



Local Action

Information for OPSEU members at regional centres in the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services

Closures would demolish services, decimate communities

Closing Ontario's regional centres would have a terrible impact on services for the developmentally disabled in the province, OPSEU president Leah Casselman says.

"Our regional centres play a vital role in helping people with developmental disabilities live the best lives possible," she said. "This government was not elected to demolish public services. We need to stop these closures before the Liberal government firms up its plans."

Casselman also predicted an "economic earthquake" in Chatham-Kent, Orillia, and Smiths Falls if the closures go ahead.

"The loss of nearly 2,000 good union jobs in three communities will bankrupt local businesses, drive down property values, and drive up property taxes," she said.

Caving in to pressure

The Liberal government's interest in closing regional centres is all about caving in to pressure from lobby groups like

Community Living Ontario, Casselman said. In June, Community and Social Services Minister Sandra Pupatello praised the employer association, saying that the Liberal government shared the same values as Community Living Ontario.

Casselman said the Liberals are also feeling pressure from the provincial deficit, and are looking for places to cut jobs and services. But closing regional centres amounts to

blaming public employees and their clients for the financial sins of the Harris-Eves government.

"In the past decade, public employees have made sacrifice after sacrifice in terms of lost jobs and lost wages," she said. "At the same time, private sector wages and corporate profits continued to climb.

"We are not to blame for the provincial deficit, and we're sure as hell not going to act like we are."

"Centres of Excellence" offer a vision for the future

The OPSEU Ministry Enforcement and Renewal Committee (MERC) for Community and Social Services believes that, rather than closing the regional centres, the Liberal government should recognize their current contribution and develop them further as "Centres of Excellence."

"We strongly believe that, in addition to providing residential

care, regional centres could be doing much, much more to provide community access to our programs and staff," says MERC member David Chew, an OPSEU executive board member who works at Huronia Regional Centre.

In the MERC's vision, Centres for Excellence would work in partnership with

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Centres for Excellence

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families, communities agencies, and other public services to:

- do behavioural and other assessments (e.g., hearing and speech) in the community on an outreach basis;
- provide access to specialized medical services, pharmacies, infirmaries, podiatry, x-ray and psychiatric services, etc.;
- offer program planning services;
- train community staff in medication administration, First Aid, and other essential skills;
- provide apprenticeships and other training opportunities to college students;
- serve as bases and/or training centres for crisis intervention teams;
- offer respite care for family and community caregivers;
- house and treat individuals who need time to stabilize before returning to their families or community placements;
- work with correctional facilities to treat the hundreds of inmates with developmental disabilities;
- provide palliative care, geriatric care, and care for those suffering from dementia (e.g., Alzheimer's disease);
- and more.

“The need for a strong, integrated system for developmental services has never been greater,” says David Chew. “The existing regional centres can play a coordinating role to give transfer payment agencies and families resource

centres that can help them improve the services they provide and the quality of life of all our clients. By adding a northern hub – say, an expanded Northern Resource Centre in Timmins – we could help every community in Ontario.”

Be part of the Campaign for Excellence

Our regional centres can do even more for people with developmental disabilities. That's why we've got to campaign now to keep them open.

Campaigning means communicating. In the days and weeks ahead, OPSEU locals will be leading the charge to get the word out to the families and communities who depend on the services we provide. This means reaching out to:

- co-workers (including staff outside the OPSEU bargaining unit);
- friends, family, and neighbours;
- family members of clients;
- businesses in your community;
- elected municipal councillors and councils;
- other agencies and services in your community
- your local labour council
- other OPSEU members

- working in the public service and in community settings;
- elected MPPs;
- Ontario Cabinet Ministers and the Premier;
- local and provincial news media;
- Ontario opposition parties; and
- anyone else who's interested!

Contact your local president or local executive committee to get involved now – before it's too late:

At **Southwestern** Regional Centre, contact **Rose Clark** at (519) 676-5431 ext. 2368 (w) or (519) 351-6713.

At **Huron** Regional Centre, contact **Liz Daubney** at (705) 326-7361 ext. 2402 (w) or (705) 327-5896.

At **Rideau** Regional Centre, contact **Dave Lundy** at (613) 284-0123 ext. 2600 (w) or (613) 269-2584.

Authorized for distribution by Leah Casselman, president.
