

CUPE LHIN Sector Update

Home and Community Care and LTC Placement Restructuring: No employment security assurances

A recent “FAQ” from Ontario Health states that “the province expects the LHINs to begin operating as Home and Community Care Support Services and to exist until home and community care transitions into Ontario Health Teams and other points of care.”

This deepens our concerns.

Currently home and community care is overseen by thousands of staff working for Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs). The FAQ reports that while some work will be spun off to Ontario Health (OH), the home and community care side of the LHINs will be rebranded Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSSs), a new board will be cross-appointed to oversee the 14 HCCSSs in the summer of 2021, and then, at some undefined point, home and community care oversight will be transferred to Ontario Health Teams (OHTs) or other health service providers.

There is no indication yet how many OHTs or health service providers will take over this work but there are literally scores of OHTs and **hundreds of health service providers that could take over the home and community care work of the 14 LHINs. Similar restructuring in the hospital sector has resulted in wages \$10,000 less per year.**

While we have consistently flagged this issue, **neither OH nor the provincial government have provided guarantees that LHIN home and community care employees will have the right to transfer with the work, nor that if they do transfer that they will be guaranteed their present wages, benefits, pensions, working conditions, and collective agreement protections.**

Government has suggested that some LHIN home care work may transfer to home care providers. These providers are often for-profit corporations that provide poor wages, poor benefits, and poor working conditions. This would be a very negative outcome for both LHIN workers and the public.

The government must rule it out.

Also very troubling is the stated intention to **move the work out bit by bit:**

“Over time, home and community care functions will transition to Ontario Health Teams and other points of care. The Ministry of Health is working with Ontario Health Teams, Ontario Health and LHINs to support this transition. This work will be gradual, undertaken with Home and Community Care Support Services and with the common goal of maintaining continuity of care for patients.”

In other words, the plan is not to transfer the work in one restructuring – as they are planning for work transferring to OH in the spring. Instead it will drip away bit by bit. This is very troubling. A few jobs here, a few jobs there will be hard to fight – it may even be hard to identify. Workers may be asked to work to keep the home care system going – until they are laid off.

LTC Placement:

There is also great uncertainty about what may happen to workers involved with long-term care placement, another key function of the LHINs. Here is their comment in the FAQ:

“The Ministry of Long-Term Care is currently considering options for the end-state of long-term care home placement functions. The decision will take into account findings related to the long-term care home system’s experience and performance during the COVID-19 pandemic.”

LHIN workers are key health care workers who have come through for Ontarians time and again. They are primarily women workers. They have particularly played an important role during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Ford government and Ontario Health must not simply toss them aside. We need guarantees from the provincial government and Ontario Health that home care services will remain public, that LHIN workers employment security is assured, and that LHIN workers will not be forced to accept inferior wages, benefits, pensions, and working conditions.