



Health Care Support News

A newsletter for stewards and activists in OPSEU Sector 11, Health Care Support - December 2006

Workers get update on health care plan

Locals across the province held special meetings through October and November to discuss the government's health care agenda.

Billed as the "Health Care Puzzle," the meetings have included a PowerPoint presentation on trends in the health care system. They are also an opportunity for locals to meet directly with members of the Health Care Divisional Council.

"The health care system is in such a state of flux we've been scrambling to update the presentations as we went," says Rick Janson, OPSEU Campaigns Officer.

"The McGuinty government has been very active on health care," says Janson. "OPSEU members were telling us they were feeling overwhelmed by the number of campaigns we were running. In reality, it's all part of one big picture, and we needed to find a way of articulating that."

Topics in the presentation varied from location to location, including:

- The latest developments on the Local Health Integration Networks,
- The high cost of privately- developed and run public hospitals,
- How the government has created a hierarchy of cuts in its guidelines for the hospital annual planning submissions,
- The Deloitte review of mental health transfers,
- The CCAC alignment project,
- The government's response to the Caplan Review of CCAC procurement,
- The review of public health,
- The lack of minimum staffing standards in the new long term care act.

Members also heard about OPSEU initiatives, including discussions with the ministry around the development of human resources adjustments plans for workers affected by LHIN integrations.



The Health Council tour of Ontario came to a number of communities including Cobden, Nov. 1.

OPSEU fights cuts in Alliston

OPSEU members and the community fought and won a battle to keep the birthing centre open at Stevenson Hospital in Alliston — at least for now.

The members of Local 360 worked with the community to keep the centre open at least until the new LHIN could make a decision. Residents of the area and hospital staff were told Nov. 29 that expectant mothers wishing a hospital birth would have to travel to Newmarket, more than 40 minutes away in good weather, and that this could take place as soon as Dec. 15, 2006.

In a letter to Health Minister George Smitherman, OPSEU President Leah Casselman blasted the decision to shut down the unit, contrary to the Central LHIN's Integrated Health Service Plan, which states its rural strategy is to "ensure that people who live in rural areas have equitable access to services."

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"The community was only consulted at the 11th hour and long after the hospital had submitted its plan to the ministry," said Casselman.

After April, 2007, the Local Health Integration Network would be legally required to give notice of the hospital's decision and the public offered a reasonable opportunity for input.

"We believe the hospital is violating the spirit of the LHIN Act, trying to circumvent the coming requirements by getting ahead of the April 2007 implementation date," she said.

If the facility was to lose its remaining obstetrician, it may also take away the ability of midwives in the area to perform home births, the union says.

"This plan would put women and families in Alliston at risk, and it's unacceptable," said Casselman.



OPSEU President Leah Casselman appears at an event earlier this year. Broaden Your Horizons was the theme of her speech at the Editor's Weekend.

Notes from the editor:

By Beverly J. Ross

Get active and involved

The year is quickly winding down and things are heating up in Sector 11. It is already time to start thinking of candidates for regional executive positions and convention. It is not too early to think of activists around you that you may like to see represent you in the 2007-2009 term. Look for people who are fair-minded, but tough; easy to talk to but difficult to win an argument with, and if you are lucky to have such a person in your midst, convince them they are perfect for the job. Best of luck to us all.

OPSEU educationals get better and better

In November 2006, I was fortunate to have been invited to the 13th annual Editors Weekend at the Delta Chelsea Inn in Toronto. Nothing could have prepared me for the intensity of this weekend. I was joined by folks from all corners of Ontario who aid in keeping us all informed.

Keynote speaker Barbara Turnbull of the Toronto Star, spoke of her lengthy history of triumph over adversity, both personally and professionally. She learned the strength of power of mind at an early age when a criminal's bullet left her paralyzed from a spinal cord injury. She spoke of inclusion and the importance of accessibility, but her underlying message was of fighting the good fight. Perhaps her most poignant lesson was to show that true ability lives in the spirit, and if the

will is strong, great accomplishment may follow.

