



Leadership meeting will set 2009 bargaining agenda

Special points of interest:

- * ACL Leadership Meeting, Monday, September 29, Double Tree by Hilton, 655 Dixon Road, Toronto
- * Bill 77 amendments leave door open for privatization
- * Employers work to centralize HR policies

Leaders from CUPE ACL locals across Ontario will meet in Toronto on September 29 to set the agenda for what promises to be an unprecedented round of coordinated bargaining.

It's all happening at the same time as the Ontario government is changing the way developmental services are funded and delivered — and not for the good.

The vast majority of CUPE ACL locals will be going to the table in 2009 — upwards of 50 locals representing thousands of frontline staff. That's a lot of bargaining power!

When the leadership of those locals meet in late September, they'll be looking at how to build on the gains that were made in the last round of collective bargaining. They will hear recommendations from the ACL Bargaining Committee — which they elect — for the common proposals that all locals will put on the table during negotiations.

In the past, the common proposals have included wages, job security, pensions, health and safety language



CUPE ACL members develop mobilization strategies at the one-day leadership training session held last March.

and common expiry date.

As well, most locals have worked hard to get employers to sign letters of agreement to lobby the provincial government for increased funding and to enter discussions about central bargaining.

With an unprecedented number of locals at the table, the meeting will also look at options for the way we

structure coordinated bargaining within CUPE in order to ensure efficient and effective communication.

The meeting agenda will also include elections for the ACLBC.

It's not too late to register for September 29. It's a meeting your local won't want to miss because it's all about bargaining better working conditions.

Bill 77 opens door to private, for profit, individualized services

When the Ontario government brings Bill 77 back to the Legislature for third reading this fall, it will set the stage for privatizing services for persons with a developmental disability.

Despite hearing similar calls for amendments to the bill from CUPE members, agencies, parents and self-advocates, the Liberal members of the Standing Committee on Social Policy rejected almost all changes that would strengthen the community-based agency infrastructure.

Instead, the Liberals are ready to entrench waiting lists in legislation and allow the introduction of private, for-profit brokers to manage direct funding to individuals and their families.

It's a recipe for disaster in a sector that has been severely underfunded and is already struggling with staff recruitment and retention.

"Bill 77 is supposed to herald a new era of community living in Ontario, but it fails to guarantee supports and services for adults with a developmental disability," CUPE Ontario President Sid Ryan, said at the public hearings held in August. "Our worst fear is that we will see all the problems currently plaguing home care in Ontario re-created in developmental services."

His concerns were echoed by CUPE members who made presentations right across the province, as well as many agencies, parents and others.

Patricia McFarlane, whose daughter lives in a group home staffed by CUPE members, talked about the burden that direct funding — the focus of much of the bill — will put on parents and families.

"Have you looked at the parents who are now aging rapidly?" she asked. "How do you think they are going to search for help when there are so little trained staff available?"

Trained staff are key. Community-based agencies face strict accountability measures in the bill. Individuals and families receiving direct funding will be required only to provided receipts showing how the money was used. But the private brokers allowed by the bill will not be held accountable at all for the quality of the supports and services provided.

Perhaps the most frightening part of the bill is the inclusion of waiting lists, a move that allows the province to cut funding without any consequences. After all, the Liberals rejected calls from almost all parties for amendments that would recognize the full inclusion and entitlement to support of



"We don't call it cuts, it's called service level adjustment?"

persons with a developmental disability.

All in all, the Liberals voted against amendments that would have:

- * mandated core services
- * removed waiting lists from the legislation
- * required a common assessment tool
- * ensured people hired through direct funding would be paid equivalent wages to service agency workers
- * provided WSIB coverage for all those providing service
- * kept services not for profit
- * set up a provincial advocate office
- * established an appeal process.

"Have you looked at the parents who are aging rapidly? How are they going to search for help when there are so little trained staff available?"

CUPE ACL workers in the news

CUPE leaders garnered good news coverage around the legislative standing committee hearings on Bill 77.

"Mom fears worst; Don't cripple care facilities, parents and union beg legis-

lature," read the *Toronto Sun* headline on a story with extensive quotes from CUPE Ontario President Sid Ryan as well as parents.

The *Sault Star* reported that members of CUPE 1880, Community Living Al-

goma, travelled to Timmins for the hearings. Meanwhile, the *Sarnia Observer* reported on CUPE 4370 members telling the committee in London that the bill will mean "longer wait times and uncertainty for people."

Employers, ministry developing human resources 'strategy' Unions respond with call for central bargaining

The time is ripe for making the case for central bargaining in the developmental services sector at both the provincial level and at individual bargaining tables.

Employers and the Ministry of Community and Social Services have been meeting since last year, under a steering committee co-chaired by ministry staff and an employer representative, to develop a human resources action plan for the sector.

Their objectives include:

- * developing "core competencies" for all developmental services workers and related pay scales
- * developing supports for families hiring staff directly
- * setting up consistent agency-based

training across the province

- * launching an awareness/marketing campaign to attract people to the sector — the one area where they suggested union participation.

Recognizing that much of this strategy is aimed at implementing Bill 77, both CUPE and OPSEU pointed out the problems of proceeding down this path without involving the unions that represent thousands of workers in developmental services.

Many of the policies being developed — particularly job qualifications and related compensation — belong at the bargaining table, not in closed-door discussions. Otherwise employers are setting the stage for labour strife.

Indeed, the best way to bring consistency to the sector right across On-

tario is through a central bargaining table.

It has happened in other sectors without undermining the autonomy or independence of individual employers or locals. It can happen here.

CUPE has long argued that a common table will strengthen the sector overall. CUPE Ontario President Sid Ryan and OPSEU President Smokey Thomas are requesting a meeting with Minister Madeleine Meilleur to discuss how her ministry can facilitate a move in that direction.

In the meantime, both unions are asking the HR Strategy Steering Committee to tread carefully and consider the implications of their planning on labour relations before moving too much further.

As part of the HR action plan, employers and the ministry are running focus groups with workers. If your members have been asked to participate, please inform your ACLBC area rep.

ACL leadership training day — open space, world café, great ideas



CUPE

The Canadian Union of Public Employees represents about 8,000 developmental services workers in Ontario's community living sector. In keeping with CUPE's national strategic directions, ACL locals have been working actively to coordinate collective bargaining since 2003. Between annual conferences, an elected, volunteer ACL Bargaining Committee (ACLBC) coordinates that effort.

"One of the ways to increase the bargaining power of smaller groups is to coordinate their collective bargaining with other groups. Effective coordination of locals within a sector is not just helpful in moving forward our bargaining goals. ... Coordination can help us address the critical issue of equality. Also, a strong and coordinated sector has political clout and can influence government decisions. Such a sector is better able to confront privatization drives by corporations trying to get hold of services within that sector."

— *Gaining Ground: Strategic Directions Program for CUPE, 2005–2007*

We're on the web!
cupe.ca
cupe.on.ca



ACLBC team, from left: Connie Hurtubise, Area 5 Eastern Ontario; Stephanie Malinsky, Area 3 Metro Toronto; Jill Coffey, Area 4 Metro East; Amy Parker, Area 5 Eastern Ontario; Cindy Hertz, Area 6 Northern Ontario; Joanne Smithers, Area 2 Niagara; Jim Beattie, Chair. Missing from photo is Brian Biggers, Area 1 Southwest, who was elected part way through the term. Elections for the 2008-09 ACLBC will be held at the September 29 leadership meeting.