

MERC Minutes
Ministry of the Attorney General
Ministry Employee Relations Committee Meeting (MERC)
November 5, 2025
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.
720 Bay Street
Chair: Angela Oh

MERC Members:

Loretta Clark, OPSEU/SEFPO Co-Chair
Ashlee Elliott, OPSEU/SEFPO Member, Vice Chair
Brenton Beeston, OPSEU/SEFPO, Negotiator
Margaret Hotchkiss, OPSEU/SEFPO

Angela Oh, Management Co-Chair, CSMD, MAG
Alexa Lopreiato-Yau, CSMD, MAG
Susana Garcia, CSD, MAG
Kate Lupini, VVPD, MAG
Jacqueline Abergel CPSLRC, TBS

Guests:

Agnieszka Dabrowska, CSMD, MAG
Zoha Salam CSMD, MAG
Brittany Bousamra CSMD, MAG

Regrets:

Link to MERC Minutes -OPSEU/SEFPO Website
[Ministry of Attorney General Employee Relations
Committee \(MERC\) Minutes – OPSEU SEFPO](#)

Link to MERC Minutes -Employer Website
[Bargaining Units - InsideOPS](#)

Ref #	Agenda Item	Issue	Follow-Up / Action
Standing Items			
1.	Provincial Offences Act (POA) – Part III	- No updates at this time.	The Employer will provide further updates as they become available.

		- OSPEU/SEFPO takes the position that fixed term employees working more than 9.25 hours in a day should be eligible for a meal allowance, aligning with the entitlements provided to regular staff. However, it has been noted that fixed-term staff are only receiving the allowance after reaching 38.25 hours in a week. - OPSEU/SEFPO has noted that the interpretation of “overtime” as it applies to fixed-term staff has presented some challenges and has raised concerns about the potential impact on access to entitlements. They also note that there are inconsistencies across locations and how this impacts retention.	application of mealtime entitlements.
MAG Updates			
5.	Court Services Division	Regional Usage of FXT Staff & Recruitment - OPSEU/SEFPO have reported that recruitment and retention challenges persist in the Northwest Region, particularly in Fort Frances and surrounding areas. These difficulties are compounded by operational changes that may further deter talent attraction and retention. - In addition, OPSEU/SEFPO notes that remote court reporting has been introduced, but concerns remain regarding its effectiveness and the potential loss of local employment opportunities. Regionalizing services risks shifting work away from smaller communities, reducing access to jobs and increasing workload pressures on remaining staff. - OPSEU/SEFPO note that based on the regional funding model, staffing funds are allocated to regional management for distribution across locations. As a result, some courthouses may be under-resourced because its staffing complement was reassigned to the regional office. - Concerns have been raised about the practice of hiring staff at a regional level and expecting them to work across multiple locations. Specific examples include St. Catharines (Central West) and the Northwest Region. Further, where some courthouse fixed-term staff are not receiving their expected hours, while staff from other areas are being brought in instead.	Employer to provide further updates as they become available.

		- OPSEU/SEFPO noted a recent decision has moved fly-in court operations from Dryden to Kenora and add five additional courts in: Wapekeka, Weagamow, Mishkeegogamang, Big Trout Lake, Kasabonika. - OPSEU/SEFPO also state that remote reporters have been introduced in the region, but this may increase workload for CSD staff when coverage is insufficient. In addition, remote reporters may lack familiarity with local practices, creating additional work for on-site staff. - OPSEU/SEFPO note there is a growing concern about decisions being made without adequate consultation with frontline management and staff, which may impact morale and operational effectiveness. Communications: - The CSD bulletin is one of several new communication approaches being introduced within CSD. Feedback from both staff and managers has informed its development. The monthly CSD bulletin has been in place for the past nine months, featuring career development insights, project highlights, and other relevant updates. - Feedback has been positive regarding the communications to staff members. Training: - The Employer has confirmed that CSD's Learning and Development Unit is actively developing new training resources, including three upcoming courses scheduled for release in December. These will focus on criminal court processes and enhancing financial administration practices. - OPSEU/SEFPO has provided feedback recommending the implementation of a standardized training curriculum to ensure consistency and support staff development across regions.	
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		Overtime: - OPSEU/SEFPO provided court decision 2019-0347, referring to arbitrator ruling on calculating overtime and is asking the Employer to share the decision with management. - OPSEU/SEFPO have highlighted that in various regions, members are being approached by management regarding concerns about time reporting—particularly around the interpretation and application of the 15-minute increment of overtime. These concerns highlight inconsistencies in how time is tracked and understood. - OPSEU/SEFPO have also noted that in some court locations, multiple time recording systems are in use which is problematic for staff who report overtime. In some courthouses, management utilizes the Digital Recording Device (DRD) as the sole indicator of when court ends. However, the DRD stop time does not reflect when members, the public, or staff actually exit the courtroom. This creates a misalignment between recorded time and actual work performed; DRD does not also reflect that duties staff perform post court. - OPSEU/SEFPO is seeking to establish a mutually agreed-upon framework that addresses these discrepancies and ensures consistent application of time tracking practices across all regions.	
6.	Victims and Vulnerable Persons Division (VVPD)	- OPSEU/SEFPO has reported growing concerns around significant burnout among members, particularly in roles that are inherently high-pressure and more vulnerable to emotional pressures. - The Employer has provided the following updates to address some of these concerns: Victim/Witness Assistance Program (VWAP) – OVS Highlights Program Area Updates - To address workload pressures, the ministry will allocate additional temporary FTEs to VWAP sites experiencing higher-than-average volumes over the fall and winter.	Employer to provide further updates as they become available.

