

MARCH 2019

PULSE

Unifor Health Care



JERRY DIAS NATIONAL PRESIDENT • ROBERT J. ORR NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER • RENAUD GAGNÉ QUEBEC DIRECTOR

Bill 74, The People's Health Care Act



Unifor has expressed deep concern for the proposed amalgamation of healthcare oversight and delivery into an unaccountable partisan agency.

"We are partnering with the Ontario Health Coalition, other Unions and allies in a massive fight back opposing this legislation" said Andy Savelle, Unifor Director of Health Care. "We are going to hold town hall meetings across the whole province ensuring Ontarians know what's at stake here". Following the town hall meetings there is a mass Rally planned for April 30th at Queens Park.

If adopted, the bill will shift decisions about more than \$60 billion of Ontario's public spending and healthcare delivery to a small board of unelected, partisan appointees.

The new agency would have reckless far-reaching powers including funding, coordinating and managing Ontario's entire healthcare system. This includes the power to order closures, transfers, mergers of all health care providers and of healthcare employees and their work.

In a government briefing February 26, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care employees announced that the process for creating Health Teams is already scheduled to begin March 2019 despite the bill not yet being law in Ontario.

"Healthcare is a big slice of public spending that Ford's friends in business want to take a bite of. But privatization doesn't work for healthcare. Our public dollars shouldn't be going to private profits," said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President. "The fight against private interests in our public services will be long and hard, but Unifor will defend these services for all Ontarians." The union is opposed to any move towards privatizing public delivery of healthcare, including previously leaked plans of widespread outsourcing of vital services including inspections, laboratories, licensing, devices and Ornge.

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LTC Bargaining Meeting

More than 120 Ontario Long Term Care workers were in Toronto February 4-6 attending Unifor's Bargaining conference. In addition to discussing bargaining priorities, the bargaining meeting provided delegates with an opportunity to strategize against the possible impacts of Doug Ford's health care privatization agenda, continue advocating for a staff ratio minimum and hours of care and discuss workplace and sector issues affecting health care workers.

Conference delegates had the opportunity to root these issues in their own experience during workshops on maintaining pay equity in nursing homes; PSW sub-classifications, Plan A, staffing levels, and online staffing survey; using social media as health care activists; and developing a long-term care campaign.



"We have a world-class health care system. The problem is it is not adequately funded to succeed," said guest speaker Natalie Mehra, Executive Director of Ontario Health Coalition. Mehra spoke extensively about Doug Ford's privatization threat to health care, the ongoing crisis in long-term care and the coalition's plans to take action and lobby Members of Provincial Parliament.

"As we enter this round of bargaining not only must we prepare against the employer but also against the PC's inaction of implementing a minimum standard of care in Ontario," said Katha Fortier, Assistant to the National President. "Workers in nursing homes and long-term care facilities across the province are overworked and fed up with the employers' inability to attract and sustain personal support workers."

Expert Panel on Long-Term Care recommendations highlight need for increased funding

Recommendations from the Nova Scotia Expert Panel on Long-Term Care highlight the need for a serious investment in the province's long-term care system, including a call to increase staffing and deal with troubling recruitment and retention issues. Unifor, which represents over 2,000 workers in long-term care facilities across Nova Scotia, said while the panel did not address funding specifically, it is clear that many of its recommendations cannot be achieved without an increase in provincial long-term care budgets.

"Long-term care in the province is in crisis, and there is no doubt the recommendations in this report will help, but not if the government doesn't step forward and put the necessary funding in place to ensure there is adequate staffing and high-quality care for residents,"

said Lana Payne, Unifor Atlantic Regional Director. "In our nursing homes, we know that the conditions of work for our members are the conditions of care for vulnerable seniors." The five recommendations from the Panel show an understanding of the complexity of providing care and the problems in recruiting and retaining staff in a sector that has faced consecutive years of budget freezes and budget cuts.

"Worker retention and recruitment are serious problems and stagnating wages is a key factor we identified driving workers away from long-term care homes," said Linda MacNeil, Unifor Atlantic Area Director. "We know that without a commitment from the government to substantially increase funding, we will continue to see problems with staffing levels and inadequate care."

Round Table Discussions regarding the critical shortage of Personal Support Workers (PSW's)



Unifor and the Ontario Health Coalition are partnering in hosting a series of Round Table discussions to address the critical shortage of PSW's in Ontario, bringing together all stakeholders from the Long Term Care sector. "Frontline workers have been working understaffed but in the past year things have only gotten worse", stated Nancy McMurphy, President of Unifor Local 302. At the London roundtable participants heard that Long Term Care homes across the province have found that there is a critical shortage of individuals applying for PSW positions. Community colleges and training schools have had to cancel the PSW program due to lack of applicants. There are workplaces with 10-15 vacant positions which make it almost impossible for staff to take their earned vacation or even a statutory holiday. Employers have reported it is a struggle to hire workers and once they experience firsthand what the job entails, the working conditions and high needs of the residents, many don't even complete their orientation.

