



September 26, 2008

Madeleine Meilleur
Minister of Community and Social Services
80 Grosvenor St, 6th Flr, Hepburn Block
Toronto ON M7A 1E9

Dear Minister:

As part of the Ontario Liberal government's strategy to 'transform' the provision of developmental services, last year your ministry began a human resource (HR) plan for the sector. Panels and committees have been struck. Sector employers have been consulted, and a forum was held in March 2008. However, throughout this process your ministry has failed to seek the involvement of two key stakeholders, the bargaining agents for the majority of the workers in the sector – the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU).

As a Minister with a trade union background you understand that to guarantee that a new HR strategy is a workable process and ultimately a success, CUPE and OPSEU input is necessary throughout the development of the strategic plan.

We agree that processes that improve service standards, best practices and recruiting and retaining a quality workforce, are important. However, we are unhappy with the fact that OPSEU and CUPE have been excluded from these discussions. Our front-line worker perspective, expertise and knowledge are a benefit currently missing from your strategic planning for the sector. It is particularly disconcerting that many of the issues being discussed by a committee co-chaired by your ministry and employers, such as linking compensation to core competencies and worker training, are issues that rightly belong at the bargaining table.

We are writing to ask you to intervene in a positive way and facilitate a provincial process where your ministry, employers and OPSEU and CUPE can negotiate centrally many of the issues identified in the HR strategy. It has happened in other sectors without undermining the autonomy or independence of individual employers. It can happen here.

The alternative, years of single table union and employer negotiations, costly grievances and arbitrations, as employers across the province attempt to follow through on your ministry's HR strategy has the potential for widespread labour instability in the developmental service sector.

Your ministry, employers and our members have one thing in common – a shared vision of providing high quality, consistent services and supports to Ontarians who have a developmental disability and their families in order to further their full inclusion in our communities. The best way to achieve that vision is to come together at a common table to negotiate the basics of provincial HR policies and compensation levels.

We look forward to continued discussions with representatives of the HR Strategy Steering Committee, but look even more for your ministry to play an active role in explaining and promoting the advantages of central negotiations in the developmental services sector.

We are requesting a meeting with you at the earliest opportunity to discuss how we can move forward together to bring consistency and stability to developmental services in Ontario. Please contact CUPE Legislative Liaison Stella Yeadon at 416-292-3999 x287 (syeadon@cupe.ca) or OPSEU Legislative Liaison Tim Little at 416-443-8888 x8628 (tlittle@opseu.org) to arrange a meeting time.

Sincerely,



Patrick (Sid) Ryan
President
CUPE Ontario



Warren (Smokey) Thomas
President
OPSEU