

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

The campaign continues

BY ROXANNE BARNES
Chair, MCSS MERC team

Well the days are getting shorter but the work has not decreased. Surplussing has begun at two of the three developmental services (DS) facilities.

Twenty-three members from Huronia Regional Centre and 28 members from South West Regional Centre received their pre-surplus notice Sept. 28, 2006. Most of these members had their name on the Variable Surplus List, but they were still devastated as their lifelong work has come to an end.

OPSEU's Executive Board has approved another \$40,000 to carry on the campaign to stop the closures of the three DS facilities. This campaign has been renamed Transition to the Centres of Excellence. The Board has also approved our request to increase our MERC by one member.

A Reasonable Efforts Committee has been established for the Family Responsibility Office to mitigate the potential impact of changes as the Integrated Service Delivery

Model (ISDM) is implemented. I would like to thank Terry Baxter of OPSEU, and Donna Holmes of MGS for their work on a Memorandum of Agreement for our members at FRO who volunteered to work overtime to assist in the production of manual cheques.

Some members at the Disability Adjudication Unit are fighting to get all their duties included in their job specs. This item has been raised at MERC and we are waiting for a response from the employer.

How seriously does the employer take Health and Safety? We have asked at some of our local tables and at our MERC table for Plexiglas to be placed in some Ontario Disability Support Program offices, to no avail. We have put the employer on notice that the direction to the members will be to file Policy Grievances. They have left us with no other route of action. Our members' health and safety comes first.

The lack of resources in ODSP has been a priority at both the ODSP subcommittee and at the MERC table. Both tables will be meeting with the Deputy Minister and we will ensure that



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he receives a strong message that this program is grossly under resourced.

The Deputy Minister cancelled our meeting Oct. 3, 2006. It has been rescheduled for Oct. 27, 2006.

The divisionals are fast approaching. We have a lot of work to do within our occupational groups. We have to develop by-laws for each group. Your MERC team has drafted by-laws for our team which we will be presenting to you at the divisionals. Keep up the great work.

Interest-based problem solving: Coming to an ODSP office near you

BY PAM SMITH

*Member of the MERC ODSP
Sub-Committee*

As part of the Memorandum of Agreement signed May 26, 2004, Article 4.3, it was agreed that the parties would;

- Provide separate and joint training to stewards and managers concerning grievance prevention and resolution; and
- Assess the feasibility of local mediation/arbitration and grievance consolidation

We realized that if we want to achieve a cultural shift in labour relations we needed to provide LERCs, Stewards and Managers with the tools to make this happen.

We need to move JPSP into the mainstream and make it part of our everyday labour/management relations. As a result we have a training

package on Interest Based Problem Solving, developed by the Ministry of Labour in conjunction with the MERC ODSP Subcommittee. It was time to take our successes at the MERC ODSP Subcommittee and encourage and promote the same kind of successes at the local office level. To do this we recognized that the LERCs, Stewards and Managers needed some tools to assist them in accomplishing this cultural shift.

We also recognized that although this is an alternative dispute mechanism, we in no way are suggesting members abandon the grievance process: To the contrary. If interest-based problem solving does not work then members need the traditional way of resolving disputes through the grievance procedure. We will provide information on the grievance process as part of the training.

In June 2006 we piloted this training in the Toronto

region. OPSEU President Leah Casselman and Deputy Minister Costante attended the training to give opening remarks and offered their support and endorsement of this training and the interest-based approach.

To assist with the pre- and post-training Norm Pilon, co-chair of the MERC ODSP subcommittee, and Pam Smith, a member of the subcommittee, are on union leave. They will be responsible for liaison with local presidents, stewards and LERCs, offering support and assistance prior to and after the training to identify and overcome any labour relations barriers. To balance this there are also three employee-relations advisors assisting local managers.

We are optimistic that by providing the pre- and post-training support we can promote a positive shift in labour relations.

Southwest Regional Centre report

BY RANDY DAUPHIN

President Local 126

Morale at Southwestern Regional Centre is at an all-time low with the recent 28 surplus notices and deletion of 15 vacant positions. OPSEU has lost 64 bargaining unit jobs this year in our building.

Since Oct. 2005, 71 residents have been permanently discharged to community living agencies. Our client population is now 179. The Reasonable Efforts Committee has successfully softened the landing for many members with the implementation of the VSD Memorandum of Agreement and the joint support of the onsite

staffed Career Centres.

