



# dialogue

October 5, 2006

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

## New pandemic plan weak on worker protection

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The 2003 SARS outbreak was supposed to be a wake-up call around pandemic planning in Ontario. Three years later the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care is still grappling with the details of the plan.

The Ministry is drafting an “evergreen” plan — meaning that it will be subject to constant changes and additions.

The newest draft has been posted on the Ministry site in September (link at top right). Chapter 7 of the plan deals with occupational health and safety, but is still incomplete.

Despite overwhelming scientific evidence that influenza transmission is airborne, the Ministry continues to suggest that regular surgical masks would be appropriate protection for most health care workers rather than N95 respirators.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is holding a national consensus conference on respiratory protection October 26 and 27. The Toronto meeting is intended to bring together scientists representing a range of opinions on influenza transmission. However, physicians and scientists who argue influenza is airborne are being mostly excluded.

To date, the conference is closed to labour organizations representing health care workers. OPSEU and ONA are telling the Ministry that if the conference is not open and transparent, there is no reason to view the outcome as credible.

The Ministry of Health is relying on the outcome of the conference to determine what personal protection equipment will be required by front line workers.

## Sharps to go to second reading November 30th

Members asked to come to  
Queen’s Park

Shelley Martel's private member's bill requiring the use of safety engineered sharps devices is going to second reading November 30th. Concerned OPSEU members should be present in the legislature on that day to support the reintroduction of this bill by the NDP health critic. Ontario is dragging its heels on replacing needles and other sharps with safety engineered devices that cut down on injuries. Five provinces have now passed legislation and/or regulations requiring these devices. The response by the government will speak loudly about how it views workplace safety.

## Protecting workers rights in the event of LHIN integrations

OPSEU continues to work with ONA, CUPE, and SEIU towards a universal human resources adjustment plan (HRAP). To date, the government has refused to provide a binding forum for establishing rules around the transition of workers in the event of LHIN integration decisions. Fives unions are none-the-less meeting with government and Ontario Hospital Association representatives October 13 to begin discussions. At least one LHIN CEO has expressed support for such a central agreement. Locals should urge their LHIN to pressure government to protect workers through a central negotiated human resources adjustment plan.

### MOHLTC Pandemic Plan

[www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan\\_flu/pan\\_flu\\_plan.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/emu/pan_flu/pan_flu_plan.html)

### Ontario Health Coalition

[www.web.net/ohc/](http://www.web.net/ohc/)

Dates and Opportunities...

### Ontario Health Coalition Action Assembly

**Saturday, October 14, 2006**

9:30 am to 4 pm

519 Community Centre  
519 Church St. , Toronto  
Q&A sessions with...

- Health Minister  
George Smitherman
- NDP Health Critic  
Shelley Martel
- Dr. Ifran Dhalla, Canadian  
Doctors for Medicare

### Health Care Local Meetings

The OPSEU Health Council is conducting “big picture” briefings on Ontario's health care system at a local near you. Go to the OPSEU Health Care Divisional Council web page for locals, dates and locations.

### FAC Workshops

The OPSEU Board has approved funding for one person per hospital-based local to attend the upcoming OFL Fiscal Advisory Committee Workshops. The workshops are for those serving on, or wishing to serve on, their hospital fiscal advisory committee. For more information on the 2-day workshops, go to the Health Council web page.

### CREOD Deadline

Joint Health and Safety Committees are urged to get their CREOD surveys back as soon as possible. CREOD is the Centre for Research Expertise in Occupational Disease.