

OPSEU employees hold information picket at CWSDS

by Nathan Howes
Special to the Beaver

Employees with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) Local 249 are frustrated over what they feel is a lack of respect in the workplace.

That was the union's message, according to OPSEU Local 249 president Sue Walker, one of approximately 100 developmental service workers who took part in an information picket Saturday, Feb. 28 to educate the public about issues they would like addressed.

The picket was held near Central West Specialized Developmental Services (CWSDS) at 53 Bond Street, where employees walked in front of the facility, many of them carrying signs.

CWSDS is a not-for-profit charitable organization that provides services to individuals with developmental disabilities in Dufferin, Halton, Peel, Waterloo and Wellington regions.

Nearly 300 workers there, OPSEU members, provide personal care, meal assistance, medication administration and facilitate outings, among other responsibilities, on behalf of those with developmental disabilities.

CWSDS executive director James Duncan told the *Oakville Beaver* Monday that the organization is currently in the middle of contract negotiations with the employee union, and will honour the integrity of the collective



Members of OPSEU held a information picket Saturday afternoon, walking along Kerr and Bond streets in south-central Oakville. They were out to increase public awareness to their concerns with their employer, the Government of Ontario.

| photo by Graham Paine - Oakville Beaver (Follow on Twitter @halton_photog or facebook.com/HaltonPhotog)

bargaining process.

"We'll continue to discuss these important issues at the bargaining table," he said.

Meanwhile, on the picket line, Walker charged, "The employer has no respect for

the employees here. It's time that it stops. The amount of people out here is just a sign of how people are fed up. They've had enough."

Critical issues cited by workers include increases in management-level positions,

frontline staffing reduction, growing waiting lists, staff accommodation for injuries on the job and the cost of head office renovations vis-a-vis other priorities.

A pressing matter for the OPSEU Local 249 is the manager-staff ratio, which is one for every seven employees, according to vice-president Shana Shipperbottom.

Walker called the proportion "ridiculous and unheard of" and noted it's public dollars that are at stake.

Walker and Shipperbottom cited concerns about waiting lists for clients and said they want CWSDS and the provincial government to reduce the wait and fill empty beds.

"The waiting lists in developmental services are phenomenal," said Walker.

Jill Cameron, a day-program services worker in Oakville for nearly nine years, joined the picket line to support her union, she said, because she is not happy with how employees are treated.

"I would like the employer to listen to doctors that are qualified to make appropriate decisions on people's health and wellbeing, and to be supportive to staff," said Cameron.

When asked for comment regarding the picket line information, Duncan said, "We'll continue to discuss these important issues at the bargaining table. Our top priority right now is we achieve a fair agreement with our employees and we continue to provide the best possible care and servicing people we support."

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