		- A new VWAP Operational Support Unit has been established to enhance corporate operational support and alleviate front-line pressures. - A comprehensive review of VWAP's Policy and Procedures Manual is underway, aiming to deliver clearer, more consistent, and inclusive operational guidance. - South Region has added a permanent FTE dedicated to supporting Gun and Gang cases, joining the Provincial Gun and Gang Case Management Table. - Toronto Northwest Justice Centre is expanding to include all YCJA cases. Training Initiatives - A provincial VWAP training program is in development; two training roles have been posted. - Suicide prevention training offered in-person and virtually. - The Anti-Racism Advisory Group continues career development sessions for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) staff. - Crown-led training on Justice Participant Assistance Program delivered. - French language training scheduled for Jan 2026 in Cornwall. - "Responding to Inappropriate Client Behaviour" policy launched in May 2025. Finance, Technology and Administration (FTA) – OPGT Highlights Staff Engagement and Culture - September 10: Let's Talk session reviewed Pulse Survey results; followed by team lunch. - September 26: Staff participated in National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. ADAGO/DCSB Update Pulse Survey - Program areas reviewed results to inform the Employee Engagement and Anti-Racism Action Plan (EEARAP). Leadership Development Session - 67 attendees; strong engagement and positive feedback.	
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		- Topic: “Building High Performing Teams Through Influence.” - Next session: “Leading with Recognition” planned for May 2026. Take Our Kids to Work Day - DCSB-led event included tours, activities, and presentations. - Virtual activity booklet shared with regional participants for inclusivity.	
7.	Criminal Law Division (CLD)	- CLD is undertaking a pilot in Toronto and Hamilton to enable designated Case Management Coordinators (CMCs) to independently appear in Court on behalf of the Crown to address purely administrative scheduling and other routine matters. The intent of the pilot is to help create efficiencies in moving files through the system and help address any backlog. - CMCs will be notified of this pilot and will have a chance to volunteer to participate in this pilot. Individuals will be selected with regard to their experience in case management court and training in substantive criminal law and court systems. - OPSEU/SEFPO have raised concerns about assigning additional duties to a position that is already carrying a substantial workload and the potential liability of the new duties. - The Employer reported that CMCs are currently involved in court proceedings, during which they are sharing information with the Crown. They noted that this may reduce the overall workload and shorten the duration of the court process, emphasizing that the matter is strictly administrative in nature.	The Employer will provide further updates as they become available. The Employer will inquire about the Terms of Reference and share accordingly. The Employer will compile and provide a list of employees currently serving in CMC roles, enabling OPSEU/SEFPO to engage directly with members and ensure their perspectives are considered in ongoing discussions and decision-making processes.
Reports			
8.	Fixed Term Report (Article 16.5.1)	The Fixed Term report ending October 31, 2025, was provided by the Employer on November 3, 2025.	The parties continue to discuss.

9.	Conversion Reports (Article 31A.15)	The Conversion report ending October 31, 2025, was provided by the Employer on November 3, 2025.	The parties continue to discuss.
10.	FPT Deficit Hours	No deficit hours reported from July to September.	
11.	Job Descriptions	- July disclosures– sent August 13, 2025 - August disclosures– sent September 12, 2025 - September disclosures– sent October 16, 2025	
12.	Vacancy Reports	- OPSEU/SEFPO inquired about the high number of vacant positions. - The Employer acknowledged that current reports may not fully reflect the staffing situation, as many notations reflect clearance only postings to stabilize positions. Further, some competitions may not be closed out in a timely manner.	The Employer to clarify how staffing data is being pulled. This includes understanding whether the data accounts for mass departures, unfilled new positions, retirements, secondments, and leaves etc.
Report Back Items			
13.	Health and Safety	Virtual Courtroom & Safety Concerns - OPSEU/SEFPO continues to emphasize concept of the open court principle in virtual proceedings that are accessible to the public. – - OPSEU/SEFPO has raised concerns about Zoom bombing incidents during virtual proceedings, which have included offensive and threatening disruptions from the public. These pose psychological and operational risks to court staff. - The Employer has shared that a temporary intranet site is available (Zoom Bombing Information & Resources - InsideOPS) to provide staff with training and resources to help limit Zoom bombings, stop Zoom bombings in progress, report Zoom bombings, and keep staff informed about the work underway to address this issue. - OPSEU/SEFPO has noted the shift of virtual courtroom access duties to Crown Attorney offices, emphasizing that this is a Court Services Division responsibility.	

