



Local Action

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

Closure questions: still no answers

Six weeks after Community and Social Services Minister Sandra Pupatello announced that Ontario's three remaining regional centres will close by March 2009, OPS managers still can't answer the most basic questions about how the plan will unfold.

In local-level meetings at Southwestern, Huronia, and Rideau Regional Centres, employer representatives have all said the same thing: "The plan is not written yet." An Oct. 5 meeting at the ministry level was equally uninformative.

The union has posed a long list of questions, such as:

- When will each facility close?
- How will the closures be "phased in"?
- Are there plans in the works to find temporary assignments so staff can build their skills before the closures happen?
- What will happen to unclassified employees, and when?

On Oct. 13, OPSEU's

Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee (CERC) discussed regional centre issues with the employer. The CERC called on the employer to agree to a joint committee as outlined in the OPSEU collective agreement for the OPS. Employer representatives agreed to consider the matter and report back.

Support grows for keeping regional centres open

OPSEU locals have been busy since the closure announcement. Members have leafleted their communities and spoken directly to the news media; support for keeping the centres open is coming from all directions. Parents of clients are frightened over losing professional care for their loved ones. Municipal councils are worried about job loss and economic impacts on their communities. Editorial pages have been filled with letters

Demos set for Nov. 5

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from families and staff.

Even Tory MPPs are getting in on the act. In Lanark-Carleton, MPP Norm Sterling called the closure of Rideau Regional "cruel and harsh."

The influential Ottawa *Citizen* newspaper has also questioned the wisdom of the Liberal plan.

"This battle is far from over," said OPSEU president Leah Casselman. "ComSoc Minister Sandra Pupatello is on record saying that she wants to develop three to five 'centres of specialized care' for people with developmental disabilities, to link university research to front-line workers. The obvious and best solution is to further develop programming at our existing centres. Regional Centres can evolve. They must not disappear."

Protest targets Pupatello, McGuinty

Ontario's regional centres still have a vital role to play in caring for people with developmental disabilities, now and into the future. Supporters of the service we provide are taking a simple message right to the doorsteps of Premier Dalton McGuinty and Community and Social Services Minister Sandra Pupatello. The message is:

STOP THE CLOSURES!

Demonstrations are set for:

Friday, Nov. 5, 2004
10:00 a.m.
Dalton McGuinty's
Constituency Office,
1795 Kilborn Avenue,
OTTAWA*

*With OPSEU president
Leah Casselman

Friday, Nov. 5, 2004
10:00 a.m.
Sandra Pupatello's
Constituency Office,
1483 Ouellette Avenue,
WINDSOR

Tune in to your OPSEU local

To get involved locally in any aspect of the campaign to save our regional centres, contact your OPSEU local president, listed here.

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