Workload Analysis Tool Gets Approval For Probation & Parole

The OPSEU members of the MERC Probation and Parole Workload sub-committee are pleased to announce some good news on the development of the Workload Analysis Tool (WAT). The committee, co-chaired by Gord Longhi, also consists of Brian Dunham, Cornwall P&P, Barb Friday, Thunder Bay P&P, Lorraine Skitch, Brantford P&P and Ida Rosati, Black Creek P&P.

In 2002, OPSEU and MCSCS established the MERC P&P workload sub-committee in response to increasing pressures from officers and ongoing recommendations from the Office of the Auditor General concerning workload issues in Probation and Parole. One of the primary goals of this subcommittee was the development of a Workload Analysis Tool.

After several years of careful collaboration between OPSEU and MCSCS, the long awaited project has been completed and the WAT is ready for province wide implementation starting this fall. The WAT will be implemented throughout P&P offices in a graduated rollout over the next several months.

"Workload issues have been a long-standing concern that have dogged Probation and Parole offices across Ontario for more than a few decades. We actually have newspaper articles that document staffing and workload issues in probation offices dating back to 1965," said Gord Longhi, P&P representative on the MCSCS MERC team.

"We have been waiting patiently for an instrument that could assist us with assessing workload pressures in many of our P&P offices with the goal of achieving the most equitable distribution of work possible. Workload has really been the predominant workplace issue for our staff in P&P for as long as I have been involved as a union representative," remarked Longhi.

He added: "Whenever issues of workload were raised between management and the union, the inability to effectively quantify workload was always the source of contention that would become a barrier to resolving the concerns. We now have a mutually agreed upon tool of analysis that will give us a common place-mark for starting the process of addressing workload complaints and equitably distributing workload."

Both Longhi and management lead, Emelie Milloy, noted that caution needs to be exercised and that the WAT is not the "solution" to workload issues, but instead it is a starting point to commence the process of problem solving that works for both staff and management. It is anticipated that within each office, joint staff and management workload committees will utilize the tool in an interest based process to provide transparent and equitable workload distribution.

MERC co-chair Dan Sidsworth extended congratulations and appreciation to all of the people from our membership, management and other departments who have worked on this important project over the years. The dedication and perseverance has produced a product that can have positive impact on the conditions in our workplace.

OPSEU president Warren (Smokey) Thomas said the agreement demonstrates that workplace improvements can be achieved when labour and management focus on common goals.

"This agreement took some time but that doesn't overshadow the significance it will have on the long-term well-being of our members. I applaud both sides for taking a giant step forward," said Thomas.

OPSEU members of the workload sub-committee wish to remind staff that the best way to impact workload issues in your offices is to be well informed and to be involved. Make sure you utilize the resources at your disposal to address workload issues. Every office should have a workload committee and should be addressing workload issues at monthly staff meetings. When the WAT is implemented, take time to understand the tool and use it to support workload adjustment recommendations. Also use the established dispute resolution processes to forward any unresolved issues to your Union representatives at regional ERC and MERC.

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