

# Emergency Bulletin

Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE

March 16, 2004

## We Did It!

### **Liberals' Hospital Plans Still Threaten**

The Health Minister and Premier took aim at hospital services last week. Mr. Smitherman proposed new province-wide hospital payroll and purchasing systems. Mr. McGuinty said 'the days of throwing money at hospitals and seeing if it will stick, are over'.

Bill 8 is intended to push regional housekeeping, dietary, maintenance, clerical, information technology, laundry, lab and other services for hospitals, nursing homes & community care agencies. Bill 8 gives the Minister the power to cut hospital and other agency budgets to encourage this. And the Minister can reduce CEO compensation to force compliance.

William Osler Health Centre wants privatization of services to extend to Milton, Oakville, Trillium, Credit Valley as well as Georgetown, Brampton and Etobicoke. Ten GTA hospitals have formed an alliance to share services. Support services are already skeleton-thin and this plan will mean fewer staff and pressure to reduce wages and benefits to create profit for the new owners of the services. Our struggle is just starting.

### **Bill 8 Can't Open Our Contracts**

Thousands of phone calls, e-mails and faxes from CUPE members to their Members of Provincial Parliament and strong strike mandates across Ontario pushed the provincial government to amend Bill 8.

In Peterborough, a public meeting organized on one week's notice drew out 200 community members to talk about Bill 8.

Meetings with all Ontario MPPs and pickets at their constituency offices took place March 5. One local brought 36 members with them to meet their MPP. Many members called the Minister of Health's office to raise their concerns directly. The Minister's staff were moved by the eloquence of these callers. All of your efforts have resulted in substantial changes to Bill 8, which mean the legislation cannot be used to open or over-ride your collective agreements. In our discussions with the Minister of Health around these areas of Bill 8, he committed that he would make changes to clearly exempt unions and collective agreements from the bill and he has done that.

Bill 8 has been amended so that trade unions are named as exempted from accountability agreements, performance agreements or compliance orders. It has been clarified that the only person whose wages and benefits may be reduced by the bill are the Chief Executive Officers (CEO) of health care institutions.

It has been clarified that the only employment contract that the bill can over-ride is the individual employment contract of the CEO of a health care institution.

The government has given up its powers to write regulations and adopt them at the cabinet level in the areas of the bill which concerned us.

The government has given up its power to order anyone to do anything.

These are tremendous concessions that you have won from the province.

There remain serious problems with Bill 8 and we fear the government will use its new powers in next year's hospital and long-term care budgets to coerce CEO's to regionalize and privatize services. So we need your help in pickets at all facilities on March 19. And together we need to develop an action plan to harness the incredible power of our members to push the government off this agenda.

In solidarity, The Executive Committee, Ontario Council of Hospital Unions

**March 19:** lunchtime demos at all hospitals & long-term care facilities against regionalization & privatization of support services.

**March 31:** Emergency all-presidents meeting to discuss next phase of our campaign to protect support services, Toronto, location to follow.

**April 3:** Ontario-wide demonstration against private-public partnership hospitals, in Toronto. Sponsored by the Ontario Health Coalition.



*Brockville's Council of Canadians Chapter presented to the Legislative Committee hearings into Bill 8 in Ottawa and strongly opposed using the Bill to open or over-ride workers collective agreements.*