

**MINISTRY of AGRICULTURE, FOOD and RURAL AFFAIRS**

**MINISTRY EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE (MERC)**

**March 24, 2020**

**Teleconference 1-866-633-1033 / 416-212-8013**

<b>For Management:</b>	<b>For OPSEU:</b>
Alaina Oda (Co-chair) Doug Reddick Colleen Fitzgerald-Hubble	Melanie Begin (Co-chair) Heidi Steffen-Petrie Marcus Rangai

<b>Management Resources</b>	<b>OPSEU Resource</b>
Jared Friesen Kristin McCrimmon-Jones	Mike Grimaldi, OPSEU

<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>STANDING ITEMS</b>	<b>ACTION REQUIRED</b>
<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	Melanie Begin opened the meeting at 9:35am	
<b>Additional Agenda Items / Changes to the Agenda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance Management</li> <li>• Grievance process</li> <li>• COVID-19</li> <li>• Regional Office Health &amp; Safety Reps</li> </ul>	
<b>Ad Hoc Meetings</b>	<p>A list of ad hoc meetings was distributed prior to the meeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some additional meetings occurred after the ad hoc meeting listing was sent out.</li> </ul>	Management will update the listing and redistribute to OPSEU
<b>Surplus List</b>	Management reported that there are no employees on the surplus list.	
<b>Temp Agency Staff</b>	Management reported that they are not aware of any temp agency staff currently working in the ministry as of March 24, 2020.	

AGENDA	STANDING ITEMS	ACTION REQUIRED
<b>Fixed Term Staff Reports</b>	<p>Management provided fixed term staff reports in advance of the meeting dated February 29, 2020.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OPSEU inquired about three employees on Full Time Fixed Term list</li> <li>• Management reported on two employees who are backfilling approved leaves of absence</li> </ul>	<p>Management to report back on one employee backfill and another employee assigned to a “BIL” position</p>
<b>Conversion Report</b>	<p>OPSEU advised they did not receive report</p>	<p>Management to look into additional reporting and provide information to OPSEU</p>
<b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>	<p>Management reported on</p> <p>Indigenous Cultural Competency Training (ICCT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 63% of the ministry has completed the training</li> <li>• OMAFRA’s pass rate of 94% is higher than the OPS-wide completion/pass rate. Staff who do not pass have to redo the training.</li> <li>• Currently assessing if Q1 training will start in April/May</li> </ul> <p>Diversity and Inclusion Working Group (DIWG)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• D&amp;I Ambassadors Toolkit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Materials finalized in February. Toolkit intended to promote D&amp;I discussions at the branch and unit level</li> <li>○ Launch tentatively scheduled for Q1</li> <li>○ Ministry management attended the soft-launch of the tool and were encouraged to have discussions with staff within next 6 months.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• D&amp;I Strategic Framework <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Strategy launched in February. Framework will be launched in the Spring with linkages to OPS of the Future, OPS Inclusion &amp; Diversity Blueprint, OPS Multi-Year Accessibility Plan and OPS Anti-Racism Policy</li> </ul> </li> <li>• DIWG Events Calendar</li> </ul>	

AGENDA	STANDING ITEMS	ACTION REQUIRED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Number of events hosted over past few months: Pink Shirt Day, Black OPS Employee Network’s Black History Month event</li> </ul> <p>Diversity Career Champions Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Launched in January and will end in June. OMAFRA has 30 participants this year (up from 27 in 2018/19 and 8 in 2017/18)</li> <li>• Champions received hands on sessions including tips on effective coaching and mentoring</li> </ul> <p>OMAFRA Inclusion Targets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OMAFRA to report on progress in Spring based on available data. Deputy Minister will share scorecard to support performance discussions. Targets are posted publicly and will be shared with OPSEU.</li> </ul>	
<b>Disclosures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• January 27 – Local disclosure related to creation of new “Public Awareness and Issues Supervisor” job description/position (AMAPCEO 04) within Rural Programs Branch, EDD.</li> <li>• February 12 – Local disclosure related to creation of new “Business Advisor” job description/position (AMAPCEO 05) within the Finance, Infrastructure &amp; Administration Unit, BPFMB, RCSD.</li> </ul>	
<b>Health and Safety Update</b>	<p>FSIDB Health &amp; Safety Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MIERC is in receipt of some materials requested (i.e. two-page health &amp; safety report and data/reports). OPSEU requested minutes to understand what discussions are occurring and objectives of the working group.</li> <li>• Concerns raised about direction provided to staff during COVID-19</li> <li>• Parties agree discussing and checking in with health &amp; safety work on an annual basis. Where there are immediate issues/concerns these can be raised when needed.</li> </ul> <p>Alternative Emergency Locations – 1 Stone Rd.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OPSEU raised concerns about the direction provided for staff to use personal vehicles when there is inclement weather</li> <li>• Management encourages staff to raise individual concerns or accommodation requirements with their manager</li> </ul>	<p>Management to follow-up on request for minutes</p> <p>Management to follow-up with Business Services Branch</p>