The face of LTC has changed dramatically over the past decade. It's been widely recognized that the workload is incredibly heavy and there are constant staffing shortages. Unions are calling for a staff to resident ratio be put in place. At the round table meetings it was also discussed that PSW's are dealing with residents with a much higher acuity level as well as those suffering from serious mental health issues. As a result of shortcomings in mental health and assisted living, residents in Long Term Care range in age from 20 to 100, resulting in a dramatic rise in violence. "PSW's are feeling overworked and under appreciated" stated Jim Kennedy, President of the Unifor Health Care

Council, "and the modest wages paid certainly contribute to how they are feeling."

Unifor and the OHC are working to fix the problems are in the sector and felt it was imperative to bring stakeholders together for discussion. There have been two meetings to date, in Thunder Bay and in London, Ontario with several others planned across the province. Attending were front-line workers, Owners and Operators of LTC homes, HR Representatives, Members from the LTC Family Council, MPP's, Educators from Community Colleges and seniors' advocates. Attendees were tasked with identifying common concerns and more importantly some solutions.

After the community meetings are concluded the Ontario Health Coalition has committed to compiling the data into a report with a comprehensive list of recommendations to lobby our Provincial government for change. It's time to put the "Care" back into Long Term Care!!

SAVE THE DATE

OHC "Major" Rally
April 30, 2019

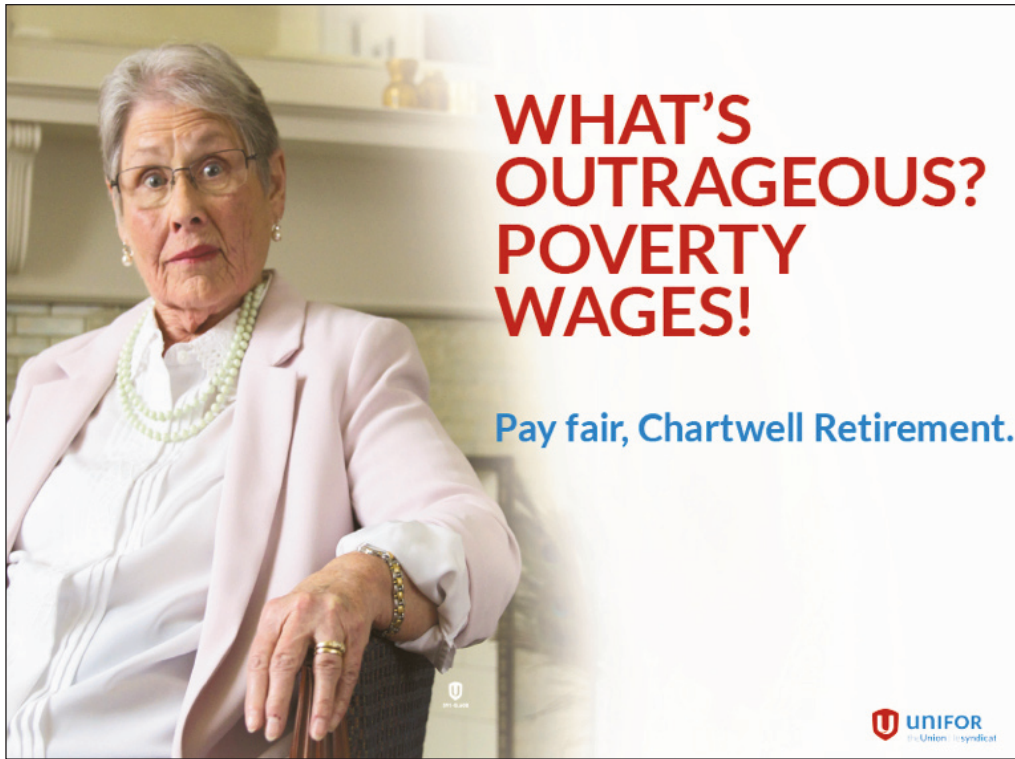
WARNING

Doug Ford's new health care legislation will privatize & impose mega-mergers on health care
The new legislation Doug Ford worked to keep secret from the public will:
Sell vital health care services to private for profit corporations
Impose costly mega-mergers that put our local services and hospitals at risk
Privatize our health care system
IF WE DON'T STOP IT

RALLY
Queen's Park
April 30 12 pm

TAKE ACTION Improve Public Health Care
TELL DOUG FORD: No to Cuts & Privatization

Ontario Health Coalition
Protecting public. Free stories for all.



#PayFairChartwell

Unifor has launched a campaign to inform residents, families and community members about the shamefully low wages being paid by Chartwell Retirement Homes in seven locations across the province.