The employer is providing educational and training opportunities, daily-updated job posting boards, temporary work assignments and flexible work schedules. As with any signed agreement, there are interpretative misunderstandings, as the agreement filters through

Southwest Regional Centre report (Continued)

levels of management. The COMSOC MERC team continues to work diligently to negotiate speedy resolutions to these misunderstandings.

Through the corporate disclosure agreement, the MERC is also monitoring the surplus process as it unfolds, and addresses any inconsistencies.

Thanks to those working hard to support the members and their best interests.

News from Rideau Regional Centre

BY EILEEN WHITMORE
President Local 436

This is a very difficult time for staff and residents at RRC (as at the other two centres). Most of us have never had to deal with a future career change or the possibility of not having a job at all. Now we are dealing with this stress, and that of losing co-workers we have spent much of our life with. Our biggest concern is for the people we have cared for over many years. Some have become our friends; some have become our “children” as we have watched them grow over

a lifetime. We are definitely in a grieving process.

Rideau had no surplus pre-notices handed out Sept. 28. We still have more than 800 bargaining unit staff. Our resident count is approximately 352. Fifty-two residents have been discharged since Sept. 2004.

There are many training opportunities to help prepare for a career transition. On Sept. 26 - 27 we held Career Exploration Days which were a big success. Approximately 300 staff members were able

to talk to future employers, some taking resumes. As well there were information booths on investing your money, job searching, preparing a resume and attending college. OPSEU benefits officer Marcia Gillespie held two well-attended and informative afternoon seminars on pension benefits.

As we face the challenges ahead we must remember we are not alone. We have a Union and a collective agreement that give us many rights and opportunities. Together we stand!

Report from Huronia Regional Centre

BY LIZ DAUBNEY
President Local 323

The mood at Huronia Regional Centre has been affected by the first round of surplus. Although the Variable Surplus Date list has allowed the impact to be felt mostly by those who want to actually leave, many of whom were able to access their Factor 80, it is still difficult to see friends go, apartments close and roles and jobs change.

On Sept. 18 our career centre expanded and now has a staff

member assigned to it. There are plans for another Career Exploration Day. Our instructor-led computer training is booked full until November, offering Word, Excel, and Outlook. Staff needing/wanting to remain available for re-assignment within the OPS upon surplus should complete their employee profiles. Printed copies are available at the career centre or on the virtual career centre. These profiles are extensive and require time and thought to complete. Several staff are exploring their options through

developmental opportunities and temporary assignments, both here at HRC and outside. We are planning information sessions on pensions, benefits and financial planning as members face surplus.

The only constant from here on is change! We all must look at the challenges ahead with an open mind and strive to make the best of it. Look around you and see what has been great about working here. As the t-shirt says, we are who we stand with.

It's time to re-evaluate

BY PAM SMITH

Member of the MERC ODSP Sub-Committee

Last year, as many ODSP staff recall, Dr. Wayne Lewchuck, a Professor of Labour Studies at McMaster University, began conducting an evaluation. Dr. Lewchuck had been hired by the ministry to evaluate the new framework for service delivery in ODSP offices.

Specifically Dr. Lewchuck was evaluating;

- Working conditions
- Worker input into workplace changes
- Workload
- Control over one's work
- Effort / reward imbalance
- Job strain
- Negative Health indicators

The purpose of the evaluation was to provide both the union and the ministry with a baseline to measure if changes introduced by joint problem solving were improving both working conditions and client service.

Results of this survey are available on the SAMO website, and these results should have been shared with all ODSP staff via e-mail. The results of the evaluation were obtained by two different formats. First Dr. Lewchuck conducted focus-group meetings with a cross-section of all ODSP staff randomly selected in each region. As

well, all ODSP staff were encouraged to complete an on-line survey.

It is now time to do a follow up evaluation and this will begin in November, 2006 with the on line surveys commencing in January 2007.

The results of the survey will be used to evaluate staff working conditions and the quality of ODSP client services.

All responses will be kept confidential and only Dr. Lewchuck and his research team will have access to the on line survey and the data from the Focus Groups.

We encourage all OPSEU members in ODSP to take this opportunity and ensure your opinions are noted. The new framework for service delivery is intended to promote a healthy and safe work environment for staff and improved client services. The results of this survey will show if that goal has been met and, if not, where further attention is needed.

Management has agreed that staff should be provided with dedicated time and privacy to complete the survey.

Remember: Your opinion counts! It's time you had your say!

MERC team

Roxanne Barnes, Chair
Ron Strong, Vice Chair
Elizabeth Daubney, Member



Authorized for Distribution:

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

Leah Casselman, *President*