

dialogue

February 28, 2008

A bi-weekly update on issues
affecting health care in Ontario

Royal Ottawa under media scrutiny

“Fox put in charge of chicken coop.”

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February 24 and 25 the *Ottawa Citizen* provided extended coverage of the ongoing woes at the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre (ROMHC) – the first P3 hospital in Ontario.

After being open for more than 15 months, the new interim CEO George Weber insists the problems at ROMHC are “teething issues.” When asked about malfunctioning security cameras, Weber told the *Citizen* “only a couple of cameras” didn’t work.

Yet the *Citizen* reported that a January 28 internal memo found 44 of 65 cameras to be “inoperable” after a review – not just a few.

Further, the next day the *Citizen* reported on the hiring of Richard L. Bisson as the hospital’s director of supply-chain management, responsible for managing the “day to day deliverables” of the P3 agreement. Bisson’s previous job was as a senior manager at Carillion Canada – the same P3 company that runs the facilities and ancillary services at the ROMHC.

When asked why the hospital would hire Bisson to police a company he recently worked for, the ROMHC’s acting director of communications told the newspaper: “I don’t know. I can’t answer that.” He later denied Bisson to be in a conflict of interest.

OPSEU local president Marlene Rivier disagreed: “It strikes me as a conflict of interest to get someone from Carillion to monitor that Carillion is living up to its terms of the agreement,” she told the *Citizen*. “They hired a fox to guard the chicken coop.”

The Royal Ottawa pays the private consortium \$800,000 monthly to operate, maintain and provide non-clinical services over the 20-year lease.

In a memo to staff on Monday, Weber sent out an invitation to a presentation from Carillion on the “purpose of P3 partnership and agreements in place” at the next staff forum.

Fertility Clinic decision subject to a judicial review?

OPSEU has learned that the recent landmark Ontario Labour Relations Board decision regarding the bargaining rights at the Ottawa Fertility Clinic may be subject to a judicial review.

In January the OLRB had decided that ONA, OPSEU and CUPE carried their bargaining rights from the Ottawa Fertility Clinic in The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) to a private stand-alone clinic run by a group of doctors despite a lack of involvement by the Local Health Integration Network (LHIN).

Should the decision stand in Ontario Divisional Court, rights will likely be extended to workers affected by a wide range of transfers within the health care system.

‘Service excellence’ to include gag on workers?

St. Joseph’s Healthcare in Hamilton is developing a new program of “Service Excellence” which emphasizes standards of behavior for anyone associated with the hospital. Among

examples of “inappropriate behavior” are “discussing workplace concerns, conduct, and conflicts in front of others.”

While the OPSEU local does have language in its collective agreement to protect members who speak to union issues, there is concern that the new standards will create a chill on discussing conditions that need improvement at the hospital.

OPSEU Local 206 was vocal in its opposition last year to the closure of the hospital’s last three community lab collection sites and their subsequent privatization.

Rights Commission & MOHLTC dodge diaper complaint

The Ontario Federation of Labour is appealing directly to Dalton McGuinty after both the Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Health both dodged taking action on long term care residents left to sit in soiled incontinent pads.

After initially agreeing in January to send a letter out to long term care homes reminding them of standards regarding the use of so-called adult “diapers,” Tim Burns, Director of the Ministry’s Health Performance Improvement and Compliance Branch reneged on the promise in a letter to the OFL, insisting a random inspection was now sufficient. A week later, the Ontario Human Rights Commission said it did not have the resources to pursue a systemic complaint from the OFL on the issue.