



dialogue

OPSEU HEALTH COUNCIL

August 24, 2006

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

To download the SE LHIN IHSP go to
www.lhins.on.ca/english/SouthEast/SouthEast.asp

To download public health report go to
www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/pub/ministry_reports/capacity_review05/capacity_review05.html

SE LHIN first to post a draft service plan on-line

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The South East LHIN is the first to post an on-line discussion draft of their Integrated Health Service Plan (IHSP). While specific to the Kingston to Bancroft LHIN, the document is a good indicator of what to expect across the province.

The IHSP is an outline of the vision, priorities and strategies the LHIN will use to make its decisions for the next three years.

As expected, the IHSP is mostly an analysis of regional problems, with few detailed solutions beyond the promise of more consultation and study. However, that doesn't mean the clues aren't there as to where resources will eventually be redirected.

Throughout the document the SE LHIN identifies the need for a greater volume of primary care, mental health services, long term care, home care and addiction services. The lack of such services mean the hospitals in the region are handling a high percentage of non-urgent cases in their emergency departments — the highest among southern LHINs. Hospital beds are also being occupied by those who do not have community-based services to go to. The SE LHIN has the province's third highest waiting list for long term care.

The IHSP also focuses on transportation issues over local provision of service.

The document highlights the fact that three regional hospitals — Kingston, Belleville and Brockville — provide about 70 per cent of inpatient acute care in the LHIN. For those remaining rural hospitals, it's not hard to see where this is leading.

With limited resources, this could be a scenario that justifies closing local hospital beds to fund SE LHIN's shopping list.

At labour's urging, the province has picked up the mantra of human resource planning. This is reflected in the IHSP, although most of the emphasis remains on recruitment rather than retention.

The biggest surprise is attention to areas outside the LHIN's jurisdiction, including physician availability and public health.

Public Health

In previous meetings with OPSEU, the Ministry has suggested that the jurisdiction of the LHINs could expand to such sectors as public health and ambulance.

In a separate May report on Ontario's public health capacity, the review committee strongly recommends amalgamating a number of public health units to better align with the LHINs. For example, it suggests the Lanark portion of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit amalgamate with Renfrew County and District Health Unit to fit in the Champlain LHIN. The Leeds Grenville portion of the health unit will remain in the SE LHIN. Six OPSEU-represented Health Units would be involved in amalgamations if the report were accepted.

However, none of these amalgamations are likely to take place any time soon. August 14 Dalton McGuinty announced a joint review of provincial-municipal relations, including public health and emergency services. The review is not intended to report for 18 months, about four months after the next provincial election.

CCACs delve into the cheese

At first the CCACs were saying not to worry — the planned mergers would be seamless to CCAC workers and their patients. Yet, among the recent resources the CCAC Alignment Project has made available is the controversial "Who Moved The Cheese" book and video. "Who Moved the Cheese" is a business fable by Dr. Spencer Johnson about mice in a maze who have their cheese moved. The mice that accept the change are rewarded, the mouse that questions change goes without. The message is: questioning change is futile, just get on with the agenda. Corporations have loved this book since it came out in 1998, and have ordered employees to read it, discuss it, and even write book reports on it. Scott Adams, the creator of Dilbert, claims that such patronizing parables are among the top ten complaints he receives at his web site. Of course, Dr. Johnson's book does not address unions, which might want to move management's cheese instead.

"Anecdotal evidence suggests that a flurry of cheese sessions often precedes layoffs."
 - San Francisco Chronicle