The next day we had a briefing by President Leah Casselman. Sister Casselman spoke of common themes in our workplaces throughout the province:

- that public services continue to be dangerously underfunded.
- despite the obvious wealth of Ontario, it ranks last in funding per college student.
- conservation officers are rationing gas for patrol vehicles.
- this summer, contracts of seasonal staff and regular students at provincial parks were cut by 19 per cent
- wages of developmental services' members are excessively low.
- health care services, including mental health care, are rapidly declining due to underfunding.

We all know how these kinds of cuts affect our communities:

- the ongoing move to a part-time workplace.
- the increase of workload due to greater demands of less workers.

Sister Casselman says "Ontario can do better" and indeed we can. With a membership of 115,000, OPSEU solidarity can speak volumes. We shall demand, through political action, stronger public services and a better quality of life for all.

Stopping violence and abuse in the workplace

The employer shall take all necessary measures to protect employees from violence/abuse at work.

It is understood that violence/abuse include any physical assault or aggression, verbal threats, and any unwelcome comment, conduct, gesture or contact which cause humiliation, physical harm or fear, or which compromises an individual's dignity or self-worth.

The employer shall develop written policies and procedures, in consultation with the union, to deal with violence/abuse at work. Such policies and procedures shall address, but not be limited to, the following:

- Prevention of violence at work
- Management of potentially violent clients or situations;
- Initial and ongoing assessment of client's propensity for violence;
- Regular evaluation of changes in the workplace that may contribute to violence;
- A procedure for detailed reporting of all violent or aggressive incidents involving staff;
- Providing the union with written reports of all incidents;
- Legal counsel and post-traumatic support to victims of violence;
- Procedure for calling police when a worker is assaulted.

Employer must investigate; union may participate

The employer shall investigate all violent incidents, and agrees that the union has a right to participate in the investigation.

The employer shall conduct an ongoing security and safety assessment, and develop a security plan that shall include measures and procedures to protect staff, clients and the general public from aggressive or violent actions.

The security and safety assessment shall examine trends in aggressive behaviour from incident reports and client assessments.

The security plan shall include measures and procedures that include, but are not limited to, safety considerations related to all of the following:

- physical design and layout of the workplace;
- the organization of work;
- security personnel;
- staffing levels and staff deployment;

- training in appropriate response to violent behaviour.

The employer agrees to provide an adequate level of trained staff.

No employee will be required to work alone with a potentially violent client.

The employer agrees to notify employees of potentially violent or aggressive clients, and to provide another staff member to work with an employee who is required to work in such circumstances.

Where appropriate, the employer shall institute security measures including, but not limited to:

- Surveillance means;
- Restricted access by the public;
- Protective barriers;
- Safe room;
- Panic buttons to alert security personnel.

The employer shall provide two-way radios, Cell phones (where appropriate), alarms and/or paging systems or other means of summoning immediate aid where employees establish a need. All equipment shall be tested, and all employees shall be trained in the operation of such equipment.

Training provided

The employer shall provide training to all staff including, but not limited to:

- Defusing violent situations and verbal confrontation;
- Recognizing warning signs and triggers of violence;
- How to resist attack and avoid escalation;
- Obtaining and reviewing client's history for violence;
- Critical incident stress briefing;
- Strategies for avoiding physical harm including self defense training;
- Detailed review of all employer safety policies and procedures.

The employer shall provide counselling and support to all affected employees. The employer agrees to compensate affected employees for lost work days (suffer no loss of pay and or benefits or

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Stopping violence (from page 3)

credits), counselling sessions, travel and other related expenses.

The employer shall assist an assaulted employee in all legal actions against the offender. Should the employer not press charges, the employer shall provide a written explanation to the union and the employee of its decision.

The employer agrees that the union has a right to bring into the workplace any union representative to assist in investigating health and safety conditions. It is understood that all Centre policies with regards to employer and the union.

Health Care information? Contact OPSEU

If you have questions or concerns about LHINs or P3s, or know of a development in your area, you can contact your sector executive, or Rick Janson, campaigns officer at head office, rjanson@opseu.org

See OPSEU's bi-weekly publication, Dialogue, at www.opseu.org, for timely news on health care issues. Contact Rick for more information.

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