

Health Care Links

A newsletter for OPSEU
stewards working in health care

Issue 8 June 2005

OPSEU BPS Conference in September

OPSEU's BPS (Broader Public Sector) conference will be held at the Delta Meadowvale in Mississauga Sept. 16-18, 2005. The conference itself will be Sept. 16-17 with divisional meetings to be held on the 18th.

The BPS conference is a gathering of members from across the province who belong to bargaining units in OPSEU's largest sector. The BPS includes 48,000 front-line and support staff in community agencies, security staff, hospital and community health professionals and support staff, correctional officers, youth workers, and paramedics, to name a few.

The BPS Conference is an excellent opportunity to network with other members in your sector, learn new skills, and come away from the conference feeling that you have tapped into a valuable resource. You will identify goals and objectives around workplace issues. This will shape collective bargaining and campaigns specific to your sector or in concert with other sectors.

Delegate entitlement

Each BPS unit is entitled to at least one delegate. The rules for delegate entitlement can be found on the web at: <http://www.opseu.org/bps/conference/bpsconference2005.htm> (see the French site for equivalent documents in French.)

The deadline for registration was May 31, but if you are just hearing about the conference now, it's not too late. Contact your regional office or download a form from the web site and fax it to Tina Furman at 416-448-7451.

On Friday morning, Sept. 16, all delegates will gather to learn from each other's experiences in bargaining, mobilizing and enforcing our collective agreements. Friday afternoon will bring participants into various sector meetings or educational workshops.

On Friday afternoon, all the health care delegates will be meeting together to get an update on LHINs and learn how to combat bullying in the workplace.

On Saturday, each of the health care divisions will be engaged in sector-specific workshops on topics such as political action campaigns, duty to accommodate and health and safety.

The Sector Division meetings are an important part of this weekend. Sector meetings are scheduled for Sunday to do sector business and to elect new Division Executive Committees, who will work with members to implement the short and long-term goals of your Division.

Who should attend?

Based on delegate entitlement, if you are an OPSEU Local Executive Committee member, bargaining team member, steward, or have been asked to represent your bargaining unit on behalf of your elected leadership, you won't want to miss this opportunity to network, learn, share experiences and have some fun.

This newsletter from the Health Care Divisional Council (HCDC) is sent to local presidents and stewards in the health care sectors, and posted on the web at www.opseu.org. Click on "Health Care" under "I work here", and scroll down to Health Care Divisional Council. **Please post** the newsletter on your union bulletin board and share it with your colleagues. Let us know what you'd like to hear about. Send e-mails to us through the link on the HCDC web page.

New list of LHIN CEOs shows stunning lack of front-line health care experience

Recently, George Smitherman, Ontario's Health Minister, sent the names to cabinet of 14 LHIN chairs, vice-chairs and board members.

Who has the province chosen to run its Local Health Integration Networks? Are the new CEOs and board members front-line health care workers who understand the stresses on the system and on the people that deliver services? No.

Are they the workers who understand first-hand the devastating effects of contracting out in home care? Are they the people who know how staff shortages are affecting hospital wait times? Are they the people that have delivered a sick patient from one "LHIN" region to another? No.

Do we find union activists, members of community health coalitions, members of patient /consumer groups – the people who spend their time away from their jobs advocating for better health care services? No.

Actually, Smitherman has found a number of people to run the 14 LHINs who have little or no front-line health care experience or grassroots activism.

No front-line experience

In one LHIN, we have the triad of a chartered accountant and management consultant, a businessperson/ consultant, and a hydro executive (in case the lights go out?).

In another LHIN, we have a conflict resolution professional, a human resource consultant, and a retired educator.

Among the LHIN chairs, we also find a certified HR professional, a senior law partner, a former university administrator, a municipal administrator, the owner of a health care company, another municipal administrator, a professional engineer, a former hospital administrator, a social service agency CEO.

No offense, George, but aren't these the kind of people who got our health care system into the mess you admit it's currently in?

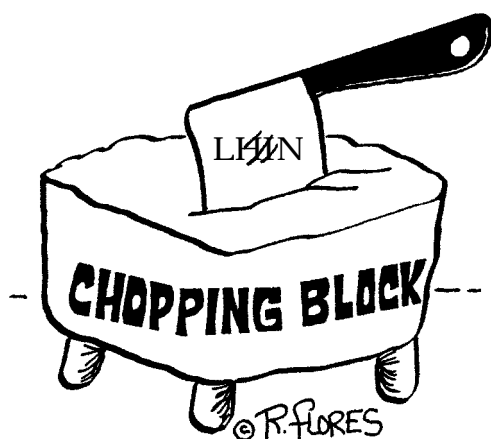
It takes a team

People with front line experience know health care is not provided just by doctors and nurses. It takes a whole team.

