

**Social Service Sector – Ontario
Chair Report
December 2011**

The Social Service Sector is under a strategic attack by municipal and provincial government initiatives. The stress on the system is being felt by the membership, at bargaining tables and the people supported by social services and supports.

CAS

CUPE represents ¾ of the front line workers in the CAS sector in Ontario. We just increased our numbers with the successful representation vote between Lanark (CUPE) and Leeds Grenville (OPSEU). With 3 more CUPE/OPSEU votes in the near future we anticipate our numbers will grow further. We also are supporting 2 CUPE to CUPE mergers.

Bargaining in 2011 has been challenging but successful. The combination of the CAS PDT Consensus Agreement and coordinated bargaining has meant real gains for our members. We have concluded bargaining with 19 employers covering 21 bargaining units – all with the CAS PDT Consensus Agreement incorporated plus additional local priorities. There were four bargaining units which opened up their collective agreements early to ensure the PDT Consensus Agreement was on the table. The sector was creative in building improvements to their collective agreements while breaking through the provincial government compensation freeze initiative.

A battle remains with 2 CUPE employers and 1 OPSEU employer in the North. The Payukotayno employer (CUPE) has requested a “no board” and the Timmins employer (CUPE) is moving in the same direction. Both are saying no to the PDT Consensus Agreement and no to any of the local priority issues. The Kawartha (OPSEU) local has reached a tentative agreement and returned to work after a 6 week strike. The employers are coordinating in the North so both CUPE and OPSEU are working together closely.

We have a small number of CAS units open in 2012 and the first collective agreements to bargain after the merger PSLRTA votes. The locals will be building on the foundation of the 2011 round.

Child Care

What started in Windsor had spread to Toronto as city council considers closing or selling off municipal child care centres. The region of Peel is also considering selling off their 12 municipal childcare centers. We are extremely concerned the attack on municipal childcare centers will result in the end of the only truly publically-delivered childcare in Ontario.

In addition the reports of community child care centre closures are escalating. Historic inadequate funding coupled with the loss of fees as the four and five year olds move into the full day kindergarten program has been devastating to centres' ability to remain viable.

We are seeing layoffs at the Child Development Centre and anticipate a closure announcement of Progress Child Care Centre to name a few impacts within CUPE workplaces.

CUPE, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) and other community partners are calling on the government for immediate and substantial investment to assist public and non-profit child care programs to transform and modernize over the next four years. Over the short-term the province must stop further licensing of any new corporate/for-profit child care operators.

Sustained, reliable multi-year provincial funding to develop a planned system of accessible, affordable, high quality, inclusive public and not-for-profit early childhood care and education continues to be a priority for our members and the community. The SSWCC Child Care Work Group is escalating its campaign activities.

DS

The DS sector continues to push the ministry to standardize funding to address access to supports and services and staff compensation and benefit inequities as a way to improve service quality.

The developmental service provincial discussion table (DS PDT) between the employers and the unions (CUPE and OPSEU) plus the ministry made strides to move in the right direction but in the end the table fell apart. While we work to leverage work achieved at the DS PDT the DS local bargaining tables continue to struggle. With approximately 55 open collective agreements the sector is mobilizing their memberships, doing community outreach and participating in coordinated bargaining. The sector also anticipates a ministry push for restructuring including mergers in the the upcoming year.

In addition the sector work includes;

- Providing input to the Social Assistance Review Commission
- Working with a coalition of advocates to promote the Children's Mental Health campaign
- Supporting the Raise the Rates Campaign
- Community agency advocacy and coordination
- Supporting work in the Toronto campaign
- Research the impact of the growing pressure in the sector of social enterprises and privatization within the sector and developing a strategic response/education within the sector

An integrated fight back approach is necessary for the Social Service sector because the intended government reforms and privatization initiatives are wide-reaching and will deeply affect all social service sub-sectors, including community agencies, social assistance, and children's mental health. The Social Service Workers' Co-ordinating Committee will be submitting an integrated campaign proposal for 2012.

The Ontario Social Service Sector Conference is March 22 – 25, 2012 in Niagara.