



Front row: Diana Piccinin, Doris Meredith, Kelly Borchardt, Thelma Ward, Sean Patterson, Terri Aversa, Sheryl Ferguson; back row: Angela Champagne, Melissa Ree, Colleen Arvelin, Mark Polson, Bo Prus, and Diane Muller attend a Health Care Divisional Council workplace violence workshop at the Victoria Inn, Thunder Bay.

OPSEU lobbying influences Occupational Health and Safety Act amendments

by Greg Hamara

This year's Health Care Divisional Council (HCDC) workshops coincided with an announcement in April by the Minister of Labour that the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) will be amended to include provisions for workplace violence.

Several of the changes to the OHSA mirrored the recommendations put forward by OPSEU in a paper submitted to the provincial government in October 2008 as part of the public consultation process.

"After years of lobbying and all-out campaigning by OPSEU and other unions, the changes announced by the Minister of Labour are like a gust of fresh wind blowing through the workplaces of Ontario," said OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas.

Following the success of last year's workshops on workplace violence for the Community Services Divisional Council, OPSEU organized a similar round for members of the Health Care Divisional Council in 2008-09.

And the outcome was very much the same: members came away with a better understanding of what constitutes workplace violence and the steps they can take to prevent it.

Seven HCDC workshops were organized on a regional basis and attracted more than 200 participants from our health care sector, including paramedics, long term care providers and workers in psychiatric facilities. The tales they shared proved, again, that violence is a real and dangerous threat in too many workplaces in Ontario.

Many of those real-life stories of workplace violence were recorded and will soon be published in a booklet for distribution to thousands of members in this sector. 