

# ComSoc MERC NEWS

News from your OPSEU Ministry Enforcement and Renewal Committee team for the Ministry of Community and Social Services

## Report from the chair

**BY ROXANNE BARNES**  
*Chair, MCSS MERC team*

Your MERC team has been extremely busy over the past few months. We are dealing with an extremely high number of issues at our MERC table. This is a source of some concern. What is happening in our workplaces? Are we becoming more active or is the employer not dealing with the issues at the local level?

We had to call a special MERC meeting in July as we were unable to deal with all the items (32 items in all) on our agenda for June.

Our ministry is again going through many changes. There will be change within the Adoption Unit; there is an organizational change at the Social Benefits Tribunal (SBT) where we are seeing members competing for their own jobs; there have been changes at the Disability Adjudication Unit (DAU); and the Family Responsibility Office recently announced that they will be rolling out their new model. About 88 members could

be affected by this change. The Ministry has requested that a subcommittee of the MERC be established to assist the members through this transition.

The Reasonable Efforts Committee is still working extremely hard to ensure that the members from the three developmental services facilities that are closing have a soft landing. A huge stumbling block that is hindering the progress of some of the work is the lack of funding. This issue is being addressed on many levels.

The ODSP subcommittee has been working hard to ensure that the offices are completing their Joint Problem Solving (JPS) plans. Almost all offices are working under their new plans. They continue to meet with management each month to deal with ongoing issues within ODSP.

Your MERC team will be meeting with our Deputy Minister on October 3, 2006. We wish to address the lack of resources within ODSP, lack of



Issue No. 2  
Aug. 2006



**We are looking for interested members to assist us with the publishing of our newsletter.**

**Please submit any articles to [roxanne\\_barnes@hotmail.com](mailto:roxanne_barnes@hotmail.com) for our next issue. Please send in your ideas of what you might want to see in our newsletter.**

### In this Bulletin:

<b>Report from the Chair</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Disclosure Process</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Developmental Services Report</b> ..	<b>2</b>
<b>IBPS Launched in Toronto</b> .....	<b>3</b>

funding, the changes that they are making within the Ministry now and in the future and to mention the concerns that we have with the way they are doing business.

I would like to take this time to thank each and everyone of you for your commitment in making our workplaces safe and free of harassment and discrimination.

# Disclosure process

OPSEU, MGS and HR have spent numerous hours building a relationship that has enabled us to receive confidential information before it is released publicly. The only reason corporate gives us disclosure is because we have guaranteed that this information will remain confidential until the date indicated in the disclosure. This disclosure system helps us protect the rights of our members. It is the right of the employer to inform their employees of the disclosure and it is our role to enforce the collective agreement and support the membership if and when the disclosure affects them.

If other MERCs have released information, it may be because all disclosures have different instructions and some may be able to be released immediately. It is our ministry's practice to give us as much notice as possible so we can deal with any issues that we might foresee before the information is rolled out to all.

The members elect the MERC team to be their trusted servants and I would hope that they therefore trust our discretion and the position that we are in. If we were to breach this agreement, it will be you, the members, who will ultimately suffer.

---

## Developmental services report

BY LIZ DAUBNEY,  
*MERC member*

Our collective agreement now has a new Appendix 36 that directs the ministry to conduct reasonable efforts negotiations to support members during these closures. We had a very rocky start, to say the least. The union requested that a mediator be brought in to try to bring the two parties together on the basic terms of reference for this committee. Even the scope of this committee needed to be negotiated!

Once the hurdle of the terms of reference was settled, the first win was setting up a process to enable our members to access the CO-START correction training program. We secured a commitment from the ministry to support staff through this six-week training by paying the

tuition, paying the room and board costs and paid time to attend for nine members for each training session.

We are now faced with the challenge of sorting through survey results and job skills bases to find other training initiatives that will enable more members to gain or retain employment. It has become apparent that one of the biggest hurdles that we are now facing is funding. We need to secure the resources to enable members the opportunity to become qualified for employment. All the planning and negotiations doesn't do any good if the commitment is not there to support the staff through this phase.

On June 29, we signed a memorandum of agreement that allows members at the three facilities to sign up for a

variable surplus date. This will allow some members to access their Factor 80. Also included in this agreement is a process for lateral transfers and job trades with the two MCYS facilities (CPRI and Thistleton). This agreement will enable members who want to leave the OPS the opportunity to do so.

