



ONTARIO AGENCIES

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Agences Ontariennes de Soutien pour les Personnes qui ont des Besoins Speciaux

OASIS LABOUR RELATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

May '05

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

Labour Strife Hyperbole

In January of this year it appeared that the Developmental Services Sector was heading for a spring of lockouts and strikes. CUPE, and to some degree OPSEU, gave numerous indications of coordinating a series of strikes across Ontario. At the heart of their issues were wages. CUPE has determined a wage standard of \$24.99 per hour for Ontario Developmental Services workers. In addition CUPE is aggressively attempting to introduce central bargaining to the sector.

To date, in spite of incredible brinkmanship and rhetoric CUPE has settled contracts across the province. Most settlements have been in the 2% to 2.5% range. One exception to this was Community Living Sioux Lookout, where the settlement was 2% in the first year, and **20%** in the second year. However it must be noted that in this situation, the settlement was an arbitrated award that settled a work stoppage. Many believe that this year was a dry run in preparation for the bargaining sessions in 2007. It is expected that the threatened province-wide labour strife of 2005 will be a reality in 2007. The OASIS Labour Relations Committee had a meeting with CUPE and expressed opinions & concerns from employers regarding the approach taken by CUPE this year. The message from the OASIS LR Committee to CUPE was 'central thinking, not central bargaining' at this point in time, as obviously funding levels for the sector need to be increased in order to raise wage levels. It was also suggested that the issue of provincial wages for the sector should be a topic considered by the Provincial Network. The Executive Committee of the OASIS Board was in agreement with the suggestion from the LR Committee, and OASIS representatives to the Network will raise this topic at a future meeting. A summary of the meeting with CUPE can be viewed on the secure Labour Relations section of the OASIS website.

New Hours of Work

New rules regarding hours of work came into effect on March 31st, after Bill 63 received Royal Assent. While the changes will predominantly effect organizations without a collective agreement with their employees, it should be noted by all employers. As highlighted in the Hicks Morley Client Update in January, without approval from the Director of Employment Standards any agreement that an organization has with employees to average overtime or hours worked beyond 48 hours in a week will no longer be valid, and risk violating the Employment Standards Act if they continue. More details on this matter, and others, can be reviewed on the Hicks Morley website at: www.hicks.com.

Centres of Excellence?

OPSEU continues to conduct an extensive lobbying campaign to keep open the three remaining provincial institutions. One proposal is to turn the three institutions into “Centres of Excellence.”

In their report OPSEU claims turning the institutions into Centres of Excellence would result in:

- Improving accessibility and individualized service for all people with developmental disabilities by transforming the Centres into regional hubs for intake, needs assessment and access to all developmental services.
- Improving quality and accountability by creating a central tracking network to ensure clients are getting quality services and ensuring no one falls through the cracks.
- Building on Regional Centres’ expertise to provide specialized long-term care to meet the increasing need as the number of seniors with developmental disabilities grows.
- Providing easy access to respite care that families caring for developmentally disabled loved ones at home desperately need.
- Cutting waiting lists by opening community access to the high quality services provided in the Regional Centres by doctors, dentists and therapists who specialize in working with the developmentally disabled.
- Improving training and research by expanding current college and university placement programs and developing a professional development program for those already working in the field.

The report fails to address the fact that many of these services already exist in communities across the province. In addition, no mention is made as to how these Centres would integrate

with existing services and service access centres. A full text of the report is available at:

<http://www.opseu.org/ops/ministry/comsoc/CentresofExcellenceReport.pdf>

OPSEU War Chest Bursting

The OPSEU strike fund is now in excess of \$30 million. Included in this figure is the total value of the union's capital assets. Over the past few years OPSEU had imposed a .2% levy on all members to bring the strike fund to its current state. This levy was lifted in December 2004. With the strength of the strike fund, employers, in particular the Ontario Government, should expect a confident OPSEU conducting tough negotiations as future collective bargaining agreements come up for renewal. In fact, OPSEU has recently filed for conciliation in the current round of bargaining.

WSIB Coverage Consultations – Three Years Later and No Report

Three years ago WSIB conducted an extensive consultation on Coverage under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. The consultation examined who was covered and who should be covered under the Act. The possibility of providing coverage to volunteers was also examined during the consultation process. OASIS submitted a brief to the consultation review expressing many concerns, especially regarding the possibility of having to provide coverage to volunteers, indicating that this could have significant negative consequences on the sector.

It has been three years since the close of the consultation process and to date there has been no report issued. In fact, when queried, one WSIB communications spokesperson seemed to have no idea of the fact that there was a consultation and that stakeholders were still expecting a report to be issued. The OASIS Labour Relations Committee continues to monitor this issue.

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, or via fax at 519 882-3386.