



OPFFA

ONTARIO PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

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March 29, 2010

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL ONLY

Attention All OPFFA Members

RE: Provincial Budget & Compensation Freezes

Dear Brothers & Sisters:

On March 25, 2010 I along with Executive V/P Mark McKinnon attended the Ontario Government's Budget Speech at Queen's Park. The budget was met with mixed reaction and there has been much press attributed to the compensation freezes declared within the budget.

The immediate steps that were announced were; a continuation of the MPP's salary freeze for an additional two years. As well legislation will be introduced to freeze compensation levels of *non-bargained* political and Legislative Assembly staff for two years.

They also stated that the current fiscal plan does not provide for additional funding for incremental compensation increases for future collective agreements that are the responsibility of the Provincial Government. As contracts are renegotiated, the Government will work with transfer partners (i.e. Hospitals, Schools Boards etc.) and bargaining agents (OPSEU, ONA, OPPA etc.) to seek agreements of at least two years' in duration and without a net increase in compensation. While this statement is clear that tough negotiations lie ahead for many within the Ontario and broader public service, many agreements are in place until the end of 2012.

Both Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Duncan were subsequently quoted (March 26, 2010) in various newspapers encouraging municipalities to follow suit and utilize similar compensation freeze strategies at the municipal level. What is important to note is that the Premier was quoted as stating that "*We could have imposed this approach on our municipal partners. We decided they're a mature, responsible level of government, they have their own duly elected representatives.*"

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) issued a press release stating that they are working to determine what the Province's expectations are with respect to compensation matters and how they would achieve this goal without the legislative tools to do so.

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An Association Run For and By The Membership
Affiliated with the International Association of Fire Fighters and the Ontario Federation of Labour



We applaud much of the Government's Budget including avoiding the temptation to implement mandatory days off (i.e. "Rae Days" or "Dalton Days" as they have been referred to). As well they stated a number of times that all collective agreements will be honoured. Notwithstanding, we take exception to the Premier's and Finance Minister's musing about a compensation freeze at the municipal level.

We have made inquiries and are meeting with staff from both offices to discuss if there is any legislative intent behind these statements.

The economic situation is vastly different across the province from municipality to municipality and a province-wide compensation freeze on municipal workers is deliberately unfair. We have witnessed numerous local settlements within the fire sector throughout this global economic downturn. Many contained conservative wage increases with a few modest benefit increases which were agreed to and endorsed by the local municipality. For those areas proceeding to arbitration, the legislation is fair whereby the employer can argue its fiscal situation before the arbitrator who must consider not only the local economy but the Ontario economy as well.

It is our position that negotiations at any level of government should be conducted without predetermined outcomes or pre-existing conditions. To do so otherwise borders on bad faith bargaining.

We will strenuously oppose any attempts to legislate change that would negatively affect local bargaining or the arbitration process.

Will keep you apprised of any positions in this regard.

For more information about the government's budget please go to the Government's website at:
<http://www.ontario.ca/>

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fred LeBlanc".

Fred LeBlanc,
President