The campaign asks members of the community to sign a petition demanding Chartwell pay workers a fair wage.

“Caregivers are vital in providing a safe and enjoyable living environment for seniors in retirement homes,” said Katha Fortier, Assistant to Unifor National President. “Chartwell’s track record of paying workers poverty wages makes it difficult for workers and residents to receive the high-quality care they deserve and pay for.”

Chartwell Retirement Homes pay many of their staff minimum wage. In fact, most of their employees do not receive a living wage. To make matters worse, Chartwell has proposed all minimum wage employees have their wages frozen until 2020. These workers provide care and compassion to residents, work that is so important that the Ontario Labour Relations Board has consistently denied them the right to strike, putting them under the same legislation as other essential service providers, such as hospital workers. “Chartwell needs to get its priorities in order,” continued

Fortier. “Its Chair of the Board, former Premier of Ontario Mike Harris takes home a hefty \$237,000 while front line workers, make abysmal, poverty wages.”

The union, representing Chartwell workers has organized a province-wide mobilization campaign under the banner of Pay Fair Chartwell.

The campaign also features billboard advertisements in all Chartwell Retirement Home communities, a petition calling on Chartwell CEO Brent Binions and Chair of the Board Mike Harris to pay workers a decent, living wage and the “Ask Hilda” video series, providing the union its own take on Chartwell’s “Ask Edna” videos. We went with Hilda because one of the points is that these members cannot strike as they are deemed to fall under HLDAA, like hospitals. We are using the hashtag #PayFairChartwell for all social media.

“Families and community members have been shocked to learn about the outrageously low wages of Chartwell workers,” said Andy Savela, Unifor Health Care Director. “Chartwell has gotten away for far too long with not treating its workers with respect, and we are going to change that.”

Please add your voice. Go to www.unifor.org/payfairchartwell and click on **Sign the petition**

Successful lobby for pharmacare

On January 29, 2019, armed with red folders, 109 advocates from across Canada braved snow and cold and met with 110 Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Green and Bloc Québécois Members of Parliament (MPs) on Parliament Hill. The lobby, organized by the Canadian Health Coalition, joined voices in advocating for the federal government to take action to implement a pharmacare program that is universal, public, portable, comprehensive and accessible.

“We are the only country in the world with a universal health care that doesn’t include prescription medication,” says Melanie Benard, National Director of Policy and Advocacy at the Canadian Health Coalition. “Millions of Canadians are left out of our patchwork of drug coverage. Many Canadians have no drug coverage at all. One of four households can’t afford their prescription medications. Canadians shouldn’t have to choose between buying medication and putting food on the table.”

MPs were receptive and eager to hear what the advocates had to say and many were willing to commit to taking concrete action and signed the pharmacare pledge.



40th Anniversary Fundraising Gala and Dinner

The Canadian Health Coalition is celebrating its 40th anniversary Tuesday, April 2, 2019, 6:00 – 10:30 pm at the National Arts Centre, O'Born Room, 1 Elgin Street, Ottawa. Purchase your tickets by Mar 19, 2019.

For further information contact the event coordinator, Amélie Baillargeon,

Amelie@healthcoalition.ca,

(613) 688-4973 or www.healthcoalition.ca.

Tickets are \$195 pp

Federal government must implement national pharmacare

Following the release of an interim report, Unifor affirms that a new federal drug agency and limited list of prescription medications alone will not ensure universal access to pharmacare.

“Canadians need transformative change to address critical issues of an aging population, and guarantee access, value, safety and above all the public ownership of health services,” said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President. “The majority of these evolving issues can be addressed through a universal pharmacare plan.”



It's time for universal pharmacare

ACT NOW!

 **UNIFOR**
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unifor.org/pharmacare

The Advisory Council on the Implementation of National Pharmacare, led by Dr. Eric Hoskin announced plans to create a new drug agency and a master list of prescription medications that would be available to all, regardless of ability to pay, in the federal advisory council interim report. The interim report recommends Canada create a national drug agency, develop a comprehensive, evidence-based national formulary and invest in drug data and information technology systems as essential building blocks for any national pharmacare program.

“Canadians have made it clear a successful and effective national pharmacare program must be a single-payer system. We believe that healthcare is a right,” continued Dias. “The latest polls show 91 per cent of Canadians want a national drug plan and though the interim report recognizes some of these principles, it falls short of ensuring that all people have access to public pharmacare without cost.”

Unifor has been on the front lines urging the federal, provincial and territorial governments to take immediate action in instituting a national, universally-accessible pharmacare program. The union raised the issues of

affordability and accessibility of prescription drugs to Federal Members of Parliament and senators last May during Unifor’s lobby week and most recently, Unifor members joined the Canadian Health Coalition to meet with Members of Parliament to discuss what a national pharmacare program would look like. The union has worked with both employers and municipalities to sign a joint letter in support of a Canadian universal pharmacare program.

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