

ON HEALTH CARE

December 2005

NEW LIBERAL HEALTH CARE SCHEME WILL BRING MORE PRIVATIZATION AND FORCE PATIENTS TO TRAVEL, HEALTH WORKERS SAY

On November 24, 2005 the McGuinty Government introduced *Bill 36 (Local Health Integration Act, 2005)* for first reading. This proposed legislation is deeply flawed reflecting more the Liberal infatuation with the “reforms” to health care under way in Britain than a desire for positive change in Ontario’s health care system.

Four OFL affiliates (CUPE, ONA, OPSEU and SEIU Local 1.on), held a joint press conference on December 13, at Queen’s Park, to call for public hearings on Bill 36 and warn that LHINs will undermine patient access to local care.

The December 13 press release by the health care unions says, “The new scheme will seriously disrupt the health care system through its creation of 14 unaccountable LHINs, the unions say. These unelected bodies will have the power to put more health services on the auction block and open the door to profit-seeking companies wishing to cash in on the new system. Ontarians may also be forced to travel much further to access certain procedures.

The Ontario Nurses’ Association (ONA), the Service Employees International Union Local 1.on (SEIU Local 1.on), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) say health care workers know how to improve health care - without the chaos that the LHINs plan will provoke.

“Health care workers saw what happened in home care with the CCACs: massive job loss and disruption for patients, whole communities up in arms, but no way to stop the process. This time, our members want to stop the train before it leaves the station, not while it is running them down,” said OPSEU President Leah Casselman.

Ontario’s health care system has undergone drastic changes in the last decade. The result has been diminished patient care and demoralized health care workers. Constant change and poor working conditions deter young people from entering the health professions.

“The changes the McGuinty Liberal’s are planning will result in the slow destruction of our local hospitals. And the lowest-bidder approach for health services that the Liberals are unleashing under the LHINs threatens both access and the quality of services. CUPE believes that the McGuinty government is forcing a confrontation with our members, who are determined to protect Ontario’s publicly delivered healthcare services,” said Michael Hurley, President of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (CUPE-OCHU).

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The four-union campaign includes mobilizing health workers and communities to stop the LHINs legislation before the Liberals push into law early in March 2006.

“The McGuinty government is afraid of public scrutiny of this legislation,” said Sharleen Stewart, President of SEIU Local 1.on. “This is just the next step on the road to more health care privatization. First it was the continuation of the managed competition model for home care. Then the announcements of private construction and financing of hospitals came. Now under this legislation a LHIN can force a hospital to transfer services to a for-profit entity. We no longer trust the McGuinty government to protect our public health care system.””

Ontario Nurses’ Association (ONA)
Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
represent almost 200,000 health care workers

NEW ON THE OFL WEBSITE

Delegates to the Ontario Federation of Labour Biennial Convention in November passed a Rebuilding Health Care Policy paper and an Action Plan on fighting Public/Private/Partnerships (P3s). Copies of these papers can be viewed and printed on the OFL’s website www.ofl.ca click on Library

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