



dialogue

October 19, 2006

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

Download the Municipal Pledge at
www.protecthealthcare.ca

New Long Term Care Homes Act
http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/public/legislation/ltc_homes/ltc_homes.html

Health care pledge targets municipal candidates

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November 13 election day

Monday, November 13th is election day for Ontario's municipalities. Municipalities provide ambulance and public health services. They operate long term care homes. They contribute towards the cost of new hospital facilities.

Who you elect does matter.

CUPE, OPSEU, ONA, and SEIU have developed a health care pledge for municipal candidates. The pledge is intended to identify which candidates are health care friendly.

Union members are asked to approach local candidates and ask them to sign a pledge which states:

If elected, I promise to:

Work with all levels of government to ensure local access to health services that are publicly financed and delivered.

Work to ensure municipal contributions are used only towards new hospital infrastructure that is publicly financed and owned.

Work to support fair wages and working conditions for all health care workers, recognizing these workers' incomes are vital to my community's economic well-being and to the quality of care.

Work to ensure that any changes in health service delivery, including those affecting non-clinical services, do not lead to further privatization of public services.

Once these pledges are signed, the document should be returned to Rick Janson along with information about the candidate, including their name, their municipality, and office they are seeking.

The names of those who have signed will be posted on www.protecthealthcare.ca and on the health council web page. On election day, all members will have a quick reference to candidates willing to sign their commitment to our publicly-provided health care system. A PDF copy of the health care pledge, suitable for candidate signing, is available for download at these two sites.

Long term care revolution?

The Liberals were outraged when Mike Harris removed the minimum standard of 2.25 hours of care per day at Ontario's long term care facilities. They promised in the 2003 election to restore it.

Turns out George Smitherman's "revolution in long term care" is still wanting, as the government failed to include even a rock-bottom minimum standard in the new long term care act introduced in October.

By comparison, a 2005 Ontario Coroner's Jury report recommended a minimum of 3.06 hours of care per day after investigating the deaths of two residents in June, 2001.

The Ontario Health Coalition, health care unions, the registered nurses association and seniors' advocacy groups and the NDP are calling for a minimum standard of 3.5 hours.

While Ontario has moved to increase the number of for-profit long term care beds, the standard of care still has a long way to go. Last year one Eastern Ontario home had to fundraise to be able to provide food for its residents.

LHINs can't find staff

Want a short term future? Not afraid to leave your pension plan behind? Then the LHINs are looking for you! At an Oct 10 forum, Gary Switzer, CEO of the Erie-St. Clair LHIN, said he had been able to hire only five of 21 staff. Across the province the LHINs are struggling to staff up. Hy Eliasoph, Central LHIN's CEO, met with members of Local 374 Sept 27. He admitted that pension portability was a major stumbling block to finding staff. In the North East LHIN the staffing situation may have actually gotten worse – CEO David Murray is rumoured to be leaving for the post of executive director of the Waterloo-Wellington CCAC. At the Oct 10 forum panel members expressed frustration that the LHINs roll out could take as long as 3-4 years. While the LHINs are supposed to begin making funding decisions next April, the province has already decided how much most health care providers will get. LHIN CEOs are saying they will have very little money at their discretion, mostly to begin implementing their regional plans.

CCAC appointments?

Where are the announcements for the new CCAC executive directors and boards? According to the Oct 10 forum, the execs have been appointed and are at work. So, why is the province so slow to post their names?

Approved for Distribution by Leah Casselman, President