



France Gélinas

MPP/Députée Nickel Belt

Background/Document d'information

The following Statement was made by France Gélinas, MPP and NDP Critic for Health and Long-Term Care, in the Ontario Legislature on June 10, 2008

PUBLIC HEALTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today to highlight the importance of supporting the public health units. Public health units are so important that on May 28 the Minister of Health finally announced that hospitals will be required to report C. difficile outbreaks to their local health units so that medical officers of health have the information they need to monitor and respond to emergency outbreaks.

However, according to the Association of Local Public Health Agencies, about one third of Ontario's medical officer of health positions are still either vacant, part-time or led by acting directors. This is despite the fact that six years ago the very first recommendation from the Walkerton inquiry stated, "The Health Protection and Promotion Act should be amended to require boards of health and the Minister of Health, acting in concert, to expeditiously fill any vacant Medical Officer of Health position...."

Twenty-seven OPSEU members who work at the Grey-Bruce health unit in Owen Sound have been on strike since May 1. These workers keep people safe from rabies, bird flu, West Nile virus, contaminated tap and beach water, and much more. I don't know how the mosquitoes are elsewhere, but in my riding they are ferocious.

A public health unit is dysfunctional here in Ontario, and the Ontario Medical Association said that a single dysfunctional health unit could incubate a national epidemic.

More must be done to support our local health units so they can continue to protect us.