



CASe Notes

This Newsletter is Produced by and for OPSEU CAS Workers

February 2003

Conference Time again....

Well, it's looking to be a busy Spring. **April 3, 4 and 5th, 2003** mark the dates for this year's annual convention.

We will be getting together for our usual CAS Caucus on **April 3 at adjournment** of the first day's events. For those newcomers this is when we get together with other delegates from OPSEU CAS's across the province to obtain updates and share information and strategies. This is normally a one and a half hour session, and yes... we will provide pizza and refreshments. I look forward to seeing you there.

On **June 6 and 7, 2003** the bi-annual BPS conference will be held at the

Constellation Hotel on the airport strip. This year's theme of the conference will be "**Connecting the Power**".

Workshops are being planned for Health and Safety, Duty to Accommodate and Human Rights, Facing Management, Benefits and "Why Union" – a workshop to assist new activists.

In the CAS sector, we are continuing our focus on Bargaining – using all three stages: preparation for bargaining, negotiations, and contract enforcement.

Unfortunately, in order to obtain the best collective agreement possible, we must continue our work constantly.

We need to be able to have the knowledge and ability to mobilize our members, using communication and education as our primary tools.

We are not holding a Sector Specific meeting on the Friday and Saturday of this year as we did for the last PS Conference. The reason for this is simple. In order to best address the needs of our members, we need to ensure that we have the tools to enforce our Collective Agreements – all along the way. Issues around Health and Safety, as well as Accommodation are finding their way to Stewards on a regular basis.

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Coordinated Bargaining – Why this Just Makes Sense

The 2002 round of bargaining has now wrapped up. There were many successes and some takeaways. The road at times had its bumps and curves, however, for the most part I would have to say this was a worthwhile venture.

Being from one of the agencies involved in bargaining in 2002, I would have to say this round was one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences I've had.

From the very beginning, support from OPSEU was there. The Bargaining Council was established and the work began. Research needs were provided by the Council. Regular meetings and updates through email provided accurate information and invaluable support to all involved. The On-Line Conference Centre proved to be a great tool to keep people up to date on events at Negotiating tables all over Ontario.

Just knowing that there were a large number of agencies throughout the province going through the same thing made the going easier. Members felt they could take the risks involved in securing the best collective agreement possible. Large strike votes were seen across the province, while members prepared to spend some time on the street to ensure their demands were being heard and acted upon.

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The Coordinated Bargaining Council- Bargaining 2002

Lynne Easter-Froats, London CAS

The CAS Sector has diligently pursued the concept of coordinated bargaining for a number of years, while CUPE was focusing on lining up common contract end dates.

In June 2001, the OPSEU CAS Executive initiated dialogue with CUPE and the Joint Coordinated effort emerged. This in and of itself was a significant undertaking as it is extremely uncommon for two unions to work cooperatively on bargaining issues. The typical barriers with guarding local collective agreements appeared to fall by the wayside in the interests of addressing the ministry on issues affecting child welfare. It was decided we would begin with collective agreements expiring in 2002, because between OPSEU and CUPE, 23 locals were scheduled to go into bargaining.

At the BPS Conference in November 2001, the consensus indicated that the five central demands would include wages, mileage, benefits, liability, and workload. These demands were clearly identified by the locals as the most significant. The delegates to the conference also agreed that coordinated filing dates would also support this effort and put direct pressure on the Ministry to review the funding formula and consider a central conciliation for common issues.



Following the 2001 BPS conference, the OPSEU executive was successful in securing funding for the CAS Bargaining Council to include representatives from each region, locals in bargaining, and Staff. These included Sudbury, Kitchener-Waterloo, Timiskaming, Prescott Russell, York, Renfrew, and Cornwall.

On January 15, 2002, all locals filed notice to bargain anticipating a plan to file notice for conciliation on March 15, 2002.

The realities of the impact of the coordinated dates suffered a significant set back with the OPS strike in March. Some locals had settlement offers very early and were forced to take them back to their membership.

As a result, 5 OPSEU locals remained at the table following the OPS strike. The coordinated effort continued with the five that remained and appeared to have an impact on the settlements achieved.

While a central conciliator was not appointed, locals made some gains on all of the central issues. Most agencies were able to negotiate some workload language as well as an average wage increase of 3 percent per year. York, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Sudbury were all successful in negotiating grievable workload language into their collective agreements.

Timiskaming, and Prescott-Russell, negotiated settlements early in 2003. Both received workload acknowledgement as well as wage increases inline with the averages.

CUPE's participation continues to be an area to be developed and continued communication will be necessary to look at provincial bargaining at some point in the future.

Regional representatives on the 2002 Bargaining Council clearly benefited from participation, particularly in London and Ottawa. While these two large agencies weren't currently in bargaining, it allowed for an excellent opportunity to mobilize their membership and do necessary research to prepare for bargaining in 2003.

Change is always difficult and realistically takes a significant amount of time. Bargaining in 2002 has provided an excellent foundation to build on in future rounds.

