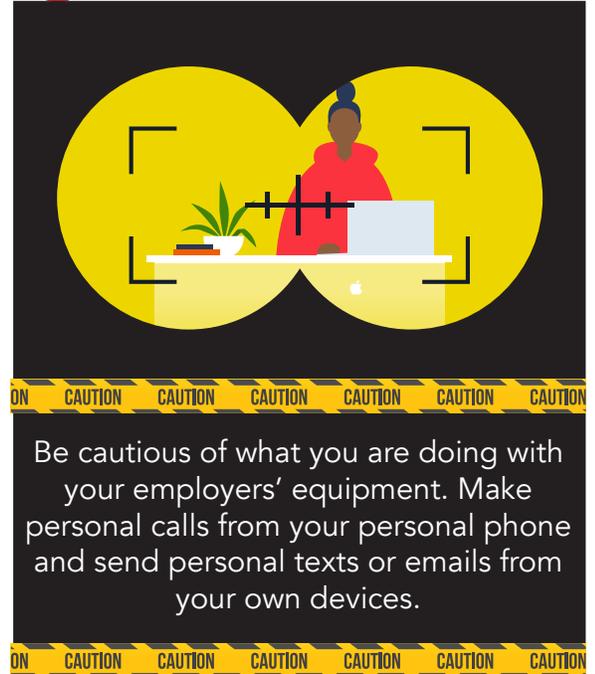
Caution when working from home

It's no big secret that in the past, employers have tracked employees' work progress from home to determine how to improve productivity. Given these unprecedented times, working from home has become a lot more common and employers may be monitoring what you are doing.

There are numerous ways employers can track your productivity.

Some of the more common practices employers use to track employees are:

- If using a work laptop connected to company's virtual private network (VPN), the employer is able to monitor nearly everything you do.
- Keystroke monitoring is used to monitor and record each keystroke typed on a specific computer's keyboard.



Be cautious of what you are doing with your employers' equipment. Make personal calls from your personal phone and send personal texts or emails from your own devices.

Human rights concerns during COVID-19

Many of our members have been working from home during the pandemic. Many offices are now slowly starting to re-open with modified start times, modified lunch breaks, and safety protocols in place. With limited daycare spots available and schools closed, securing childcare while returning to the office may pose some hardships for our members.

The Ontario Human Rights Code provides for equal treatment and freedom from discrimination based on a variety of grounds. 'Family Status' is one of those protected grounds.

Employers have a duty to accommodate based on an individual's family status. Members seeking Family Status accommodation should speak to their supervisors with their needs and provide relevant details of the accommodation being sought. During these discussions we recommend you consult and involve your steward, local president and/or staff rep for assistance. Each accommodation request is dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Your union will be there for you every step of the way trying to finding a suitable solution. Some examples of accommodation include, but are not limited to, changing work shifts, flexible starting times, and/or modified work arrangements.

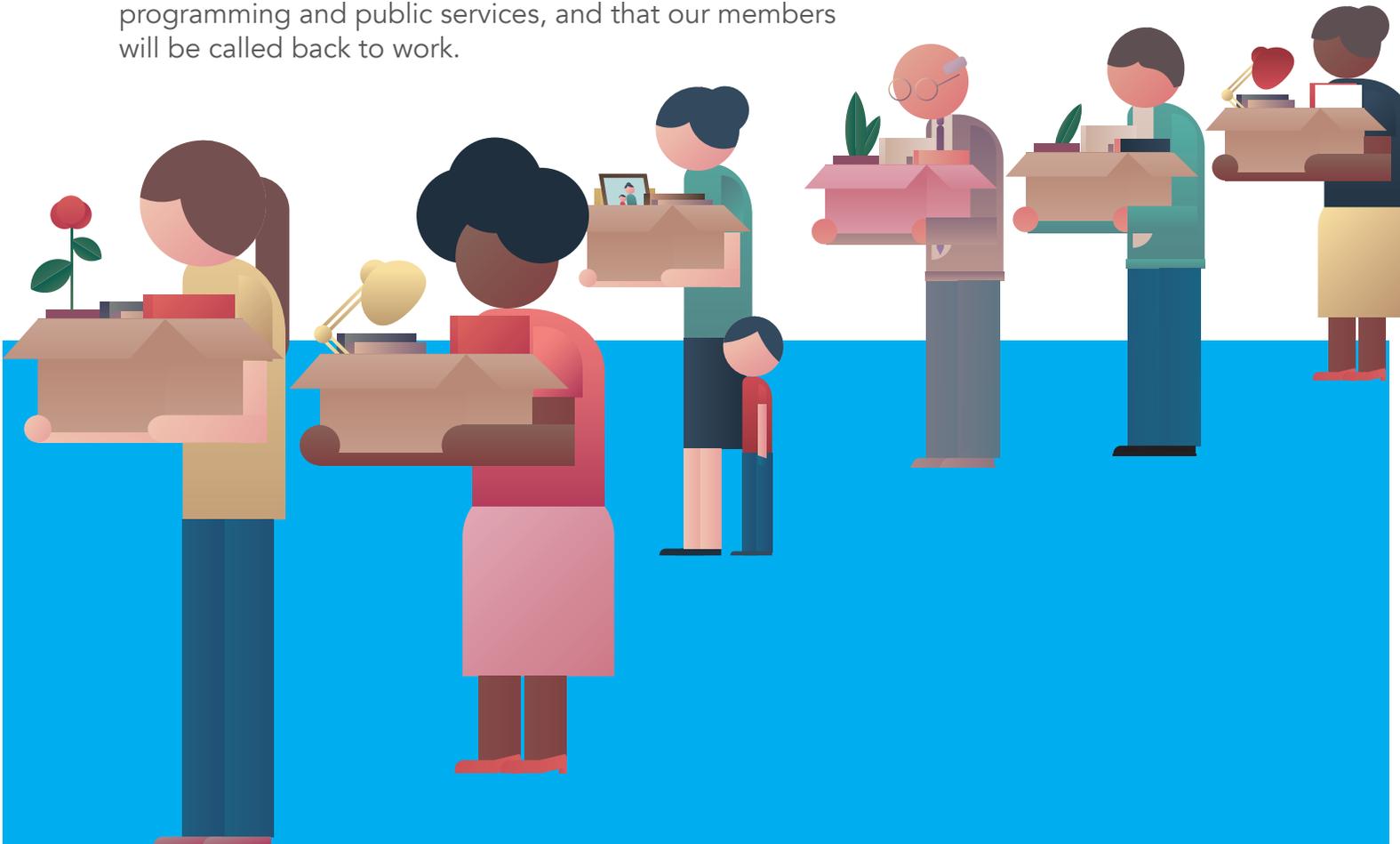


Layoffs across the sector

The Coronavirus pandemic has led to multiple layoffs across our sector. Employers are looking for ways to save money, especially in workplaces that rely on some user fees in addition to government transfer payments to function.

Local 217 Niagara Parks laid off 446 individuals due to the pandemic with 50 per cent of those members recalled in early June. A “soft opening” of amenities is scheduled for July 1 and additional 203 members will also be recalled by that time.

Local 259 Grand River Conservation Authority has had 70-plus layoffs. Only a handful of members have been recalled to date. The Sector Divex is hopeful that with the lessening of restrictions from the government, these employers will be able to again start providing programming and public services, and that our members will be called back to work.



Authorized for distribution by:

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

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