



CASe Notes

This Newsletter is Produced by and for OPSEU CAS Workers

September 2004

Sector Update

Linda Aho, Chair

Well, it's time for round two. Those CAS's with Collective Agreements expiring March 31, 2005 are now approaching their second round of coordinated bargaining. Almost every CAS covered under OPSEU has participated in this activity, and each has seen their own level of benefit.

So what are the successes? Well, workload language is not a secret anymore. From motherhood statements to grievable processes with caseload caps, all can be seen across the field. Since 2002 bargaining units have made this issue a priority and have been able to negotiate language they believe fits in with their own agency. Now it's up to those same bargaining units to work on improving that language as each round progresses.

We have seen a trend for salary increases across the sector – anywhere from 2 ½ to 3% per year increases have been noted. Considering what the employer is consistently bringing to the table (0%, 0%) I think as a sector, we're doing well at raising that.

We have also seen improvements in our other priorities, Mileage, Liability and Benefits – again these improvements are tailored to the membership of each agency.

So, what else is new? We have a change in our executive. **Sister Lynne Easter Froats** from London CAS, has recently accepted a job at where else but OPSEU itself!!! Congratulations go out to Lynne as we wish her the best in her new challenges as a staff representative in the London Regional Office.

We've finally recruited a Sector Bargaining Rep from Region 7: **Shannon MacLeod** from Rainy River Family and Children's Services. Shannon is a child protection worker with that agency. Welcome aboard Shannon!!!

So, with these changes, the Sector Executive and Bargaining Teams, along with our respected Sector Negotiator **Rob Field**, took the opportunity to review our goals, responsibilities and roles for the next year. We are embarking on this second round of Coordinated Bargaining with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and commitment to the workers within our sector.

Communication remains of utmost importance for all of us, so to that end, we will be changing the format of this newsletter to include updates from locals throughout the sector. Over the next couple of pages you will read about what has been happening in a number of CAS's. We encourage you to send us your updates as well.

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LOCAL UPDATES

London CAS: Local 116

Brenda Mallott

We are in our second year of a three year contract. We have had a recent discussion regarding workload and the employer is giving people to the end of the summer to get caught up. The ERC is meeting next week (September 20 – 25) to see who is caught up and where do they go from here.

Workload alerts etc are being discussed and if the pressure is to continue then more workload alerts will be submitted. We have had good success with the workload alert forms in terms of getting more workers. Work loads are high and for the most part people are not filing workload alerts in general. The crown ward units are feeling overwhelmed. Lynne Easter Froats is leaving the agency and that has created some concerns in the workplace.

Ottawa CAS: Local 454

Sue Corlett

Ottawa CAS got rid of three senior managers. There is one and a half years to go in their contract. We still need some ongoing family service workers, CYW workers are now becoming contract workers – their primary jobs is in regard to supervised access. The mood in the agency is very good at this time and it appears that things are quiet.

Ottawa has not filed any grievances regarding workload and they have improved. The numbers are all under 30 cases and the workers feel that things are improving.

Rainy River Family and Children's Services: Local 739

Shannon MacLeod

We have completed bargaining. We filed for conciliation as planned as we had not been to the table at all at that point. The Employer and staff had attended an interest based negotiation workshop which we used it to our advantage. A good deal was reached. Our agency includes CAS Developmental and mental health services. People were leaving the CAS component as the salaries were all the same. This round, salaries were negotiated based on job function vs. education.

Management attempted to negotiate out of the OPSEU Joint Trusteed Benefit Fund to no avail. We received five emergency days, cleaned up some language, and new worker classifications added. We received a 3% wage increase each year of the contract, a signing bonus for those who were red circled. Team assistants got their first raise in 15 years. Mileage rate up .05 to .35 per kilometre. Increase for after hours workers.

As for Workload, the director believes there are no workload issues, however we are striking a workload committee to come with a letter of understanding. We have a three year deal.

Brockville CAS: Local 441

Rick Pybus

Bargaining just completed. Nothing was gained other than 35 cents kilometre and 38 cents a kilometre for April 1, 2005. Salary increases had been negotiated in a prior agreement.

Local Updates: Continued

Temiskaming Family and Children's Services: Local 665

Mohammed Bekkari

*Note this agency is a hybrid agency consisting of a number of services, including Young Offender, Brighter Futures, Child Treatment and CAS. Other hybrid agencies include Prescott Russell, Chatham Kent, Rainy River, Jeanne Sauve.

Some programs such as secure custody program have been in question. Since the change in legislation there have been fewer youth using the secure custody program which has created some concerns. The youth now in the custody centers are very disturbed youth which in turn creates some issues. At Brighter Futures they have had some lay offs.

