



dialogue

April 12, 2007

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

"Ontario Can Do Better" Website

www.ontariocandobetter.ca

Safer Needles Website

www.saferneedles.ca

Bill 171 hearings April 23-24

Omnibus legislation creates Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion

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Public hearings will be held in Toronto April 23-24 for the huge omnibus Bill 171 — *The Health System Improvements Act*. Introduced December 12, the bill raises several concerns for OPSEU members.

While OPSEU supports the creation of an Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, there are concerns about its accountability and the transfer to the agency of about 600 OPS members from 12 public health labs.

Many issues around transferring these workers out of the OPS have yet to be resolved, including pensions, successor rights, and job security.

The new agency was one of the key recommendations emerging from Justice Campbell's report on Ontario's response to the SARS crisis. However, Campbell envisioned a strong health and safety component to the new agency, a role that is noticeably absent from Bill 171.

The act clumsily tries to protect the public from untrained psychotherapy practitioners

who are without credentials and unaffiliated with any professional body.

Unfortunately, the definition of psychotherapy presented in the bill is so broad that many legitimate professions using psychotherapy may be disqualified from continuing their practice. This could include many OPSEU members who use psychotherapy as part of their job, such as social workers, child and youth workers, developmental service workers, and women's shelter employees.

While the government has promised to fix the bill by adding social workers to the list of professions qualified to provide psychotherapy, many more professions risk disqualification from this critical element of their work.

OPSEU is applying for standing before the standing committee on social policy to address these issues. Any individual or group may also apply for standing by contacting Trevor Day, the committee clerk, by 5 pm on Friday, April 13. Written submissions can also be sent to the committee by April 24.

Hospital mental health programs expendable?

More cuts to mental health are taking place at Ontario hospitals. London's St. Joseph's Health Care is cutting 34 jobs in mental health despite close to \$20 million in new funding. The London cuts follow on the heels of Oshawa's Lakeridge Health, which announced \$2.6 million in cuts to mental health and addictions this spring. The Ontario government's hospital annual planning submission guide has suggested to hospitals that any mental health programs funded from the hospital's global budget may be expendable to balance budgets. The patients presently receiving these services may also feel expendable in this process.

HCDC Convention Raffle

In support of the Ontario Health Coalition

Coming to convention? Get a ticket on the Health Care Divisional Council convention raffle.

You could win one of...

- Vintage OPSEU Jacket
- Original Oil Painting by Rick Janson
- Blue Jays Tickets
- Foot Care Pkg

Tickets are \$2 each or three for \$5
Draw: April 20

May Day Rally

Safe needles save lives!

Tuesday, May 1 — 12 Noon to 1 pm / Queen's Park

Bill 30, the Safe Needles Save Lives Act, is stalled in legislative committee. Show up to Queen's Park May 1st to demand government pass this bill before the legislature adjourns for the October election. Prevent 33,000 needlestick injuries a year by making safety engineered devices the law. Many other provinces already have this legislation. It's time Ontario took the safety of health care workers seriously too! This rally is co-sponsored by the Needlestick Alliance: OPSEU, ONA, and SEIU.

Approved for Distribution by Leah Casselman, President