



ON HEALTH CARE

Focus On Health Care is a new monthly publication from the Ontario Federation of Labour to keep the Ontario labour movement aware of developments and provide an opportunity for involvement and support for health sector workers.

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COMPETITIVE BIDDING RESPONSIBLE FOR CHAOS IN HOME CARE

Health Minister has announced Review

The process of “competitive bidding” in home care is driving workers out of the sector, causing harm to patients, and is rapidly privatizing one of the fastest growing health care sectors in Ontario.

What Is It?

Introduced in 1996 by the Harris Government, home care agencies are required to bid every two to three years to provide service in each of the regions served by Ontario’s 42 Community Care Access Centres (CCACs). This includes non-medical support services, social work, and direct health care provided by visiting nurses and therapists.

The Drive To The Bottom

Home care agencies are driving down wages and benefits in order to low-bid these contracts tendered by the CCACs. The inevitable and constant turnover of employers also means workers are regularly forced to reapply for their jobs, losing their seniority and their union in the process. The result has been an exodus of workers from the home care sector at a time when they are needed more than ever as hospitals discharge patients “quicker and sicker.” Due to these staff shortages, patients are ending up back in the long-term care homes and hospitals, or are being forced to seek private care at their own expense.

Privatization by Stealth

With large for-profit companies bidding against local non-profit agencies, for-profit involvement in home care has dramatically escalated. In 1996 for-profit agencies represented 18 per cent of the home care sector. By 2001, that had increased to 48 per cent. Many non-profit agencies have declared bankruptcy in the wake of these decisions.

The Health Minister has announced a review into the “Competitive Bidding” process – also known as “Managed Competition” – although no details are yet available.

Information provided by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union

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