



OPSEU President Thomas joins Executive Board Members and activists at the ODSP office on Yonge Street, Toronto

ODSP days of action

Greg Hamara

OPSEU members on staff with the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) have long been a silent voice inside the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS).

Not any more.

Fed up with poor workplace conditions, ODSP workers took to the streets this year to bring public attention to the stress, tension, ill health and high absenteeism rates they face due to an understaffing crisis that the provincial government ignores.

In Ontario, the typical ODSP Income Support Specialist handles an average of 530 cases compared with a national average closer to 250.

On March 4 more than 1,000 ODSP workers and supporters demonstrated outside offices in more than 35 communities across Ontario calling on the McGuinty government to add \$60 million in the Spring Budget to bring the ODSP workload closer to the national average.

Empowered by the success of that first rally — and the knowledge they can make a difference in their workplace health and safety — ODSP staff followed up with a ‘Walk for a Healthy Workplace’ on May 22. Close to 1,000 workers participated.

“The health of our members is suffering because they’re expected to carry a caseload burden that is unimaginable anywhere else in Canada,” said Normand Pilon, chair of the Ministry Enforcement and Renewal Committee subcommittee. “It was gratifying to see where ODSP staff have finally said ‘we won’t take it anymore,’ and that it’s time the government put in the resources that are needed.”

www.opseu.org/ops/ministry/odsp/odspindex.htm