

Developmentally Speaking

A newsletter for OPSEU's developmental service workers - Sector 2



Winter 2006

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Report from the Chair

By Sue Walker

I would like to extend a huge thank you to all the delegates who attended the Developmental Service Sector divisional meeting on Sept. 18, 2005. I'm very proud that you re-elected me as your Sector Chair and I'm very excited about working with the new sector executive you elected.

I would like to welcome our newly elected executive members: Scott Collins (L667) Secretary/Treasurer; Chris Moore (L554) Vice Chair 2B; Peggy MacDonald (L433) Bargaining Rep.; and Kyle Pearson (L740) Communications Rep.

I would like to welcome back Violet Stringer (L448) Health & Safety Rep.; Grace Mungal (L251) Vice Chair 2A; and Helen Riehl (L664) Vice Chair 2C. I know everyone will work hard for all our members.

A big thanks goes out to departing executive members Mary Kelly (L235), Melanie Hamilton (L738), Brock Suddaby (L249), Carolyn Elder (L235), for all their hard work.

The Broader Public Service (BPS) Conference held on Sept. 16 and 17 was a great success. We held a session on the importance of pensions and why we need to move to coordinated bargaining to better protect our members. OPSEU Campaign Officer, Sarah Jordison also brought in MPP Michael Prue to teach us effective ways to lobby an MPP. We had loads of fun and met many new members.

Your sector executive is now working with OPSEU education staff on a sector specific development course to be offered in each region. We hope to have it ready to start in September 2006.



Authorized for distribution:
Leah Casselman, President
Ontario Public Service Employees Union

Report from the Bargaining Rep. By Peggy MacDonald

Hi there! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Peggy MacDonald and I was elected as your Bargaining Representative at our divisional meeting in September. I'm from Local 433 - Ongwanada, in Kingston, where I've worked for over 26 years and been an active OPSEU member.

It's been a busy year in developmental services. In Jan. 2005 our division held a full sector bargaining conference for the first time. This was a very productive day, bringing members together from locals all across Ontario to strategize on how to increase our bargaining power. We identified sector wide bargaining priorities, timelines and strategies and set up regular conference calls for locals to share information about bargaining successes and different employer tactics. We have since held a second bargaining conference in Sept. 05, building on the success of the first.

It was great to see so many members come out and work together toward a common goal. I think one of the most important things that we take home from sessions such as these is the

knowledge that we are not alone. We need to be committed to supporting each other. This is especially important in a division like ours where the wages, benefits and working conditions are so diverse.

A little bit about the current state of bargaining in our division:

There are approximately 65 bargaining units in our division. There are a variety of differing expiry dates. At present, 21 collective agreements will expire in 2006, 22 in 2007 and six in 2008. These numbers will fluctuate as we get word on contract settlements. Regular conference calls have been established to provide an opportunity to keep up on what is happening out there. I would encourage all those in bargaining or going into bargaining to participate in these calls when you are able. (Contact your staff rep. for further information.)

This is my first time as part of the division executive. I'm very excited about the direction in which we are headed. I'm just starting to get my feet wet and am finding that there is certainly a lot to learn!

Pandemic Influenza - Are You Prepared?

By Violet Stringer, Health & Safety Rep.

Health & Safety Committees should be ensuring that their employers are preparing for outbreaks of influenza.

Even though plans exist in your communities, it is necessary for each agency to have its own internal plan that links to the community plan, health care partner plans, as well as the provincial and federal plans. Health care agencies are responsible for the planning, surveillance and managing of pandemic influenza. In the event of a flu outbreak, supplies and equipment are likely to be in short supply, illness may decrease the suppliers' ability to deliver in a timely fashion, and there

will be pressure for certain types of equipment.

Health and safety committees and union activists should be insisting that their employers develop policies to deal with emergency planning.

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA SUMMARY:

- Likelihood a pandemic will occur: 100%
- Likelihood that anti-virals will be available for Health Care Providers: Good
- Likelihood that vaccine will be available: Uncertain
- Likelihood social systems will be ready for a pandemic: Uncertain

New coordinated bargaining team and procedures established

By Peggy MacDonald, Bargaining Rep.

After much debate and discussion, delegates at September's divisional meeting approved new bargaining procedures for our sector. Following this, they elected a new Coordinated Bargaining Team. This is a great step for developmental services. This will build our bargaining power and allow us to move forward with our goal of addressing priority issues within our sector and objectives determined by our members.

Your newly elected Coordinated Bargaining Team consists of:

Nancy John, Local 161; Kyle Pearson, Local 740; Chris Moore, Local 554; Tammy Cook, Local 738; Dina Woods, Local 448; and Helen Riehl, Local 664.

Peggy MacDonald, Local 433 (Bargaining Representative on the Sector Executive) and Sue Walker, Local 249 (Sector Chair) are automatic members.

Pension Talk, By Peggy MacDonald, Bargaining Rep.

26 per cent of developmental service workers are set to retire in the next ten years, most without a pension. While tens of thousands of our brothers and sisters in other sectors are covered by high quality, secure pension plans, this is not the case in our sector. A presentation made at the Broader Public Services (BPS) Conference in September made this painfully clear. We are a sector that employs mostly women and if things don't change we will be forced to retire into poverty.

Canada Pension Plan (CPP) is not enough to live on even if you are maxing out your contribution every year. 40 per cent of our workers aren't making enough to max out their contribution.

In the developmental service sector only 830 out of approximately 6800 members are in guaranteed, professionally managed pension plans. That's only four out of 65 of our bargaining units. Some have a limited RRSP contribution arrangement with their employer or an employer sponsored plan that

provides very minimal investment for retirement. Close to 1000 of our members appear to have no coverage at all. This needs to change.

OPSEU's position is that all workers deserve access to guaranteed, professionally managed pension plans. The Executive Board has recognized this important need and has begun a process to begin to correct it. The Pension Liaison Committee of the Executive Board is looking into the viability of a BPS pension plan being developed for those members in the BPS who lack coverage or have sub-standard plans.

In the meantime, we need to get our wages up so that all our members max out the CPP contributions and everyone can benefit from a pension plan. Our Coordinated Bargaining Team is focused on building up wages sector wide and laying the ground work so all our employers sign on to a strong BPS pension plan that ensures a secure financial future for all of us when we retire.

Come learn more about what's happening in our Sector:

Developmental Service Caucus meeting at Convention

Thurs. Apr. 20 at noon
Refreshments provided

It's that time again

By Scott Collins, Secretary/Treasurer

January is here and that means that the Developmental Services Sector dues are due for 2006.

Dues remain unchanged:

For bargaining units that have up to 50 members, dues are \$50.00 for the year. For bargaining units that have 100 or more members pay \$100.00.

If paying these dues causes your local undue hardship, please let the executive know so your local may be considered for an exemption on your 2006 dues.

Please make your cheques payable to "Developmental Services Sector".

Kindly send your cheques to:
Scott Collins
407 Roy Street
Sturgeon Falls, ON P2B 3E6

Or you may bring them to the OPSEU Convention in April.

Make sure we have your correct info.

If members have any changes to their contact information, please email them to Sue Walker, Sector Chair at suewalker@mountaincable.net

Stay informed

Anyone wishing to receive information via email please should forward their email address to Sue Walker at suewalker@mountaincable.net. Please note that your e-mail address should be a secure, non-work address.

Your Sector 2 Executive

Chair

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