



Health Care Links

A newsletter for OPSEU
stewards working in health care

Issue #7 September 2004

Local Health Integration Networks – have you been consulted?

This summer, the Liberal cabinet quietly approved a plan to create **Local Health Integration Networks (LHIN)**.

What are Local Health Integration Networks going to look like? Nobody really knows, but we know the government is planning to create 14 regional LHINs. This could mean more uncertainty in the health care system and possibly more privatization in health care.

LHINs may replace CCACs, district health councils, public health units and Ministry regional offices. This might lead to increased competition for scarce funds, and job losses, while allowing politicians to avoid responsibility for funding decisions.

There are no details about what the LHINs will mean to our work in health care. Because of all this uncertainty, the Executive Board of OPSEU has approved a major advertising campaign to inform members and the public about the LHINs that asks people: "Have you been consulted?"

We will need all OPSEU members working in health care to spread the word in their communities. We'll also need our members to be prepared to actively lobby MPPs and municipal politicians. Check our web site at www.opseu.org for more information on how you can do this.



Television personality Mike Duffy meets with protestors at the Premier's Conference in Niagara July 28. OPSEU and Ontario Health Coalition activists rallied against the privatization of health care. More on the Niagara situation on page 3.

More demonstrations planned

The Health Care Divisional Council will meet Sept. 14-15 in Ottawa. Region 4 Board members are organizing a rally Sept. 13 at noon, at the Government Conference Centre, to coincide with the next first ministers' meeting on health care.

For details on this event, call the Ottawa Regional Office at 1-800-267-9776, or watch the OPSEU web site.

Ontario Health Coalition membership drive - Sign up now!

The OHC membership drive is underway. OPSEU Locals are encouraged to join and participate in the coalition. Membership entitles you to regular mailings from the OHC and gives you the opportunity to participate in coalition meetings that help develop our policies and strategy. The OHC does not get any corporate or government funding. It depends on support from individual members and non-profit groups for our survival. Membership fees and donations from OHC supporters are essential to ensuring we are able to work with the Coalition and continue fighting for a universal, accessible, one-tier health care system.

To download an OHC membership form, click on: http://www.web.net/ohc/mem_form.rtf

Please fill out the optional portion of the form that allows you to join the Monthly Giving Plan, which automatically deducts an amount of your choosing from your bank account. Please return

the membership form (with or without the Monthly Giving Plan option filled in) to:

Ontario Health Coalition
15 Gervais Drive, Suite 305
Toronto, Ontario M3C 1Y8
Or fax the form to: 416-441-4073

Health and Safety: Take action to reduce sharps injuries

Delegates at OPSEU's 2004 Convention unanimously passed a resolution to lobby the provincial government to make the use of safety engineered medical devices mandatory. OPSEU health and safety officer Lisa McCaskell has been working with SEIU and ONA staff, arguing for new laws requiring safer devices, at the recently created Ministry of Labour Health Care Health and Safety Action Group.

OPSEU has worked with the other unions to produce a package of materials for members about the importance of replacing unsafe sharp devices with safety-engineered devices. We have about 1,000 packages available including an effective poster promoting safe devices. Packages will soon be mailed to the local president or highest ranking officer in every OPSEU health care bargaining unit. The packages will come with a letter explaining they are to be used by OPSEU members of Joint Health and Safety Committees at committee meetings to convince employers to introduce new, safer devices. Health and safety members of JHSCs who need more packages to bring to their JHSC meeting can call the Health and Safety Unit at OPSEU to request them (1-800-268-7376 x 772).

Mental Health conference planned

Building Links for Better Mental Health, a conference co-sponsored by OPSEU and the Ontario Health Coalition is planned for Nov. 3 - 4 at Toronto Courtyard Marriott Hotel (475 Yonge Street).

Information is posted on the OPSEU website www.opseu.org and has been sent out to all bargaining units known to work in mental health. Those interested in attending should inform their local president.

Managed competition wreaks havoc in community health care

OPSEU has been pushing Health Minister George Smitherman to fully review the managed competition process in the CCACs, after contracting out fiascos across the province.

Many Victorian Order of Nurses (VON) chapters across Ontario have been forced to close because the Liberals have refused to intervene and stop the contracting out process that is allowing for-profit companies to come in and undercut the VON and other community agencies.

In Niagara, the community's 85-year relationship with the VON will come to an end because the CCAC's contract is being picked up by for-profit CarePartners, an outfit with no office or history of community service. Members of the community question the transparency and fairness of how the five-year contract for home health care in Niagara was awarded.

OPSEU asked Minister of Health and Long Term Care George Smitherman to suspend the contract. "The managed competition process is destroying home care, and putting continuity of patient care last," said OPSEU President Leah Casselman. But Smitherman claimed to be powerless to stop the process: "I have no power to intervene. It's the law."

In Ottawa, we have an ongoing case at the Ontario Labour Relations Board over the second phase of divestment for therapists who were originally CCAC employees. In the first phase, the approximately 65 therapists moved as a group to Kaymar Rehabilitation Inc. taking their collective agreement and the union with them.

This spring, the CCAC took the service contract away from Kaymar and gave it to two other companies who are refusing to recognize

OPSEU's bargaining rights. The Ministry ordered an operational review of the Ottawa CCAC but refused to extend that review to the rest of the province.



Niagara residents protest the loss of the VON contract at a huge rally in St. Catharines on July 8.

OPSEU in tough fight against P3 hospitals

OPSEU, the OHC and allied unions continue the fight against the P3 (private-public partnership) hospitals. Unfortunately, the Liberals broke their promise to stop the P3s. Studies show P3s are both costly for taxpayers and unhealthy for patients.

A court hearing is scheduled for late October, and we are arguing for full disclosure of all relevant documents.

Please click on:

<http://www.web.net/~ohc/P3s.htm> for information on the P3s.

OPSEU stops attempted raid at The Ottawa Hospital

OPSEU stopped an attempted raid on its hospital professionals bargaining unit at The Ottawa Hospital. OPSEU Local 464 represents about 2,000 diagnostic, therapeutic and rehabilitative professionals at the hospital.

In a representation vote held May 13-14, but not counted until July, OPSEU members voted to stay with OPSEU and rejected the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC).

OPSEU argued at the Ontario Labour Relations Board that the vote should never have happened.

Canadian Blood Services going into bargaining

OPSEU members in Canadian Blood Services are all heading into bargaining for new collective agreements in 2005. Both the province-wide Support Unit (Locals 160, 210, 477, 5103) and the Technologists Unit (Locals 5101 & 210) expire on Mar. 31, 2005. The Thunder Bay Plasma Collection Unit (Local 716) expires on July 31, 2005.

A CBS sub committee of the Health Care Divisional Council is being formed to help coordinate CBS units campaigns, activities and bargaining.

A bargaining survey is being sent out to CBS members. The information from this survey will be presented at a provincial CBS Bargaining Conference (pending Executive Board approval) tentatively scheduled for Nov. 27, 2004.

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.

The PIPSC application was untimely and lacked sufficient support. OPSEU is asking for a judicial review of the OLRB decision because it has ramifications for hospital bargaining units whose collective agreements are settled through interest arbitration.

"This was very much a pro-employer move by PIPSC. This vote only forced the local to divert its attention from bargaining a new contract into a representation campaign," said Tami MacDonald, Local 464 president.

HEALTH CARE DIVISIONAL COUNCIL 2003 - 2005

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