



dialogue

March 1, 2007

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

Coming Soon!
OPSEU's Ontario Can Do Better website. Watch for details.

Fightback on regional lab services continues

19

Ottawa hospital lab staff pressures EORLA for answers, campaign heats up in Muskoka Algonquin

The regionalization of Eastern Ontario lab services continues to move along at a snail's pace, raising questions as to how much of the nine-year-old plan is likely to ever take place.

OPSEU and CUPE have applied to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to maintain representation and collective agreements for The Ottawa Hospital workers transferred into the new Eastern Ontario Regional Lab Association facility, which is leased from TOH. A pre-hearing is scheduled for March 27. The rights would flow from recognition of EORLA as being a "related employer" in the view of the labour board.

At present, all workers at the facility are employees of The Ottawa Hospital.

Responses to the application from TOH and EORLA deny being related employers despite using most of the same arguments lifted word-for-word from each entity's submission to the labour board.

EORLA and The Ottawa Hospital contend that key decisions are awaiting the recommendations of a third party review, scheduled to be released April 1, 2007. Those decisions include whether staff will remain employees of their hospitals or whether workers will be employed by EORLA.

The union's application also seeks disclosure of information from the employer that has long been denied to the unions.

19 regional labs in 16 hospitals are presently participating in EORLA.

Despite having only moved into the new EORLA lab facilities at the Ottawa Hospital in September, management is struggling to find sufficient staff and space to handle the workload.

The satellite hospitals are also experiencing difficulties. One hospital sent 40 lab specimens to be tested at the central facility only to find that Ottawa celebrates Heritage Day. The specimens arrived at a closed lab and were ruined.

Workers asked to take off shirts

Meanwhile, at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare the hospital is trying to silence lab workers who are fighting to maintain testing in Huntsville and Bracebridge.

The hospital sent letters of reprimand to at least two workers for wearing t-shirts that read: "Our Lab Gets Results. Don't Drive It Away." MAHC has demanded lab workers not wear the shirts at the hospital.

OPSEU locals are turning up the heat by distributing flyers throughout the community and conducting a town hall meeting March 5 in Bracebridge.

The hospital has yet to make a final decision to move most hospital testing to Barrie and end a partnership to do community-generated testing, forcing specimens to be sent to a central private-sector lab in Brampton.

Poll indicates support for staffing standards

By two to one, Ontario residents say the government should require long term care homes to provide a specific number of hours of care, not "let the people who run nursing homes decide, because they know best." Of those who support care standards, 65 per cent favour establishing a minimum of 3.5 hours of care per day.

The results are part of a lengthy survey conducted by The Vector Poll for a coalition made up of the Canadian Federation of Students and several labour unions, including OPSEU. The poll is based on telephone interviews conducted with 1,131 adults across Canada from January 15 to 31.

Other results include:

- **70 per cent of Canadians favour creating a new federal program to pay the cost of most prescription drugs for everyone;**
- **68 per cent of Canadians are either not too familiar, or not at all familiar with the term "pharmicare."**
- **29 per cent say access to health care is worse under the McGuinty government, while 14 per cent say it is better.**
- **Just one in five (21 per cent) claim to understand the major issues involved in the forming of the local health integration networks. 68 per cent say they find the whole situation confusing.**
- **When asked how engaged people feel in their LHIN, 84 per cent responded either not much, or not at all.**

Approved for Distribution by Leah Casselman, President