The CAS component have no workload issues however it was the number one issue two years ago. We tried for language and obtained a letter of understanding with the possibility to grieve. At a recent ERC meeting the workload issue was brought up however I was told there are no workload issues to bring up. In reality there indeed are high caseloads which are beyond 25 to 35 cases but workers have not focused on the workload issue.

The agency is overwhelmingly CAS dominated with some mental health workers. The employer is trying to keep CAS and Mental health salaries very equal to stop the jumping from CAS to Mental Health. They are bargaining this year and the bargaining team is not in place.

Waterloo CAS: Local 258

Tom Howard

Workload – workload alerts...Senior management contacted Tom and to ask why members were putting in the alerts because they have workload language. Management decided that they were not accepting the alerts. Workers not covered by the agreement still use the alerts. Tom met with some of his workers and they feel that the workload alerts are good and they use them but they are afraid to file the grievances. Waterloo feels they have not tested their workload language.

We elected our bargaining team and had many people interested in being on the bargaining team. Waterloo is paid by function and we want to be paid the same pay grid.

Concerns regarding policy grievances and OHIP premiums. As well holiday coverage issues have become some grievable concerns. They have had some lay offs and have gone down from 9 residences to 8 residences.

Workers are mistrusting of management. They have over 400 unionized members. They are going to prepare their people for a strike before bargaining begins.

Send us your local update.

Information can be sent to

Linda Aho at

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Kawartha – Haliburton, Local 334

Paul Carroll

The local has had a lot of personal issues: Dan Carson passed away very suddenly who was the past president of the union. The new vice president's husband was killed 2 weeks into the new year, the former acting director recently had a heart attack and will not return to the agency. Ken Monks is within a year of retirement who has been a major player with the union. Their staff rep has taken a new charge and they have a new staff rep.

There are many negative feelings in the agency and the environment is not positive at this time. Workers will not grieve anything which is a concern because of the negative undercurrent in the agency. Their membership is around 100 people and there are only a couple of union members that are active. They are in a growth phase and just recently have hired a young infant nurse.

The agency has changed its wage grid for children in care workers and they now receive a lower pay rate – they are seen as support workers and do not manage cases – they support the children. The family service worker manages the case file. Crown ward workers are paid a great deal more and this is creating some issues in the agency.

Workload is a concern and they have not put numbers into their collective agreement. They have a joint workload committee. Management rejected the workload alert form and created a new form. The new form was filled out by an agency lawyer. The union wants a declaration from management that there is a workload issue.

Intake is around 12 cases but varies between 8 and 20. They encourage workers to do work on their own time. Family service cases are around 18 and crown wards around 20 families. All workers are feeling they cannot meet the Ministry time lines. There are workers who stay late and do the work and there are others that leave the work and go home.

Sudbury CAS: Local 668

Linda Aho

Workers are saying that there are workload issues but they will not complete a grievance form. Workers want lower caseloads but there are no formal complaints from the membership.

Sudbury has been very successful in their accommodation issues. The union has told workers when they go off sick leave they assign a steward to them and accommodate workers upon their return. Sudbury has bundled tasks. Sick leaves are an issue and accommodation issues are now being recognized.

There is an issue developing regarding “bullying” in the workplace and the local is starting to recognize and do some prevention in the workplace.

We have also noticed the apathy growing in her agency. Sudbury is preparing for bargaining this round of bargaining. The bargaining team has been elected and we are preparing our demands. There is a possibility of job loss within the support staff function, however the numbers are unknown at this time.

CAS Bargaining Council

OPSEU has six bargaining units in bargaining in 2005. They include: Waterloo, Sudbury, Kapuskasing, Prescott Russell, Cornwall, and Temiskaming Child and Family Services.

While our priority demands remain the same, that being Workload, Mileage, Wages, Liability and Benefits, we are also open to researching other priorities such as pregnancy leave, accommodation issues, etc.

Each member of our Sector Bargaining Team is responsible for contacting CAS's within their region, OPSEU, CUPE and unorganized to determine what's going on in their locals, what are their issues, etc. They will be requesting copies of Collective Agreements as well so that we can include these in our research.

These folks will become your contacts for the sector to relay information back and forth between what's going on provincially and within your local. They can be used as a resource for you to assist with issues within your local.

This type of communication between all CAS's is crucial to our continued success in advocating for our members. We know that our Employers are continually communicating – so it only makes sense that we do as well.

I'm looking forward to this next round of bargaining, and I hope we make even larger strides than in the past.

Yours in solidarity

Linda Aho, Chair

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 16 Children's Aid Societies in Ontario. *CASe Notes* is written by and for those workers.

C.A.S. Sector Executive

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