



dialogue

September 21, 2006

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

Wait times strategy will be derailed by home care cuts

8

Cuts to home care will throw a wrench into the McGuinty government's plan to reduce waiting times.

Despite this year's infusion of \$117.8 million to improve home care delivery, the Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres admits their members are "under pressure" and are in discussions with the province.

If no bail-out is forthcoming, CCACs could face severe cuts in service to balance their budgets by the end of the year.

Cuts to home care mean longer waits for physiotherapy, nursing care, occupational therapy, personal support and other services needed by patients after surgery.

The Hamilton CCAC revealed September 12 that it will make significant cuts to tackle a \$3.6 million deficit. It is reviewing all patient files to reduce or eliminate home care service and has also frozen all new in-home caregiver relief.

This could result in significant layoffs at the agency level. More than 9400 units of service per week will have to be cut for Hamilton to balance its budget. An hour of personal support is considered one unit of service, an hour of nursing care is two units.

To make matters worse, the freeze on new home care contracts is about to be lifted in the new year, opening the door to cost increases by private for-profit health care agencies.

The last time contracts were awarded, Ontario's auditor noted that CCACs were facing increases up to 48% per nursing visit after signing new contracts awarded

through the competitive bidding system. OPSEU is calling on the McGuinty government to extend its moratorium on new contracts and fund the CCAC deficits immediately. The union is also asking the province to look at alternative models to the replace the failed competitive bidding system.

Privately-run public hospitals just got more expensive

Evidence already exists to prove the selling off of public hospital projects to the private sector is very costly to taxpayers. Infrastructure Ontario announced recently that it is extending its generosity to losing bidders on these projects. David Caplan, Minister of Infrastructure Renewal, gave authority to offer "design and bid fees" to consortia who fail to win bids on large government projects, including the privately financed and operated public hospitals it announced last fall. In Ontario, even if corporations lose, they win!

Pinch me – only 10 jobs cut!

"I'm standing here actually thinking I have to pinch myself," said Paul Collins, President of the St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital. Facing a \$7.7 million deficit, Collins was over the moon after the province announced \$4.5 million more in funding to the hospital this year. While the money lessens the blow, it still means the hospital is set to cut the equivalent of 10 full-time jobs and consolidate hospital units. It is a lesson for George Smitherman: significantly underfund the hospitals, then give a little back. Instead of burning you in effigy, the hospitals will sing your praises.

New LHIN regulation

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/transformation/lhin/lhin_advcom.html

Progressive news and analysis

<http://www.straightgoods.com>

LHIN regulation excludes union activists

If you are a union activist, the LHINs don't want you on their professional advisory committees. The government has introduced a new regulation to define membership on this committee. The regulation prohibits any "official" of a trade union from participating. While unclear as to what an "official" might be, this could include stewards, members of local executives and others who hold an elected position in the union. It also includes officers and board members of any other organization which represents the interests of professional health care workers, such as the Ontario Medical Association. By establishing a "rank and file only" rule, the LHINs will be cutting themselves off from the activists who have made it their job to represent concerns of those working in the system.

Locals are encouraged to respond in writing by Friday, September 29.

Send to:
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