

**Ministry of the Natural Resources
Ministry Employee Relations Committee Meeting (MERC)**

September 24, 2026

OPSEU/SEFPO Wellesley Office

MERC Members:

OPSEU/SEFPO

Jake Rouse – Co-chair
Jessica O'Donnell – Vice Chair
Michelle Riley
Adam Cygler, OPSEU Negotiator
Dave Hall

EMPLOYER REPRESENTATIVES

Donna Walton, Director – Co-Chair
Laura Aitchison
Brian Locke
Julie McArdle
Keri O'Brien
Annie Leppington (TBS)

Standing Items			
	Administrative	The Employer to send double signed meeting minutes to Adam from April meeting.	
	Disclosures	No new items to discuss. The Employer to remind TBS to forward offer letters to the Union.	
	Employee Experience Survey	The Parties discussed the Employee Experience Survey. OPSEU identified multiple areas that have not been favourable over the last few surveys	

Date Tabled	Agenda Item	Discussion notes	Follow-up / Action
		including work related mental health and stress, accommodation and disability support, equity, and flexible work.	
	Inclusion/Accessibility /Diversity/Mental Health	Effective August 1, 2026, EFAP moved to a new integrated model that combines Total Mental Health services (TELUS Health) and Inclusive and Specialized Counselling Services (Homewood Health). MNR continues to share this information for staff awareness.	
	Fixed Term Position Conversion/Seasonal Employee Statistics	OPSEU to provide specific information on questions related to the report.	Employer to follow-up.
Business Arising			
April 11, 2024	AFFES – Incentive MOA, other issues	The Parties did not have any updates at this time.	
November 27, 2025	AWA Appendix 42 s.3	The Employer recognizes that incorporating flexible hours of work arrangements and/or telework may be operationally feasible in many workplaces in MNR and reiterated that all requests are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. OPSEU sought information on what factors the Employer considers when reviewing an employee's AWA request. OPSEU requested the number of approved AWAs for OPSEU-represented employees across the ministry. OPSEU requested that the Parties enter into the review process on the feasibility of incorporating flexible work	The Employer to follow-up.

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		arrangements in the workplace as described in Appendix 42 section 3.	
April 30, 2026	Accommodation	OPSEU has requested information on what process support for employees is available related to the workplace accommodation process. The accommodation process is supported by Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS). The Employer recommended that this be referred to CERC.	The Parties agree to refer to CERC.
New Business (LERC Referrals)			
September 24, 2026	Conservation Officer Concerns (Issues of Concern)	OPSEU provided information to the Employer in advance of the meeting on the following items: • Initial Training and MERC Consultation • Use of Force Qualification Standards and Risk • Instructor Qualification and Equivalency • Meals at Remote Training Facility/Fixed Training Centres	The Employer to follow-up and discuss at the next MERC meeting.
September 24, 2026	Wildland Firefighter Positions	OPSEU has requested information related to new positions established within AFFES. The Employer confirmed that as per information shared on December 5, 2025, there are twenty (20) regular (permanent) Wildland Fire Crew Leader positions in AFFES.	The Employer to follow-up.

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September 24, 2026	LERC Governance	The Parties encourage management and OPSEU representatives at the local level to establish a LERC. OPSEU requested terms of reference for the Workplace Restoration Committee and the associated report generated from the workplace review in the Kemptville/Kingston location and any other locations, as applicable. OPSEU's position is that an elected bargaining agent should be engaged in a workplace review.	The Employer to follow-up.
September 24, 2026	Protective Footwear Reimbursement	The Employer continues to review OPSEU's concerns.	The Employer to follow-up and will provide an update prior to the next meeting.
November 27, 2025	MERC Meeting Dates for 2026	November 26, 2026 (virtual)	

Original approved on September 24, 2026 by:

Jeremy Rouse
OPSEU/SEFPO

Original approved on September 24, 2026 by:

Donna Walton
Employer