

Voice

Frontline
News & Views
from OPSEU's
Mental Health
Division

of REASON



June 2010

Layoffs, transfers and mergers...

Those are the words we are hearing from locals across the Division. London and St Thomas are losing beds and services across the Southwest. The move will result in fewer beds and supports for patients and their families who will now have to travel further.

Ontario Shores Mental Health Center has announced the closure of many programs, and the merging of others. The end result is layoffs of OPSEU members, and a decrease in services for patients.

In North Bay, NEMHC is bound and determined to move beds to Sudbury...or is that Sault Ste Marie? Either way, those beds are leaving North Bay. This move is not one ordered by the Health Services Restructuring Committee, but appears to be a "political favour." North Bay City council has passed a resolution to keep the beds in North Bay, and the local is gearing up a campaign to

keep the beds. If the bed transfer goes through, there will a loss of jobs in an already economically depressed city.

In Kingston, Providence Care has decided that outpatients don't need Recreation or Employment specialists, so they have eliminated all of the positions. They have also decided that there is no need for a volunteer coordinator on site. Originally the employer was planning on eliminating 15 positions, but through the hard work of local leaders there were only 3.5 layoffs.

In Brockville, the employer has started to implement the last of the layoffs for the closure/transfer of the acute unit. By March 2011 there will only be Forensic Inpatient beds left at the center. This is a big hit for a



community that has been devastated by the current economic recession.

Convention Update

At the Division's Convention breakfast this year we honoured Tony Morabito, our first chair and Marty McFarlane, the Division's first and only Secretary to date. Tony and Marty left the Division to take on OPSEU staff jobs. Good luck Tony and Marty. We miss you.

What are we up to?

Based on the feedback from the surveys completed at the BPS Conference, the division has identified the three top priorities of the members. The first is a Human Resources Adjustment Plan (HRAP) that focuses on wage equalization between the community-based employers and hospital-based employers. In addition, workers must be able to follow their work as services are moved as a result of mergers and integrations.

The second priority is to launch a campaign to protect mental health beds - no more closures. This has already begun.

The third priority was pensions - get a pension plan in place in all of the collective agreements affecting members in our Division.

Our Campaign

At this year's Convention, an emergency resolution ER1 was put on the floor that reads as follows:

Whereas the Ontario Provincial Budget on March 25 did not return protected money for Mental Health Services; and

Whereas Mental Health services are under attack and inadequately funded to meet the mandates as determined by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and

Whereas consumers of Mental Health Services in the Province are more disadvantaged than any other user of the health care system in Ontario;

Therefore be it resolved that OPSEU immediately fund a campaign to lobby for full and complete funding of the mental health service system.

This resolution was passed unanimously by the delegates

The division has met for one day to "frame out" the campaign, and we are preparing the proposal for the Executive Board to approve at their September meeting. More information on this will be available soon, and we will need your support to make this successful.



Thank you, everyone

It is with great sadness that I announce that I have also left the division. The layoffs at Providence Care in Kingston targeted my position, and after attempting to move to a couple of vacancies and being denied I have decided to take the layoff.

The time that I have spent on the DivEx has been the most rewarding of my union career. Lobbying the people who have the authority and power to make decisions about funding and system change, Ministers of Health, provincial committees, MPPs (and in some cases MPs) have been wonderful experiences.

With mine and Marty's departure, the DivEx has to run interim elections for a variety of positions. Please check out our web page at www.opseu.org and join DIABLOGUE at www.opseudiablogue.wordpress.com for the latest on what is happening in health care in Ontario.

Sheryl Ferguson

Authorized for distribution:

Handwritten signature of Warren (Smokey) Thomas.

Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President