



At the Table

Bargaining information for OPSEU members
at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation
Issue 11 • April 28, 2010

Contract settlement reached

Some gains, but more work ahead

With just hours to go to a 12:01 a.m. Wednesday strike deadline, your MPAC bargaining team reached a tentative agreement with the employer on a new two-year contract.

The settlement achieves gains in some of the areas the members indicated were important in a new contract. While the settlement was less than what the bargaining team hoped to get, the gains made were as much as could be achieved without hitting the picket lines.

Ivan Herrington, bargaining team chair, affirmed that position.

“Our members elected us to bargain a new contract, not a strike,” Herrington said. “The 92 per cent strike vote drove the part-time issue off the table. We now believe there is enough in the new agreement to justify not taking strike action. We pushed the employer as far as we could at the table, considering the political and economic realities we were facing. The team felt it would be irresponsible to force the members out on strike when there was no reasonable expectation that there would be any significant gains achieved by doing that.”

The big issue was the Ontario government wage freeze that prompted MPAC to retract their wage offer and substitute it with a zero percent increase for the first two years. Despite an OLRB ruling that said MPAC wasn't affected by the provincial freeze, MPAC would not move off

of their zero wage increase position. The team then concentrated on making improvements in other areas of the contract.

OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas praises the bargaining team for their work, noting that difficult decisions at the bargaining table are what contract negotiations are all about.

“Most members know that any wage increase that could be gained is immediately lost once you hit the picket line,” Thomas said. “We know that MPAC members deserve an increase, but it became obvious that strike action would be needed, and under the circumstances the odds of success were slim. What are NOT in this agreement are many of the employer's takeaways, the biggest of which was their plan to create a part-time workforce in MPAC. The bargaining team made hard but strategic decisions that will benefit members far into the future.”

Herrington said the team stuck to the position of a two-year agreement so that bargaining can begin again in a better climate.

“We believe we will be in a much better position to make gains two years from now,” Herrington said. “MPAC's offer for a third year on this contract was completely sub-standard. We want to be back at the table at the start of the next reassessment cycle, which will give us far more leverage at the table.”

Details of the two-year agreement are as follows:

- Two-year agreement – January 1, 2010 – December 31, 2011
- Zero wage increase during collective agreement
- The wage freeze does not affect normal progression through the wage grid.
- The option to cash in up to five unused sick days and/or unused vacation days at the end of each year of the contract.
- Acting Positions to be filled by competition if the acting position is longer than six months in duration.
- Acting assignments cannot be continuous – there must be a three-month break between acting assignments.
- Valuation Analysts and Valuation Review Specialists will be combined into a new classification to be called “Property Valuation Analyst” and to be paid at the PA4 rate.
- PIAs to be re-assigned to the new position of Parcelization Coordinator, and paid at the PA3 rate. If a PIA does not accept the Parcelization Coordinator position, they will be re-assigned to a Property Inspector position and will have their rate of pay maintained until December 31, 2011.
- Job Postings - all permanent vacancies will be advertised province-wide.
- ITA4s whose jobs are being eliminated and who are not successful in obtaining one of the new ITA5 positions will be re-assigned to an ITA3 position. Their former rate of pay will be maintained until December 31, 2011.
- Extended recall rights from 18 months to 24 months.
- Improved bereavement leave – bereavement maximum for full-time

employees increased to five days for parent, spouse or child. Temporary employees receive three days for parent, spouse or child and one day for any other immediate family member.

Benefits:

- **Semi-private hospital coverage** – Eliminated.
- **Orthopaedic Shoes** – no longer can be prescribed by a Chiropractor. Off the shelf shoes no longer covered. Still 75 per cent reimbursement, but capped at \$1,200 per year.
- **Orthotics** – No longer can be prescribed by a Chiropractor. Now capped at \$500 per year.
- **Increased limits on paramedical** – Increase to \$50 per visit to a maximum of \$1,200 per year.
- **Dental recall** – Maintained at six months.
- **Eyeglasses** – Increase from \$375 to \$400 every two years. Now includes prescription sunglasses. \$25 (single) and \$50 (family) deductible now eliminated.
- **Hearing Aids** – Increase from \$500 every five years to \$750 every three years.
- **Life Insurance** – Increase of availability for spouse life insurance from \$2,000 to \$50,000 and dependent life insurance from \$1,000 to \$20,000 (both in increments of \$1,000).
- **Sick notes** – When sick notes are required by the employer, the employer shall reimburse up to \$10 per note.

*Note that due to the employer’s position on the wage and compensation freeze, changes to the benefit plan had to be “cost neutral” in order to take effect immediately upon ratification.

Team recommends acceptance

Herrington wants to make it clear that while the team is not happy with the final outcome, the team is unanimously recommending that the members ratify the agreement.

“If this settlement is turned down, we will be on strike, and that strike could last for quite some time,” Herrington said. “There were many outside forces that affected this round of negotiations, and we do not see that changing regardless if we are on strike. It’s time for us to continue the solidarity we have built together during this round and lay the ground work for the next round of bargaining less than two years from now.”

The team thanks the members for all their support, and also thanks the OPSEU staff who provided their professional assistance at the table.

The official Memorandum of Agreement is available on the OPSEU website at http://www.opseu.org/bps/opac/bargaining2010/MPAC_MOA_100427.pdf.

Stay in touch!

To ensure a speedy response to your questions, your leadership team has divided up all MPAC offices in the province. If you have a question or a comment, please contact the bargaining team member responsible for your office. Contact us by e-mail at work or at home, as follows:

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Impact At the Table is produced by the bargaining team for the Property Assessment Division of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union and authorized for distribution by Warren (Smockey) Thomas, president.

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