

dialogue

November 1, 2007

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

OPSEU Chosen at North East CCAC

230 staff of the North East Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) chose OPSEU in a representation vote this week. OPSEU will represent office, clerical, administrative staff as well as all direct service providers.

Health care sectors pursue full agenda into the fall

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Province to consult on LTC staffing standards

Mary Plesa and Debbie MacDonald, present and past sector 8 chairs, are participating in a Nov 5 consultation on staffing standards for nursing homes. Shirlee Sharkey, President and CEO of St. Elizabeth Healthcare, has been appointed by health minister George Smitherman to present her research around the reintroduction of such standards. The province has been recently under fire after a series of high profile media stories about the lack of staffing in Ontario's publicly-funded long term care homes. That includes a mid-election challenge by the Ontario Federation of Labour, who threatened to take the government to court over the plight of residents forced to spend the day in soiled incontinent pads. Sharkey is expected to report back to the ministry by the end of the year.

Thomas speaks at L466 screening of Sicko

Local 466 paid admission for its members to attend an Oct 11 screening of *Sicko* — Michael Moore's documentary on the impact of privatization on the American health system. Representing health care professionals at the Perth and Smiths Falls District Hospital, Local 466 invited OPSEU President Smokey Thomas and local board member Dave Lundy to attend. "Our health system is here for the people and not for profit," said Thomas at

the event. "The private sector has never been able to prove its efficiency over public care." Local 466 also used the event to distribute *dialogue's* coverage of Dr. Arnold Relman's speech in Hamilton.



Smokey Thomas

The former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine* said he has never seen any proof to suggest the private sector was more efficient at providing public health care. "The evening increased the awareness of everyone in the movie theatre about the consequences of privatization," said local president Hervé Cavanagh. "Let's put health care back in the hands of health care professionals, not investors." The special edition of *Sicko* will be released on DVD November 6th.

Paramedics stage info picket at new Brampton hospital

Paramedics from Local 277 marched outside the new William Osler hospital Oct 28 to highlight frustration over the slow progress of bargaining with the Region of Peel. Dave Wakely, Vice-president of the local, told the *Mississauga News* that "we just want to get the message out that we are continuing to provide service, but we are unhappy with our employer." The local is waiting for an arbitrator to be appointed after conciliation failed to resolve the impasse in July.

OPSEU Mental Health Symposium Nov. 13-14

OPSEU is bringing the community together for a two-day symposium that will highlight the urgent need for government ministries to collaborate to solve the poverty and housing issues facing persons with mental illness.

With health care being reorganized under the Local Health Integration Networks, defining a clear set of priorities has never been more important.

Keynote speaker will be Glenn Thompson, interim president of the Canadian Mental Health Commission, an advocacy organization dedicated to making mental health a priority for all governments.

The symposium will also include a focus on aboriginal mental health. Speakers include Debbie Pegmagawbok, Director of Bisaniibemasdwin Mental Helath Services, and Nancy Stevens, Regional Aboriginal Mental Health Program Coordinator, Northeast Mental Health Centre.

A screening of the film "Out Of the Shadows" and an art exhibition — "From Myth to Muse" — will provide a cultural focus to the program.

An invitation has been extended to George Smitherman, reappointed this week as Minister of Health. "The minister's attendance would send a signal to the mental health community that our issues are a priority for the new government," said OPSEU 1st VP Patty Rout.

Approved for distribution, Warren Smokey Thomas, President