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**Frontline
News & Views
from OPSEU's
Mental Health
Division**

Voice of REASON

SEPTEMBER 2005

UPCOMING DATES

Broader Public Service
Conference
Sept. 16-18
Delta Meadowvale
Mississauga

Division continues to pressure MOHLTC on divestment

What are we doing?

We continue to pressure the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care on divestment. The ministry shows little concern for patient care as it plans to transfer more beds and programs. We've told the ministry that there are serious problems with its plans. They include the shortage of acute and long term care beds and the lack of preparedness and funding on the part of community agencies who will get our out-patient services, such as ACT teams. We are trying to get a meeting with senior bureaucrats to discuss our concerns. We haven't been successful so far but we'll keep up the pressure.

Hospital CEO slams divestment

We're not the only ones raising the alarm. The president and CEO of one major hospital slams the Ministry of Health's actions in letters to the ministry and fellow hospital heads. He says this round of divestment is premature, doesn't

follow the directions of the mental health implementation task force report, and makes the grave mistake of transferring specialized outpatient services to a community agency. Doctors and psychiatrists from the hospital wrote the deputy minister to say there will be "serious negative consequences for patients and the mental health system."

Local 152 stops layoffs

Once again, Local 152 members at St. Joseph's Health Care, formerly the London and St. Thomas Psychiatric Hospitals, have forced the hospital to back down on its plans. The hospital was going to lay off several members of the nursing staff, stating that the union brought on the action by insisting that the employer abide by the collective agreement. The members took to the streets, resulting in St. Jo's rescinding the layoff notices and following the collective agreement.

A message from the Division Executive

We want to thank each and every member who attended convention and visited our table. We enjoyed talking with you, answering your questions about the Division's work and hearing your concerns about the state of mental health care in Ontario. We look forward to seeing you at the Broader Public Service (BPS) conference, Sept. 16-18, in Toronto.

Survey time for RPNs

Are you an RPN? If so, go to <http://www.opseu.org/> and complete OPSEU's RPN Utilization Survey 2005.

The information you give us will help the union bargain for pay, working conditions and recognition for RPNs. The Mental Health Division has the most RPNs in the union.

Local 500 opposes P3 at CAMH

Local 500 members at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) warn that turning the centre into a private (P3) hospital will put the mental health of the most vulnerable and marginalized patients second to the needs of private developers.

OPSEU says plans to "modernize" the centre and provide "one-stop shopping" sound like an attempt to apply a business model to mental health. CAMH should

remain a fully public facility in order to protect services to clients most in need.

"CAMH seems to be losing the focus on people who most need our help," said Bernard King, a vice-president of Local 500. "They're already slipping through the cracks. Community supports just aren't there."

Plans to redevelop CAMH as a privatized P3 hospital were announced Sept. 9.

Approved for
Distribution

Leah
Casselman,
President

Local 636 organizes against P3s

Local 636 at the North Bay Psychiatric Hospital is teaming up with the North Bay Health Coalition to hold a town hall meeting Sept. 19, publicizing the problems with P3 hospitals. Local 636 member Mickey King has been booked off to organize the meeting and mobilize support among members and the business community.

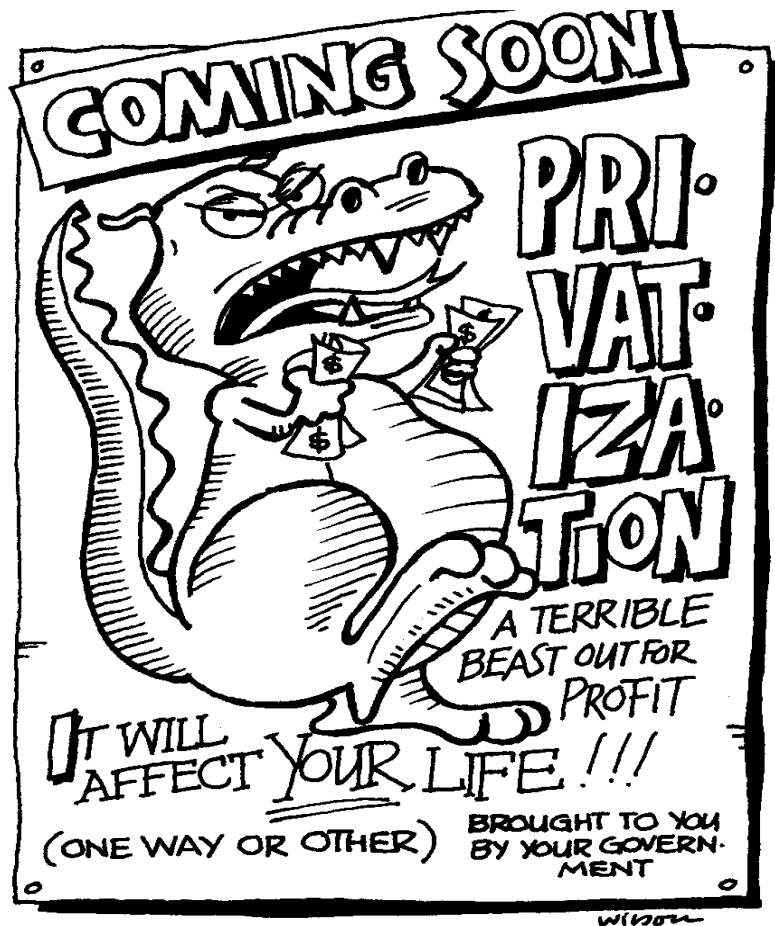
The local and Nathalie Mehra of the Ontario Health Coalition will give a joint presentation to city council that night.

The government has approved plans to replace the psychiatric hospital with a privatized P3 hospital.

Studies show that P3 private-public-partnerships are more expensive to finance and result in cuts to patient care. The experience in Britain and Australia has been big company profits and fewer beds and services.

Local 431 fights dress code

OPSEU members at Providence Continuing Care Centre, formerly the Kingston Psychiatric Hospital, are facing down management's new dress code/personal appearance policy. Local 431 will not allow the employer to dictate how their members dress at work. The local has informed management that members will abide by the terms of their collective agreement and legislated dress/appearance codes only. The employer has been trying to bring in this policy for the last year. To date, it has not been successful.



Communities talk mental health

Beds have closed. Programs have been moved around or cut beyond recognition. Our communities are feeling the affects of years of so-called reform to mental health care. We're working with the Ontario Health Coalition to set up community round tables on mental health for later this fall. The coalition will hire a co-ordinator who will need your local's help inviting speakers and encouraging people to attend. Contact Sheryl Ferguson or Doris Meredith if you'd like to help out. We also encourage you to join your local health coalition <http://www.web.net/ohc/LocalCoalitions.htm>

Divestment update

The government has not publicly announced the divestment dates for the remaining Provincial Psychiatric Hospitals: North Bay, Whitby and Penetang /Oakridge. All of the signs point to North Bay and Whitby being divested before March 31 and Penetang/Oakridge being divested next year.

Division dues reminder

Treasurer Bill Playter reminds all member locals that dues must be paid in full to exercise voting rights at our Division meeting at the BPS conference. If you have questions about your local's status, please contact Bill directly.