

Liberals privatize: Members mobilize!

Liberal plans opens door to for-profit delivery

LHINs, P3 hospitals, CCAC competitive bidding... do we see a pattern here?

First it was community health professionals; now the Liberal government is opening the door to the disasters of competitive bidding in the rest of health care. The government is moving ahead with the Local Health Integration Act (LHIN) with the March passage of this bill to devastate health care. Some portions of the LHINs bill (such as funding) have yet to be proclaimed.

The LHINs are not local. They are not accountable. And they are not about public health care.

The good news is that the hard work of OPSEU members and allies from CUPE, ONA and SEIU have had a positive impact on the process.

The LHIN legislation has been amended to include:

- Better access to meetings, and to service agreements and other documents.
- Better language on appeals.
- Requirements for human resources adjustment plans.
- Advisory panels for aboriginal and francophone communities.
- Recognition that the principles of the Canada Health Act apply.

While this is significant progress, it is not enough to stop the threat of the LHINs. Our members are still active in working to improve the regulations, yet to be written. The unions are

also lobbying for a provincial table to discuss human resource adjustment planning.

Mobilization paid off

It does mean that when our members protested on Feb. 14 against the Liberal government's plans, someone, somewhere was listening.

The LHINs threaten stability for thousands of health care workers, open the door for private for-profit health delivery, and diminish access to and local control of community health care.

The 14 appointed regional boards will be responsible for spending two-thirds of the province's health care budget – about \$20 billion. These small hand-picked boards are appointed by the McGuinty government and accountable only to the Ministry of Health.



CUPE-OCHU President Michael Hurley, SEIU local 1.0n President Sharlene Stewart, OPSEU President Leah Casselman, and ONA president Linda Haslam-Stroud, representing 200,000 health care workers, fight the LHINs.

Stop LHINs (continued)

In addition to making funding decisions, the legislation gives these boards the ability to transfer, merge, amalgamate or “wind up” services.

Despite claims that it will better “align” health services, many critical parts of the health care system are left outside this new structure, including physicians, laboratories, public health, and ambulance.

Worse still, the government intends to put many health services up for tender --- much in the same way competitive bidding has disastrously been applied in home care.

The LHINS could also limit access to many patients who will be forced to travel hundreds of kilometers for routine procedures.

www.protecthealthcare.ca

OPSEU Sectors active: News briefs

Health Care Support

The revamped Sector 11 newsletter went out in February. Health Care Support News Can be viewed at: www.opseu.org/bps/health/support/index.htm

A recent training opportunity, the leadership development course, received very good feedback. It was held March 31 to April 2, at Hockley Valley, Orangeville. About 30 members from all regions attended. The sector executive will meet for one day before convention

Long-term care

The new improved *Cadogan Chatline* newsletter came out in March and can be seen on-line at www.opseu.org/bps/health/longterm/index.htm

A new *Long Term Care Act* is expected to be debated in the Legislature some time in the near future. It is expected to deal with both profit and non-profit facilities.

The impact of LHIN legislation on long-term care facilities remains unknown.

Hospital Professionals

The HPD has established a scholarship fund from division dues. OPSEU members and their family can apply. Details are found at www.opseu.org (see HPD or scholarships sections).

Central Bargaining continues in the HPD, with almost two-thirds of units participating. There will be a central pay equity process, separate from contract talks.

Major heart and stroke fund donations were made by the sector and HPD has made a serious commitment to this charity.

Community Health Care

This is a stable year since contracting out is frozen. All units are in a waiting mode.

Meantime the sector faces huge staff shortages in sector, levels of nurses and therapists are critical. During bidding process 30—40 per cent of workers leave because of precarious work.

The government has not responded to the Caplan report. Twice the government has promised a response to Caplan, and twice the legislative session has finished without the introduction of any legislation.

With the province moving to a health care delivery model based in 14 regions, the Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) will be amalgamating to match these new boundaries - 43 CCAC's to 14.

Ambulance

The government is consulting with OPSEU and other paramedics' unions on possible changes to Employment Standards on paramedics' meal breaks, following a situation in Frontenac where the employer was fined for an ESA violation.

We are also meeting with other unions on issues such as base hospital decertification, health and safety and other issues.

Mental Health

Despite the lack of successor rights in the Ontario Public Service, the Whitby and North Bay psychiatric hospital divestments were both successful for OPSEU.

