



**Ontario Agencies Supporting Individuals with Special Needs**  
*Agences ontariennes de soutien pour les personnes qui ont des besoins spéciaux*

**OASIS LABOUR RELATIONS UPDATE**  
**September 2006**

*This bulletin is produced periodically by the OASIS Labour Relations Committee and is intended to be for informational purposes only, for OASIS members.*

**Ministry of Labour Inspections Increase**

Over the past few months many agencies have been reporting surprise inspections by the Ministry of Labour. In the past two years 200 new Health and Safety Inspectors have been hired to increase inspections, with an eye to ensuring safe workplaces for Ontarians. These inspections, while for the most part welcomed, have resulted in significant costs to agencies. One agency was forced to install six new eye washing stations. Other agencies have reported machinery being tagged and shut down until new safety guards were installed.

The process can be quite intimidating as the inspectors show up unannounced and demand to see Health and Safety representatives. One inspector said his job was to protect workers, yet failed to recognize the workers being supported by staff in the agency workshop. He instead wanted to ensure that agency staff were not being subjected to violence by the people supported. The inspector went to great pains to separate the front-line staff from management to get what he called “the real story.”

Inspectors will ask to see Health and Safety Policies and Procedures, will ensure MSDS sheets are up to date and ask to see where hazardous materials are stored. All infractions are written up and given to the agency on the date of the inspections. Compliance with infractions is usually expected immediately to one month. Inspectors have been quite flexible if work orders cannot be implemented within the required time frame, as long as the reasons are communicated to them via phone or email. However, the cost to comply with the inspections stresses the budgets of agencies that are already trying to deal with agency budget shortfalls.

Ministry of Labour Inspections: Coming soon to an agency near you!

### **Passport Initiative-Impacting Salaries and Service Quality?**

The new Passport Initiative, while being flexible and innovative may actually have a negative impact on salaries. For years Special Services at Home workers across the province have received lower compensation than their counterparts working directly for agencies. It is anticipated this same issue will arise as The Passport Initiative becomes part of our developmental services system. Families and individuals who choose to forgo agency support may hire staff at lower wages. In addition there appears to be no check and balance with regards to training and education of staff. While the government is seeking measure of success regarding Passports, these measures, at this point, seem based on the number of people serviced and hours of support received and not based on quality of service.

### **News from the Ministry of Labour Website...**

#### **MCGUINTY GOVERNMENT MAKES IT EASIER FOR WORKERS TO GET EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS SERVICES**

The McGuinty government is making it easier for workers to get information on their rights under the Employment Standards Act and access services to protect their rights, Labour Minister Steve Peters announced today.

“Workers can now get information and services when, where and how they need them across the province,” said Peters at the Service Ontario Centre in North Bay. “These are the latest of many fundamental changes in the way government services are designed and delivered to ensure the people get a government that works.”

Workers can now obtain and submit employment standards claims at Service Ontario Centres across the province. Access through 63 Service Ontario Centres will make it much easier for the public to get services closer to home than at the 21 Ministry of Labour locations. A selection of Employment Standards information material is available at Service Ontario Centres and workers can access all Employment Standards online publications through provided computer terminals at Service Ontario Centres.

Peters also announced:

A new Self Help Kit empowers workers to help resolve their employment standards concerns with their employer without the need to file a claim.

Workers can now file employment standards claims online 24 hours a day, seven days a week on the ministry's website: <http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/claim/index.html>

A simplified claim form and guide that is easier for employees to understand and complete, which can be downloaded from the ministry's website.

A Provincial Claims Centre in Sault Ste. Marie to help manage employment standards claims across the province.

The government provides employment standards information in 23 different languages.

"People in Northern Ontario can now choose from 32 Service Ontario locations across the North, including here in North Bay," said Monique Smith, MPP for Nipissing. "By making it easier, for both employees and employers to access information and government services, the McGuinty government is helping build stronger northern communities."

A complete list of Service Ontario Centres is available on the Ministry's website and on the Workplace Gateway website at: [www.serviceontario.ca/workplacegateway](http://www.serviceontario.ca/workplacegateway), or by calling the Employment Standards Information centre at 416-326-7160 or, toll free, at 1-800-531-5551 from anywhere in Canada. Workers can also fax their claim forms directly to our Provincial Claims Centre in Sault Ste. Marie at 1-888-252-4684, or mail them to 70 Foster Dr, Ste. 480, Sault Ste. Marie ON P6A 6V4.

"Service Ontario makes it easier and more convenient to access a wide range of government services and information online, in person and on the phone." said Peters. "Together, we are helping workers to know their rights and obligations under the law."

## **2007 – The Year of the Raise?**

According to a recent report in the Globe and Mail, Canadian workers can expect to receive pay increases of 3.5% in 2007. Pension and benefits consulting firm Morneau Sobeco arrived at this figure after surveying 350 Canadian companies. The types of companies surveyed were not disclosed in the report. It should come as no surprise that workers in Alberta will be receiving the most significant pay increases, coming in at close to 4.0%

## **News from the CUPE Website...**

**Work under funded; Long-standing issues of low wages, increased 'casualization' and impact on service need attention**

Thanks to Trish Crawford for her feature about our work with individuals who have developmental disabilities supported by Community Living Toronto. We applaud the Star for featuring real people who work in our community.

Crawford has sensitively outlined the challenges that we, as proud members of CUPE Local 2191, are working hard to address. During recent contract negotiations we fought back changes in the workplace that would have further increased the number of casual workers. More than 60 per cent of our 1,100 members now work as casual, part-time or relief workers compared to 25 per cent 10 years ago.

"Casualization" of the labour force directly results in deterioration of the service we provide. It means less stability, inferior training and lack of continuity for the individuals we support.

Developmental service staff are shouldering the burden of years of provincial under funding through low wages and heavy workloads. Those receiving supports and the frontline workers delivering them are paying the price. It is interesting to note the overwhelming majority of our casual members are women and visible minority persons from Afro, Asian and Latin American communities in Toronto.

Employer groups, advocates, families and unions have repeatedly raised the impact of under funding on individuals who have developmental disabilities. Despite this the province released a consultation paper that did nothing to address the long-standing issues created by under funding - low wages, increased "casualization," high turnover, recruitment challenges, wait lists and the impact on service. Let's make this an election issue.

### **Information Session**

The OASIS Labour Relations Committee will be hosting an Information Session on October 18, 2006 in Toronto. The topics include: Refusal to Work; Violence in the Workplace; and, Pay Equity Maintenance. Full details of the session have been distributed electronically, or can be accessed on the OASIS website at: [www.oasisonline.ca](http://www.oasisonline.ca).

Are there labour issues in your area that you would like to share with other OASIS members? Please submit your information to the OASIS Labour Relations Committee, in care of Don Seymour – [dseymour@lcds.on.ca](mailto:dseymour@lcds.on.ca), or via fax at 519 882-3386.