



# Community Health Care Professionals

September 2003

BPS Sector 17



## Special Edition: Provincial Election

## This election: it's all about public services

*A message to all OPSEU Sector 17 members from Leah Casselman, president.*

I think we all know that the Oct. 2 Ontario election is a crucial one.

For the last eight years, OPSEU members have suffered under a government that has failed, over and over again, to recognize the value of the public services we provide. With the Tories in power at Queen's Park, we've seen mass layoffs. We've seen workloads rise. We've seen wages fall behind. And we've seen our communities suffer.

The Walkerton disaster showed what happens when public services are cut back until they collapse, but it's not the only example. Far from it! Our colleges and universities are not ready for the double cohort. Our hospitals can't keep skilled staff because of low wages and a shortage of full-time jobs. For years, critics of Tory energy policies warned that we were heading for trouble, and then, guess what? The lights went out.

We've all seen the bad effects of this government in our own workplace. Has your workplace been

mauled by privatization, downloading, layoffs? Is your employer squeezing you harder to cut costs? Is service quality sinking with the Tories in charge? For virtually every OPSEU member, the answer to these questions is YES.

This election is all about public services and the people who provide them. Think back to the struggles you've faced since 1995. Think of what you've lost. Think about what your community has lost. Many of these losses could have been avoided – if only we had a government that cared.

This election is our chance to get one. That is why we are taking action now.

The OPSEU Executive Board has already made some key decisions around election strategy.

Our top priority must be to get rid of this government. OPSEU members simply cannot afford another four years with Tories at the helm. To defeat Tories, we will put resources into ridings where OPSEU members can make a



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*Leah Casselman, from page 1*

difference. In some cases this means backing Liberals; in others it means backing New Democrats.

Your Executive Board believes that a stronger NDP is good for public services and good for public employees. Part of our targeting strategy will be aimed at getting more New Democrat MPPs in the Legislature. A strong NDP caucus can keep the Liberals accountable, especially if there is a minority Liberal government.

We need a government that will start to rebuild public services in Ontario. I urge you to work hard to defeat this government and to elect as many people as possible who share our goals.

This means volunteering to work for opposition candidates.

It means making sure every member is on the voters' list.

It means putting up candidate signs in our front windows and on our front lawns.

It means donating money.

It means voting to defeat this government and urging all our friends and neighbours to do the same.

OPSEU members know all about taking action to protect public services. In this election, let's do it one more time.

*In solidarity,*

*Leah Casselman President,  
Ontario Public Service Employees Union*

## What it's all about for you:

Our Sector Executive met this week to discuss how the election will affect our sector. We strongly suggest you use the template of issues below to challenge candidates at your door, write to the editor of your local paper, or raise at an all-candidates meeting.

### Home care is in crisis

Across Ontario, 43 Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) deliver nursing, home-making, and therapy to the dying, to children with disabilities, to post-operative patients, to frail and elderly people and others.

The Conservatives created a crisis when they ordered the CCACs to get rid of their direct care staff and focus on administration.

The CCACs were forced to tender nursing and therapy work to the lowest bidder. Private sector providers rushed in to grab profits. Nurses and therapists watched their pay drop and their benefits plummet, while their clients suffered. Many left for better jobs, making a shortage of skilled professionals more acute.

While taxpayers pay more for the services, those who need them get less. From April 2001 to April 2003, 115,000 fewer patients were helped. The service was cut by millions of hours of care and therapy, a 30 per cent drop.

We must eliminate the profits and put that money back into the care that people need.