



Developments ON THE LINE

Issue 1 July 25, 2007



Our strategy is working

Developmental services workers across Ontario are making their voices heard. In this fight for fairness, workers right across Ontario have been visible, on picket lines and at nearly every Liberal pre-election event.

Strikes in London, Chatham, St. Thomas and Strathroy are going into their second month.

“This is a once in a lifetime chance to achieve fairness for all workers in developmental services,” said Sue Walker, chair of OPSEU’s 6,600 member developmental services sector.

Wages in developmental services are 25-30 per cent less than those doing similar work in other fields.

Solidarity and support

“You have all the solidarity and support of OPSEU members in the Broader Public Service (BPS) for your efforts to achieve fairness for workers in your sector,” said Jamie Ramage, OPSEU BPS chair.

OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas has spent many hours on picket lines and has accompanied pickets at various events including a trip to Ottawa earlier this week.

“I’ve seen the incredible spirit on the lines and I know you have the determination to win this and make the historic gains necessary for your sector,” said Thomas.

“Our strategy is working. We can win this and achieve fairness for all developmental service workers across Ontario.”



OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas on the line with Local 148 in Chatham: fighting for fairness. Courtesy Ron Lavigne

Send us your photos

Do you have pictures of members your developmental services local? We would like to publish a great photo every day. Please send photos to: dcox@opseu.org

Meaford joins the strike

Today the developmental services strike spread to Region 2 as 44 members of Local 235 at Community Living Meaford went on strike.

“The last thing we want to be doing is withholding our services,” said bargaining team chair Mary Kelly. “We want to settle this. Everyone agrees on the problem – it’s up to the government to fix it.”

Fighting for fairness !

Province-wide strikes possible as election nears

Solidarity and support widespread

All workers in the sector understand how important this fight is for their future. Cyndi Brumaroff of Community Living Sarnia, CUPE Local 4730, wrote to a local newspaper in support of striking OPSEU members. She writes:

“(Workers) must dispense meds, use feeding tubes, breathing machines and many other jobs that a nurse or nurse’s aid would perform. Workers attend medical appointments and write programs that benefit the potential growth, health and safety of clients.

“They spend countless hours at the hospital or at home with them when they are sick. They take them on outings and try to integrate them into the community.

“They do counselling and take care of their financial needs. They purchase clothing, personal items and Christmas gifts for them.

“They are their family when they have none and even when they do.

“Workers are hit, punched, kicked, bitten and abused but yet they go to work every day with a smile because they are unselfish and do a job that many people would never consider doing.

“They are asking for a fair wage increase and better working conditions. Let me remind the public that MPPs gave themselves, without our vote, a 28 per cent wage increase.”

Tillsonburg, Prince Edward could join the fight

Community Living Tillsonburg is counting down to a July 29 strike date.

“The Premier told us that he wanted us to resolve things at the table – we’ve tried that and it failed us,” said Nancy John, President of OPSEU Local 161.

“Our members have worked without a contract since March 2006. No wage offer has been made for 2006 or 2007.”

Local 448 at Community Living Prince Edward, in Eastern Ontario, has set a strike date of Aug. 7.

Why we fight

In Ontario today, developmental service workers are fighting for one thing: fairness. We’re fighting for fairness for ourselves as workers. We’re fighting for fairness for the people we support.

There is a crisis in developmental services right now. Low wages mean workers can’t afford to stay on the job. Our employers have trouble hiring – and keeping – qualified staff. Staff turnover is far too high.

As workers, we have close personal relationships with the people we support. Frequent staffing changes rupture those relationships. And that’s not fair to the people we support.

That is why we fight.

Six reasons we are on strike

1. For fairness: Our wages are 25-30 percent less than they are for the same kind of job in health care or education or the exact same job for the government. We are **not** second-class workers!
2. For the wage we deserve: Even employers are saying they need to be able to pay us more.
3. For our future: Too many people are leaving to work in professions where they can afford to take care of their family. This must end.
4. For quality of care: Agencies are unable to find enough qualified replacements. Quality of care suffers.
5. For the people we support: People with developmental disabilities deserve quality care. The government refuses to provide adequate funding. They are not making the people we support a priority.
6. And just to keep up: The Liberals announced \$200 million in the Spring Budget for developmental services. But so far, only \$20 million has flowed to the agencies for fair salaries. That is only about a 2 per cent wage increase across the province. **This doesn’t even cover inflation!**

Produced by OPSEU Communications

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