



Take action on Community Health!

A campaign bulletin for OPSEU members working in community care

October 16, 2000

This is the first issue of a regular campaign bulletin about community care for members of the Community Health Care Professionals Division of OPSEU.

The first three issues of this bulletin will be sent by mail to all Sector 17 Local Executive members. Subsequent issues will be available either by e-mail or fax to LEC members and other members who provide us with their e-mail addresses or fax numbers.

The bulletin will also be on OPSEU's website, on the Division's page.

Why the bulletin?

Home care in Ontario is in crisis. OPSEU represents more than 1900 members in the community care sector across the province. Last year we witnessed strikes at the Renfrew County and Elgin-Middlesex County CCACs. This year, members at the Hamilton-Wentworth VON were on strike for 33 days, and members at the Hamilton-Wentworth CCAC went on strike on October 10. OPSEU has 19 more collective agreements within the sector which will expire within the next year.

This newsletter will bring sector members up-to-date information about how OPSEU

is responding to the crisis in home care and will assist in developing campaign strategies to help our members mobilize around bargaining during this critical period.

You will find out about:

- Government policy
- What's going on in our locals
- What's going on at the union and coalition level
- Ideas to help locals raise the profile of their issues in their communities

In the News:

- Eighty members of Local 269 attended the opening of the legislature on September 25. Domenic Agostino (MPP for Hamilton East) called attention to the situation in Hamilton Wentworth. He said the government's portion of the recently announced \$92.5 million falls about \$3.5 million short of what is needed to maintain existing services.
- Dave Christopherson (MPP for Hamilton West) called for an emergency debate on the strike and the crisis of the VON workers, as well as on home care in general. NDP leader Howard Hampton said he and

Christopherson were disappointed health minister Elizabeth Witmer was not willing to stand up in the legislature to acknowledge the home care system needs more money. "What's happening in Hamilton in terms of home care is happening across the province," Hampton said. "Home care is literally falling apart and, as you saw in the government's statement about its action plan, there is absolutely no plan to deal with what is a more and more critical situation."

Bargaining News:

Local 269:

After 33 days on strike, the 220 members of Local 269 ratified a two-year collective agreement on October 3. Nurses will see increases of more than 6 per cent, as well as increases in mileage rates, improvements to the dental plan, and scheduling improvements. The wage increase is the first they've had in 10 years. Lois Boggs, local president, said "while it is not parity with hospital nurses, it is a good start. Our members are so proud of themselves. They are proud that someone is noticing what is happening to health care in the community. They have stirred public awareness, and that is great."

Local 274:

Over 200 members of Local 274 went on strike on October 10. Pay rates at the CCAC are so low that the agency is continually losing staff to other CCACs in the region. In the last 18 months, 32 case managers have gone on to better jobs in Brant, Halton, Niagara and Peel. "Until our pay rates can compete with the neighbouring municipalities, the haemorrhage of quality staff will continue," said Pam Clark, local president.

"We don't want to be on strike," said Clark, "but if somebody doesn't stand up for the quality of home care in this community, it will never improve."

Messages of support and donations can be sent to: OPSEU Local 274 Strike Headquarters, 584 Upper James Street, Hamilton, Ontario L9C 2Y6, or to griddle@sympatico.ca

Raising our profile:

- A letter to the editor and an article on home care concerns for submission to your local newspapers are now available. Contact Barb Linds at OPSEU head office for copies.

Ontario Health Coalition Day of Action on Health Care:

- October 28 is a wonderful opportunity for us to call attention to home care issues in our province. To date, 14 communities have announced they will be holding an activity. Get involved in the planning committees. If you need contact numbers for your local coalition, call Barb Linds.

For further information, contact: Barb Linds at OPSEU head office, extension 203, or blinds@opseu.org

Our web page address is:

www.opseu.org Go to BPS, then scroll down to Health Care Divisional Council. Click on the Community HCP Division.

Authorized for distribution:



Leah Casselman, President