In a card-signing drive, the union signed up about 98 per cent of all members at the two locals consisting of about 1,600 members. The BPS welcomes these members.

Observers also attend HCDC

The chairs of social service sectors are attending meetings of your Health Council as observers. These are the Child Treatment Centres Sector and the Developmental Services Sector.

Developmental Services

The government has set up four centres in four areas of the province to take the lead on changes to developmental services. Dual-diagnosis programs are becoming more high-profile. Non-union Christian Horizon agency staff are working side-by-side with OPSEU members. Their contracts appear to violate the human rights of staff.

Child Treatment Centres

The sector continues to work on raising the profile and lobbying, making sure politicians understand the issues and how policymaking plays out in the workplace.

Campaign to stop the P3s

A P3 hospital is short-form for public-private-partnership. It is what the McGuinty government refers to as the AFP (alternative financial procurement) model.

Experience in other countries shows that Premier McGuinty's plan to use public private partnerships or P3s for public services will be devastating.

An ever-changing number of P3 hospitals have been announced for Ontario. At last count, 23 were in various stages of planning. P3s are all about treating public services as a business where the public pays and the profiteers profit.



Lois Boggs, chair of the Community Health Sector, protests the McGuinty government's health care policies.

All of our public services and infrastructure could be negatively affected: education and schools, health care, roads, postal service – even meat inspection and food safety.

We now know that the P3 hospital announced for Brampton will cost \$300-million more than it would have if it were fully public.

OFL workshops

The OFL is holding a series of regional workshops across Ontario in April to explain the issue and what's at stake.

Workshops are being held in Windsor, Oshawa, Owen Sound, Toronto, Peterborough, London, Kitchener-Waterloo, Belleville, Brampton, Kingston, Hamilton, Cornwall, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Ottawa, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, North Bay and Timmins. Sign up for the workshop nearest to you – together we can save public services from being handed over by the province to the private sector.

Plan to join the anti - P3 rally in Toronto June 3

Health care workers from all unions will rally to protest the private for-profit (P3) hospitals June 3. Ask your executive board member about transportation to the rally.



Hamilton protests the privatization of health care.

Hamilton plebiscite held

A Hamilton plebiscite confirms the opposition of almost all Ontarians to private for-profit hospitals. More than 28,000 voted against the P3s in Hamilton - Almost 98 per cent voted against P3s. Once again, Ontarians have shown what they think of Dalton McGuinty's privatization plans.

Collective bargaining

Part time issues – Union time off

Locals are encouraged to raise part-time issues and be aware of the importance of part-time language. Consult with staff negotiators regarding OPSEU's language on part-time issues.

Union members are more and more stressed out by the dual demands of work and the union, not to mention family and personal issues.

The importance of paid union time off for locals has been raised as a key issue for local demand-setting.

April 28 – Day of Mourning

On April 28, 2006 we once again “remember the dead and fight for the living.” For 21 years now, workers and unions have used this day to honour those who have died, suffered injury or experienced illness due to work-related causes.

Photos courtesy Rick Janson, Staff; Ed Almeida, EBM

As we mourn for those who have suffered, we re-affirm our commitment to fight for safe and healthy workplaces.

In 1983, the Canadian Labour Congress declared April 28th as a National Day of Mourning. Eight years later, in 1991, the Canadian government formally recognized the day. Now over 100 countries mark April 28 as a day to mourn for those lost and to renew commitments to improve workplace health and safety.

This year OPSEU members grieve for John Stammers, who died after being struck by a car while on picket duty on March 20, 2006. John was a professor of Accounting at Centennial College in Scarborough. He died while standing up for what he and other OPSEU members believe in—the right to a fair contract.

Health Care Divisional Council

2005-07

Chair: Patty Rout
Lakeridge Health Corporation, Local 348
Hospital Professionals Division

Vice Chair: Tony Morabito,
North Bay Psychiatric Hospital, Local 636
Mental Health Division

Lois Boggs—VON Hamilton, Local 269
Sue McSheffrey—Renfrew CCAC Local 481
Community Health Care Professionals Division

Jamie Ramage
City of Hamilton, Local 256
Ambulance Division

Debbie MacDonald
Sherwood Park Manor, Brockville, Local 439
Long Term Care & Related Facilities Division

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Grey Bruce Health Centre, Local 260
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Authorized for distribution:

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