On Aug. 14, 2006 the employer disclosed the time frame for supplanting to the end of this fiscal year. There still are no details as to how this will be rolled out. Hopefully more details will follow in the next couple of weeks.

We have made a good start of enforcing Appendix 36 and feel that there is a commitment from the employer to enable as many members as possible to be ready for their career transition when it comes to them.

# Interest-based problem solving workshop launched in Toronto

## IBPS Workshop just one piece of the puzzle

BY NORMAND PILON  
*Co-chair, MERC ODSP  
Subcommittee*

In 2004, OPSEU ODSP representatives and the ministry entered into an agreement that had some commitments and undertakings to improve the working environment and conditions of our members. One of these was to jointly train stewards and managers on grievance prevention and resolution.

Almost two years after the memorandum of agreement was signed, the parties developed an understanding as to how we would meet this commitment. ODSP or MCSS stewards, LERC members, front line managers and HR consultants would take part in a two-day training session called Interest-Based Problem Solving Workshop. This IBPS Workshop is facilitated by the Ministry of Labour.

Participants are initiated to a different way of communicating, a new way of working through issues, developing a common understanding of the problem and working together towards a mutually agreed upon resolution.

The first session was held June 12 and 13, 2006. Being the first and given that it is seen as ground breaking in the area of labour relations, this received the support and commitment from Deputy Minister Kevin Costante and OPSEU President Leah Casselman.

With the first session under its belt, the members of the MERC ODSP Subcommittee put their minds to what they had accomplished and how they could improve the upcoming sessions. Twelve more sessions are scheduled to unfold throughout the province between Sept. 2006 and Feb. 2007. Some 350 stewards, LERC members, managers, HR consultants and local presidents will participate.

Providing the training to our stewards and managers was but one component of our objective. We need to dedicate more energy and resources to communicating our objective to our ODSP and MCSS members.

Our goal is to improve labour relations within our worksites. With improved labour relations, bargaining employees and managers can tackle the bigger questions

such as creating healthier worksites and providing reasonable or adequate customer services.

Over the next few months, OPSEU, Social assistance and municipal operations (SAMO) and Human Resource Branch (HRB) will be communicating with ODSP employees and making them more aware of this long term commitment towards improved labour relations and challenging our members to take part in this transition.

As was made clear to us by comments from members in Central West Region, the commitment to improved labour relations must not remain at the corporate level. It must be communicated to each and every employee of ODSP. Everyone must have ownership of this vision, and this process.

The comments made by members in Central West were understood and a serious attempt will be made to make that a reality.

Stay tuned. As they say, "The proof is in the pudding."

## MERC team

Roxanne Barnes, chair  
Ron Strong, vice chair  
Elizabeth Daubney, member  
Stephen George, Job Security Officer (JSO)

### DSOC

Tammy Kirkwood, chair  
David Lundy, treasurer/secretary  
David Chew, member  
Roxanne Barnes  
Stephen George, JSO

### FRO Subcommittee

Roxanne Barnes, chair  
Andy Sammon, member  
Stephen George, JSO

### ODSP Subcommittee

Norm Pilon, chair  
Leanne DelaPoldova, vice-chair  
Carolle Hamilton, treasurer/secretary  
Pam Smith, member  
Ron Strong, member representing MERC  
Roxanne Barnes  
Stephen George, JSO

### REC Subcommittee

Roxanne Barnes, chair  
Elizabeth Daubney, vice-chair  
Eileen Whitmore, member  
Randy Dauphin, member  
Stephen George, JSO

## MERC complement

BY ROXANNE BARNES,  
*Chair, MCSS MERC team*

At our last Divisional, one of our motions was to increase our MERC complement to fully represent all members within our Ministry. I presented a letter to the review committee on compositions of MERC teams and I highlighted the ongoing transitions within our Ministry and the representation needed to fully represent our members within our workplaces. In the committees' proposal to the Executive Board of OPSEU, they have requested that our MERC team be increased to four members. We have been lobbying the board members to support the recommendation of the committee.

## Successor rights campaign

This campaign is still ongoing. Your MERC team wrote a letter to our Deputy Minister requesting that the government live up to their promise and restore these rights that our members deserve. We also presented a letter that was sent to Premier Dalton McGuinty requesting the same, at our MERC meeting in June 2006. If you have not signed a postcard, please do so. We need everyone's support.



Authorized for Distribution:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Leah Casselman".

Leah Casselman, *President*