AGENDA	STANDING ITEMS	ACTION REQUIRED
	<p>Health &amp; Safety Representatives in Regional Offices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPSEU has reached out to staff to identify HSRs but staff have not come forward for Kemptville, Ridgetown and Woodstock offices</li> <li>Management has offered to reach out to staff to discuss the role and encourage participation</li> </ul>	<p>Management to follow-up on opportunities for training</p> <p>OPSEU will identify a HSR who could outline the role/responsibilities</p>
AGENDA	FOLLOW UP	ACTION REQUIRED
<b>Emo Office Update</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work was supposed to be completed end of January. Staff are not back in the office yet as remediation work continues. During COVID-19 measures, staff will be working from home.</li> </ul>	
<b>Verner Regional Office</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work is completed and staff were supposed to return March 31, 2020. Move-in date has been delayed and future date is unknown. Staff have been instructed to continue telework arrangements due to COVID-19 measures.</li> </ul>	<p>Management will provide an update to OPSEU when a new move-in date is established and will share any updated communication materials</p>
<b>MERC Terms of Reference</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Management has made changes and will share them with OPSEU for review</li> </ul>	<p>Management to send proposed changes to OPSEU. Any questions/concerns can be discussed in between MERC meetings</p>
<b>Responsive Feedback Mechanism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ministry has not received any calls through this initiative</li> </ul>	<p>To be removed for next agenda and be returned if issues raised.</p>
<b>2019 OPS Employee Experience Survey</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPS and OMAFRA survey results to tentatively be released in April 2020</li> <li>Further communication, engagement strategies and timing TBD</li> </ul>	

<b>MERC Training</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Members attended the training on January 30, 2020</li> </ul>	To be removed for next agenda
<b>Transition Exit Initiative</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPSEU has not received corporate reporting through CERC</li> <li>Ministry reviewed applications at the beginning of March. Any approvals from that review should have been communicated to staff.</li> <li>OPSEU raised concerns that an employee was pressured to consider an earlier exit date</li> <li>Management confirmed the ministry's process for arriving at a mutually agreeable exit date and employee options</li> </ul>	Management can provide a listing of approved exits.
<b>AGENDA</b>	<b>NEW BUSINESS</b>	<b>ACTION REQUIRED</b>
<b>AICC (Agricultural Information Contact Centre)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPSEU is aware of Employer plans to consolidate OPS call centre operations and inquired if this will affect AICC</li> <li>Management is not aware of any plans for AICC</li> </ul>	Parties can discuss if there are updates
<b>Multi-Year Planning (MYP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPSEU inquired on ministry's MYP. Management confirmed there is nothing to share at this time. Any finalized plans will be disclosed to OPSEU in accordance with disclosure directives</li> </ul>	
<b>OPSEU Unified Pay Equity / Job Evaluation Project</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steering committee is encouraging managers to provide staff with sufficient time to complete the "position information questionnaire" (PIQ)</li> <li>Management encourages staff to discuss with their manager if they need additional time to complete PIQ</li> <li>There were 4 OMAFRA positions identified through testing phase</li> </ul>	
<b>Flexible Work Arrangements</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Due to COVID-19 measures, a lot of ministry staff are working from home with some exceptions. Management continues to identify alternative work options and encourages telework arrangements.</li> <li>Telework arrangements are functioning under the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) vs. normal flexible work arrangement process</li> <li>OPSEU raised opportunity for Employer to assess feasibility of flexible work arrangements going forward once the OPS is back to normal business</li> </ul>	

AGENDA	NEW BUSINESS	ACTION REQUIRED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Strategic HR Branch held a “Navigating HR” session on February 26, 2020 with managers and directors where flexible work arrangements was a topic.</li> </ul>	
<b>COVID-19</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPSEU inquired about staff located at 1 Stone Rd. Management confirmed there are a handful of OMAFRA staff in the office and is reviewing building emergency management protocols.</li> <li>OPSEU is aware of direction that anyone entering the building should be screened. Management is following guidance from Ministry of Health and Public Health Units and would need to consult with IO and CBRE to seek direction.</li> <li>OPSEU inquired about process for employees who may be part of vulnerable group and require accommodation. Management confirmed that employees are encouraged to discuss accommodation needs directly with their manager.</li> <li>OPSEU inquired about attendance management program and employees who may exceed attendance threshold due to COVID-19. Management confirmed corporate direction has not been provided but managers are able to consider the circumstances of the absences to determine if attendance should be managed as part of attendance program.</li> <li>Discussion on contents/direction included in <a href="#">OPS Q&amp;A's</a></li> <li>OPSEU is hearing concerns from front line workers and their ability to follow “social distancing” measures during the course of their regular duties. Management has sent direction to staff. <b>Employees are encouraged to raise health and safety concerns directly with their manager and can remove themselves from the situation until the concerns are addressed.</b> Communication and information has been shared to third party operators.</li> <li>Discussion on work refusal process</li> </ul>	
<b>Grievance process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OPSEU has inquired if timelines for grievances have been affected by COVID-19 measures</li> <li>Parties have agreed to adjourned GSB hearings until April 2020 and will likely be reassessed closer to that timeframe</li> </ul>	OPSEU will confirm if there is corporate agreement to waive FRSM timelines

AGENDA	NEW BUSINESS	ACTION REQUIRED
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timelines for Formal Resolution Stage Meetings (FRSM) will be determined on a case by case basis</li> </ul>	
<b>Next Meeting Date</b>	June 25, 2020	

*Melanie Bégin*  
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 For the Union

*Alain Ode*  
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 For Management

*March 24, 2020*  
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 Date