

Frustrated workers state case

Disability support program understaffed: unions

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Ontario residents relying on income support from the government are getting sub-par treatment due to a staffing crisis, according to Ontario Disability Support Program workers.

Tired of feeling overworked, ODSP workers staged a day of action Tuesday, forming information picket lines outside more than 40 offices across the province, to call on the McGuinty government to include \$60 million in the coming budget to address the issue.

In an interview outside Thunder Bay's ODSP office on James Street, OPSEU Local 714 president Greg Snider said the staffing shortage makes it hard for his members to provide the level of service that clients deserve.

He said 325,000 Ontarians are affected by a poor client-to-income-support-specialist ratio of 530:1, compared to British Columbia, 300:1, and Manitoba, 150:1.

Heavy workloads are leading to high levels of stress for many workers who often come into work early, leave late and skip lunch and coffee breaks to get the job done, he said.

Snider said the workers go above and beyond for their clients because they care, noting that even the protest was scheduled during the lunch hour so that



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Ontario Disability Support Program workers protest Tuesday in front of Thunder Bay's James Street Ontario government building.

clients would not suffer.

"We are still providing our services as best we can under the circumstances," he said.

And, "We are trying to do it on our time."

In a phone interview from Toronto, Thunder Bay Superior North MPP Michael Gravelle said he appreciates the time and effort ODSP and OPSEU have put into raising poverty awareness.

"(What they are protesting) ties into what is a priority for the government," he said.

Gravelle said the government has taken a variety of measures to address poverty, such as setting up a cabinet committee on poverty reduction, boosting the minimum wage from \$8 to \$8.75 starting March 31 and promising to increase the Ontario Child Benefit over the next three years.

er Katherine Dugmore described Tuesday's tour and workshop of the two developers in the running to build condominiums and a hotel on Thunder Bay's waterfront.

Representatives of Man-Shield Construction Inc. (Laureate Developments) and Sherwood Developments Ltd., both of Winnipeg, made a site visit and participated in a design workshop at the Prince Arthur Waterfront Hotel.

"Today was an important day for this community," said Dugmore. "It sends a signal that there is serious interest in what will be a great project for Thunder Bay."

"Having a private partner and mixed-use development in this project allows us to leverage funding from other levels of government to build a much larger park with a broad range of recreation activities for the community and visitors alike," she said.

Attending the workshop were waterfront development committee members, and representatives from city administration and Brook Melroy Inc. Planning and Urban Design, who delivered detailed presentations of the master plan and urban design guidelines.

The workshop was intended to help interpret the city's priorities and aid its concept development.

The proponents were excited about

along with solid lead from the city. After today, it is clear to see our potential here."

Joe Bovara raved about "The plan is very solid. I have been told never a location: I'm now following that role of Sherwood Development Fausio Pereira attracted to Thunder waterfront setting.

"There are always opening a waterfront, but a well thought out potential to substantially community," he said.

"We are very excited ahead into the request process."

Dugmore said each minimums will have while the hotel will have and hotel must not be storeys high.

Earlier in the day, development plan stage site. Opponents have Ontario Municipal Board the hotel/condo propo-

LOTTERIES

Here are the winning numbers from the Ontario Lottery Corp. core, Ontario Pick 3, Ontario Pick 4 and Daily Keno draws:

The winning **Encore** number was 9244889.

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56, 60, 67 and 70.