“the consensus indicated that the five central demands would include wages, mileage, benefits, liability, and workload. These demands were clearly identified by the locals as the most significant.”

We welcome letters and feedback. We reserve the right to edit submissions for libel, accuracy, length, clarity, and good taste. Opinions Expressed are those of the writers.

If you would like to contribute to this newsletter, please forward your submission by email or regular mail to:

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Bargaining Update - 2003

Thanks Lynne for bringing us up to date.

The bargaining council for locals going into bargaining in 2003, met in November, 2002. OPSEU locals included: London, Ottawa, Kawartha Haliburton and Northumberland. Timiskaming and Prescott Russell were also included because their collective agreements still had not been settled. Like the previous year, OPSEU staff reps and members made up this council.

Just the day before the meeting, Northumberland settled their collective agreement.

Prior to this meeting, a bargaining survey was sent out to the locals, and the results of the returned surveys were shared with the council. The results demonstrated that the central demands from the previous year still applied. Research demands compiled from last year were reviewed, and other than some minor updating, it appears that the information remains relevant as well.

Workload remains a high priority in most agencies, and now that we have achieved language in CAS's the task is to determine the best language out there.

At this point in time, it appears that language achieved at the Hamilton Catholic CAS allows for lower caseloads and stronger areas for assessment. Waterloo CAS also achieved language that allows for equitably distributed caseloads which takes into consideration case activity. We have a few different sources for you to take a look at if you wish.

Wage increases across the province for 2002 averaged at approximately 3% per year. That demands remains the same, with the ultimate goal to have senior social work / child protection workers earning upwards of \$60,000.

Classification of members has become an issue, and while this is not part of the central demands, we have been able to secure a few examples for bargaining teams to use.

CUPE has advised that they are on board for this process again this year. They have five or six agencies who have suggested they would be willing to work together again this year.

Notice to bargain was filed for most agencies within the first week of January 2003. Locals will be filing for conciliation on March 14, 2003. This will again bring issues to a head by the end of April, beginning of May. It is our hope to prepare a press release around the March filing date to again bring this issue to the attention of the OACAS and the Ministry.

We will be requesting the support of those agencies not in bargaining should our remaining 2003 CAS's not be able to reach their collective bargaining goals. This support may be in the form of an email strategy, financial support, strike support, etc.

Are you bargaining in 2004? If so, you may want to keep an eye on the successes from 2002 and 2003. The central demands are yours for the taking. You should be beginning to look at them now - bargaining for you is just a little more than a year away...

BPS Conference

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We need to ensure that not only can we focus on our members during negotiations, but always.

That being said, I realize that the input from the previous BPS conference was that you enjoyed being able to be together throughout the two days. Therefore, once your registration has been received, OPSEU will be making every effort possible to ensure that CAS members are together in workshops.

June 8, 2003 has been set aside for Divisionals. This is the day we review our activity over the past two years and set goals for the next. We will also be holding elections for the Sector Executive and Bargaining Teams.

All positions are open for election. Positions include: Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary – Treasurer and Member at Large. We will also be looking for representation on the Sector Bargaining Team from all Regions.

What are the time commitments? The Sector Executive meets approximately four times a year for two days. There are times that additional meeting dates are required for campaigns, bargaining, etc. This group is responsible for ensuring that the needs of this sector are being heard; through the political process, through bargaining, through public awareness and wherever else we see it benefiting workers at CAS's.

The Sector Bargaining Team meets approximately the same in concert with the Bargaining Council of the year. This team is responsible for assisting the Bargaining Council in coordination and research needs.

Hope to see you there. – **Linda Aho**

Coordinated Bargaining

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What made this work so well, was the opportunity to be at the Negotiating Table knowing that you were prepared. When the employer disputed an issue at the table, I was able to defend the Union's stance – or argue the Employer's well armed with research on the key demands and information on where the rest of the tables at the province were. The pressure felt by the employer groups was clear.

The results were obvious. Workload language is no longer a hope of the past – it is the fact of the future.

My advice to locals going into bargaining in the future? Get plugged into this method of bargaining. As we go through each round, we will further refine the process. In the not so distant future this way of negotiating our collective agreements will be the norm.

Linda Aho, Chair

Something to make you Smile....



A Social Worker is facing a mugger with a gun. "Your money or your life!!!", says the mugger. "I'm sorry" answers the Social Worker, "I'm a social worker. I have no money and no life!!!"

Thanks to the London CAS, Local 116 newsletter.

Don't forget....

April 3, 2003, at the adjournment of the first day of Convention... There will be a CAS caucus. Watch the message boards on the Floor for location.

Pizza and Pop will be provided.

Who We Are and How to Contact Us

The C.A.S. Sector represents the support staff, foster care and adoption workers, family support and protection workers at 17 Children's Aid Societies in Ontario. *CASe Notes* is written by and for those workers.

C.A.S. Sector Executive

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"Protecting Children by Supporting Workers"