

## ON HEALTH CARE

October 2006

### HEALTH CARE AND THE MUNICIPAL ELECTION

On Monday, November 13, 2006, Ontarians will have the opportunity to vote in local municipal elections across our province. Elections are important because they provide an opportunity for us to support candidates who share our vision of the kind of community we want to build and sustain in our province.

An important component of our vision is a universally accessible health care system for all Ontarians. A system based on publicly-financed, owned and operated facilities. Where needed, services are provided by dedicated and professional staff who are union members.

Since their election in October 2003, the Liberal government of Dalton McGuinty has shown that they have another vision for health care in our province. They have continued and expanded the public-private-partnerships (P3s) that first began under the Tories. They continue to encourage privatization of services from our public health care sector, especially from hospitals. They have imposed the Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) on the people of Ontario. They continue to be supportive of the “competitive bidding” model in home care. The list goes on and on but the common theme is that the Liberal agenda is to attempt to impose privatization in health care on the people of Ontario.

The labour movement and like-minded community organizations have resisted the Liberal agenda and they will continue to do so. The municipal elections on November 13 provide another opportunity to send a strong message to the McGuinty government.

Health care is not just a responsibility of the provincial government. The local municipal governments are involved, as well. They provide local ambulance services and public health. They operate long-term care facilities and contribute to the financing of local hospitals.

In August 2006, the provincial government and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) embarked “*on a wide-ranging review of how we can improve the delivery and funding of services for Ontarians*” to quote John Gerretsen, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing from his remarks to the AMO Convention.

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He went on to make the following statements that:

- ▶ *“Any solution must be consistent with the fiscal plans of both the province and the municipal sector.”*
- ▶ *“Any proposed recommendations from the review must consider the diversity of Ontario’s municipalities.”*
- ▶ The review would examine: *“Delivery and funding of health and social services and housing, municipal financing tools such as user fees and the use of municipal debt, infrastructure funding and the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund.”*

This is an exercise in the Liberals seeking to impose their privatization agenda on the local governments of Ontario. They know that they have allies in the local governments. They should also know that they have opponents.

To ensure that the alternative vision to the Liberal agenda is heard at the local level across Ontario, a number of OFL affiliates (CUPE, ONA, OPSEU and SEIU), have developed a tool which should be widely used. The tool is a ***Municipal Health Care Pledge***. Candidates seeking office in the upcoming municipal elections are asked to sign the following pledge:

***If elected, I promise to:***

***Work with all levels of government to ensure local access to health services that are publicly financed and delivered.***

***Work to ensure municipal contributions are used only toward new hospital infrastructures that are publicly financed and owned.***

***Work to support fair wages and working conditions for all health care workers, recognizing these workers’ incomes are vital to my community’s economic well-being and to the quality of care.***

***Work to ensure that any changes in health service delivery, including those affecting non-clinical services, do not lead to further privatization of public services.”***

The list of candidates who have signed the pledge will be available at [www.protecthealthcare.ca](http://www.protecthealthcare.ca).

**P L E A S E P O S T**