

# dialogue

June 21, 2007

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

27

## Closure of lab collection sites skips LHIN process

St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton recently announced it was closing three lab collection sites in Hamilton and Dundas as of October 31<sup>st</sup>. The three sites serve close to 500 patients per day and employ about 20 full and part time workers. While the hospital suggested 10 existing private for-profit facilities in the city could pick up the work, it later told the media that it "hoped" the private sector would additionally take over the three St. Joseph's collection sites.

OPSEU has complained in a June 14<sup>th</sup> letter to the LHIN that the required integration process has not been followed. Under the process, the public should have had 30 days to scrutinize the plan for the transfer. The LHIN would only make a final decision after public input. There is also a requirement to establish a human resources adjustment plan. None of these provisions have taken place. OPSEU members are not being offered an opportunity to move with their work – another provision of the Local Health System Integration Act.

When OPSEU Local 206 approached Dundas area MPP Ted McMeekin, he said the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN had argued the public process was not required given the

hospital made the decision to close the facilities before the LHIN gained its full powers on April 1<sup>st</sup>. However, the OPSEU local was not informed of such a decision until June.

Given the integration has not yet taken place, OPSEU is insisting that St. Joseph's follow the notice provisions the union fought to have included in the legislation.

By moving the services to the private sector, the hospital will effectively remove all lab collections from the future planning authority of the LHIN.

The question remains – how many other hospitals have made undisclosed decisions prior to April 1<sup>st</sup> to avoid requirements under the LHINs?

## Vancouver looks to re-institutionalize mentally ill homeless

Homelessness has often been linked with mental illness, although there is no definitive study to determine which came first: the homelessness or the mental illness.

Vancouver Mayor Sam Sullivan says he wants to re-institutionalize some former mental health patients who have ended up homeless on the streets of his city. Sullivan has been formerly criticized for plans to make Vancouver's homeless invisible for the 2010 Olympics.

Sullivan has support from Coquitlam Councillor Mae Reid, who told the media: "I really believe there are people in the Downtown Eastside that would benefit from being in a setting where they can have food and warmth and a bed and someone there to give them their meds."

No decision has been made about re-opening mental health beds in the Vancouver area, however, the Ontario government may want to take note.

## Billboard to greet Muskoka administrators

Southbound administrators from Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare will be getting a big message from OPSEU driving just south of Gravenhurst. Tomorrow (June 22) a billboard will be posted that reads: "Danger – Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare: Doctors rely on hospital lab tests. Don't drive our lab and staff away." The hospital has been battling its OPSEU local following release of recommendations that would end community-based lab testing and reduce the scope of in-hospital testing. Decisions on the plan have been put on hold until March 2008, but the fate of a union steward fired for speaking out has yet to be resolved.

## June 22 Ottawa P3 Report

OPSEU Local 479 is issuing a report Friday detailing the shortcomings of the new Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre. The centre was the first hospital in Ontario to be built as a public-private-partnership. Since opening in October 2006, the hospital has been plagued by safety problems, blurred lines of accountability, and the downloading of maintenance costs to clinical budgets. A panel discussion on secret P3 deals and the rising costs of P3 hospitals will take place at 7 pm on Monday, June 25 at the Ottawa PSAC building, 233 Gilmour Street.

## 85 per cent agree with precautionary principle

In a May Vector Poll, 85 per cent of Canadians said they agree that their provincial government, faced with another SARS-like outbreak, should not wait for scientific certainty before taking steps to reduce risk...only 10 per cent said they would allow health administrators to wait for proof that masks are necessary before issuing them to employees. 1,113 Canadians were surveyed May 2-17. 19 times out of 20 the results will differ by no more than 2.9 per cent.