Health care workers know you can't be constantly contracting out service without compromising patient care.

They know human resources are the most important element in delivering good care, and that health care workers need stability, not constant change.

We wonder – do these LHIN executives, drawn from all walks of life except front-line health care, understand these key elements of delivering good care?



RPN Committee moves forward on issues

In October 2003 OPSEU held a forum for RPNs across the sectors of the union. An estimated 5,000 RPNs work in several of OPSEU's health care sectors.

A committee was established to raise issues and mobilize campaigns.

The RPN committee has produced two newsletters and a poster illustrating the work of RPNs.

Since last convention, the RPN committee has been hard at work on behalf of all OPSEU RPNs. Our role is to build communication links among RPNs in OPSEU; to raise the profile of RPNs within

workplaces and the community; and to identify common issues for bargaining.

The committee will focus on three research issues - wages, scope of practice and professional responsibility. The committee is also working on communications, including an RPN page on the Health Care Divisional Council web page, a newsletter, and a poster. See <http://www.opseu.org/bps/health/rpn/rpnindex.htm> for more information, or contact Barb Linds at OPSEU head office blinds@opseu.org

Ontario Federation of Labour Campaign: Health Care postcards available

George Smitherman's agenda has been causing a good deal of uncertainty for health care workers from all sectors.

During May the Ontario Federation of Labour, in conjunction with its health union affiliates, held a series of 15 meetings with front line health care workers across the province. OPSEU health care activists were very well represented at these meetings.

These meetings brought together health care workers from all sectors to talk about issues and concerns shared by workers in home and community care, nursing homes, homes for the aged, hospitals, public health, ambulance services and mental health.

Participants talked about layoffs, staff reductions and cuts in services in their workplaces, as well as about parts of their jobs that have been rationed, or that they can no longer provide. They shared their concerns about increased delays and wait times for services in their communities. They talked about the impact of the government's "transformation agenda" on workers, patients and clients.

Postcards

The information gathered at the meetings is being put into a report which will be the basis for further campaign activities in the fall. In addition, the OFL has launched a postcard campaign, which calls on Premier McGuinty to re-staff health care, to keep it public, and to make the Local Health Integration Networks democratic.

Copies of the postcard are being sent to each OPSEU health care local, and will also be available at regional offices. Please return signed postcards to your regional office or to Barb Linds at OPSEU (head office) by June 30.

HIV/AIDS educational workshops available to OPSEU members

OPSEU members will have access to a one-and-a-half day workshop planned to build sensitivity and knowledge around HIV/AIDS.

Lynn Muir, President of Local 501 at Casey House, has developed a course, which she describes as combination group participation and lecture, on issues such as “what the HIV virus is, how it affects the body, signs, testing, treatment, how it impacts workers, how to refer clients to resources.”

There will also be an explanation of the OPSEU Live and Let Live Fund, what the fund is and where the funding goes.

“HIV is worse than ever now, it is not just in Africa. We want to wake up the members—this is our issue. Many OPSEU members whether they work in health, social services, the justice system or other areas, come into contact with clients with HIV: a little knowledge will go a long way.”

Those interested can contact Lynn Muir at: ymuir6550@rogers.com ; 416-879-0278, or an OPSEU Executive Board Member.

HEALTH CARE DIVISIONAL COUNCIL 2003 - 2005

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

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

Secretary: Sue McSheffrey
CCAC in Renfrew County, 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

Jill McIlwraith
Grey Bruce Health Centre, Local 260
Health Care Support Division

Keep Informed!

This newsletter will be published after each Health Care Divisional Council meeting.

You can also keep informed about issues that affect your sector, as well as about other health care issues by checking the health care division pages on OPSEU’s web-site at www.opseu.org

Are there other issues you want to hear more about? Use the “contact the council” feature on the Health Care Divisional Council web page.

Click on “health care” and choose your sector or the council from the list provided.

To reach Barb Linds in OPSEU’s Campaigns Unit at Head Office, call 1-800-268-7376, ext. 203, or write to: blinds@opseu.org

Authorized for distribution:



Leah Casselman, President