		- OPSEU/SEFPO stresses that managing courtroom attendance and controls should remain with court staff to uphold the open court principle and avoid overburdening staff. On-Site Safety Updates - OPSEU/SEFPO continue to raise health and safety concerns for members. - The Employer has reported that the Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019 (CSPA), provides the statutory framework for the delivery of court security services by the local police service of jurisdiction (municipal, regional, or OPP), who are required to perform risk assessments to determine local security needs. - The Employer reported that in Napanee (SCJ Satellite Court), wandung procedures are in place at the entrance, with OPP support and an armed officer present during sittings. Within the OCJ Site there is a single entrance with armed officer presence, swipe card access to administrative areas, and increased OPP staffing and surveillance. - OPSEU/SEFPO continues to advocate for stronger health and safety measures across the province. While Health and Safety committees may exist, serious incidents are often underreported and OPSEU/SEFPO are encouraging members to report to their management teams.	
14.	Diversity and Inclusion/ Anti-Racism Action Plan (11:30am) Zoha Salam CSMD, MAG Brittany Bousamra CSMD, MAG	- The Employer has implemented education initiatives this year, including anti-racism training and MAG employee commitments through platforms such as Taking Action on Your Employee Experience (InsideOPS). - OPSEU/SEFPO has raised concerns about limited access to InsideOPS for members who are off work (e.g., on leave), which restricts their ability to stay informed. - The Employer has expressed openness to suggestions for improving communication with staff who cannot access OPS systems, to ensure equitable access to updates and resources.	Employer to provide further updates as they become available.

15.	Mental Health updates Agnieszka Dabrowska, CSMD, MAG (1:00pm) Link for employees: <u>EFAP</u>	Vicarious Trauma Training - Ongoing training for new MAG employees, students, and OICs in Policy Division. - Focuses on awareness of vicarious trauma, stress triggers, and early intervention. De-escalating Emotionally Heightened Situations Training - Designed for staff interacting with the public to manage conflict and defuse tense situations. - Over 1,000 frontline staff and all OPGT employees have completed the training. - A condensed version is included in Court Services Division orientation. - 100% of surveyed participants found the training practical and relevant. - Expanded ministry-wide (Nov 2024) due to high demand across roles. - Tip-sheet in development; training paused pending program review. Mental Health First Aid Training - Available to managers to support staff with mental health challenges and improve mental health literacy. - 40 sessions delivered; 397 employees trained; 33% of people leaders completed it, including all CLD managers. - 8 sessions held in 2025; final one scheduled for December. - Policy Division aims to train all managers. Mental Health Resources at MAG - Annual presentation for summer law students by WIB and CLOC. - Includes counselling services and discussions on mental health, anti-racism, and accessibility. - Open to students in seconded legal service roles across OPS. Mind Your Health Learning Series (2026) - Annual one-week event with three sessions led by mental health experts. - Topics include: burnout, resilience in high-stress environments, and secondary traumatic stress.	Employer to provide further updates as they become available.
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		- OPSEU/SEFPO has raised questions about how training opportunities are being made accessible to staff who are assigned to court duties. While recordings of sessions are available, members have noted that accessing them during scheduled breaks—such as lunch—is not always practical or feasible. - The Employer will determine if there are ways to open these learning opportunities for staff, particularly staff with courtroom responsibilities.	
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16.	Pay Equity Initiative	- No updates at this time.	Updates to be provided if applicable.
17.	Enforcement Officers	- OPSEU/SEFPO are raising concerns that CCRs and CSRs are conducting Enforcement Officer work in Hamilton, Thunder Bay, Toronto, and St. Catharines. - OPSEU/SEFPO seeks to preserve their right to undertake any subsequent actions.	The Employer and OPSEU/SEFPO will provide updates as available.
18.	Reclassifications	- No updates at this time.	The Employer and OPSEU/SEFPO will provide updates as available.
19.	Fort Frances, Kenora and Dryden courthouse locations	- No updates at this time.	The Employer will provide updates as available.
20.	Writs Administration	- No updates at this time.	The Employer will provide updates as available.
21.	720 Bay Street Relocation	- No updates at this time.	The Employer will provide updates as available.
New Business			
22.	Return to Office	- To be scheduled at a next meeting.	
Inactive Status Items			
23.	Tribunals Ontario Review	- No updates at this time.	The Employer will provide updates as available.

24.	Remote Recordings	- OPSEU/SEFPO will continue to canvass their members for specific concerns and provide those to the Employer when available.	OPSEU to canvass their members.
25.	Role of the Employer (Tabled: December 10, 2020)	- OPESEU/SEFPO has raised concerns about the hours of business run and are still an issue.	The Employer will provide updates as available.
Next Meeting Dates			
		- TBD	

For the Union

Loretta Clark

Loretta Clark - Union Co-Chair

For the Employer



Angela Oh - Employer Co-Chair