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Local 229**

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MORE LAYOFFS AT VICTORIA ORDER OF NURSES

Sept 03/ Unit Chair, Geri Chivers-Wilson, along with Local 229 Vice-President, Katha Fortier, met for the third time in less than two years, with the management of the Thunder Bay Chapter of the Victoria Order of Nurses (VON) to discuss further lay-offs of both clerical staff and registered practical nurses.

This news comes as no surprise to Chivers-Wilson, as the amount of new referrals allotted to the not-for-profit organization from the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) has declined at an alarming rate in the last two years. VON receives no base funding, and is only given operating money when they receive referrals and service clients. This comes only eight months after VON lost a contract to provide services in the Rainy River District, and several nurses found themselves unemployed. Fortier says, "This competitive bidding system makes home care nursing very unattractive to nurses, who have absolutely no guarantee they will maintain their employment when the service provider changes." The Ontario Labour Relations Act has legislation to cover employee's in case their employer changes, but this doesn't extend to home care workers. New Requests for Proposals (RFP's) are scheduled for Mar. 31, 2004 for nursing and homemaking, so more major changes may be in store for these employees soon.

The number of visits for this fiscal year was initially promised to be 60,000, but has since been reduced by the CCAC to an estimated 36,000. The VON is predicting they will not even make this number if the rate in which they are now receiving referrals does not increase dramatically. Referrals are shared by four agencies throughout the city, two of which operate on a for-profit basis. In addition to the increasing competition, it is also very apparent that more and more people are not meeting the criteria for eligibility for home care services.

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More on the VON Layoffs:

The CCAC web site now lists "be unable to access a service as an outpatient" for eligibility, so if you can drag yourself to an outpatient clinic or emergency department, you must do so. Unfortunately, the people who are denied home care typically are just too ill to put up a fight. Seniors are also affected more than the general public, but are often unsure of how to go about appealing any decisions made on their care.

CCAC's are under strict orders to operate within their budget. About two years ago the Executive Director of the Thunder Bay Chapter of the CCAC was fired, along with several others across the province for exceeding their budget to provide services. At that time, drastic cuts were made to all areas and the 2002 CCAC Annual report indicates nursing visits dropped by 32% and homemaking by 25% from 2000/2001 to 2001/2002. The 2003 Annual Report has not yet been released by the Ministry for publication, but it is suspected that there will be further reductions.

All these cuts have occurred while the current provincial government tries to convince us that they are spending more, not less on home care. The Ontario New Democratic Party has committed in their election platform to "end competitive bidding, increasing home care hours, and returning Community Care Access Centres to community control." Please attend all candidates meetings during this election and ask the other parties just what they intend to do – Then, on October 2nd, vote on it.

ONTARIO ELECTION CALL!

Ernie Eves has ended months of speculation and called a provincial election for Thursday October 2nd, 2003.

Local 229 has unanimously voted to support the Ontario NDP. Brother Andy Savela says, "This is our opportunity to elect a labour friendly government in our province and give back the power to working people." You can visit the NDP web site at www.ontariondp.on.ca for more information.

OPTIONS NORTHWEST REACHES AGREEMENT AFTER OVERCOMING SCAB THREAT

July 03/ Members of Options Northwest took matters into their own hands, and picketed their employer, sending a strong message that they will not sit by while scabs come in and do their jobs.

In a Thunder Bay Television interview, OPTIONS Executive Director Bernie Travis, did not dispute that the organization had made a plan for replacement workers. Unit Chair Kathy Atkins said, "For an employer to engage in this sort of activity, prior to even meeting with a conciliator is the ultimate in bad faith bargaining." Atkins, and the bargaining committee, Robin Zaporzan, Christy Tienharra, and Lori McAlpin, along with President Andy Savela organized an information picket on very short notice, prior to conciliation. Excellent local press coverage resulted, and ultimately led to a negotiated deal that the bargaining committee could recommend to the membership. The membership overwhelmingly ratified the agreement which contained none of the concessions the employer had tabled. Fighting back does make a difference!

CAW CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION ADDS HEALTH CARE WORKER TO NATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD

Four delegates from CAW Local 229 attended the CAW Constitutional Convention in Toronto August 19 to 22nd, where CAW history was made, with the addition of a seat to the National Executive Board (NEB). Local 302 President Nancy McMurphy, who has worked in health care for 30 years, was unanimously elected to the new seat, ensuring all health care locals will have a direct link to the highest elected level of the Union. Delegate and Local 229 Vice-President, Katha Fortier says, "This proves that we have made the right choice in joining a union who listens and responds to our concerns." The seat was a result of direct lobbying by our Local and supported by health care locals across the country.

DIGNITY IS A MINIMUM STANDARD

The billboards are up (on Memorial Avenue and Fort William Road) and plans are underway for the CAW Ontario Health Care Council's Long Term Care Campaign for Minimum Staffing Standards. You can also catch our advertisement on 580 CKPR and Hot 105 radio, which asks listeners to **visit our web site www.caw229.com to send a direct message to the Minister of Health and let them know that for our seniors, dignity is a minimum standard.**

The campaign in Thunder Bay will consist of two major actions. On September 19th and 20th we have reserved space in the Intercity Mall all day to ask the public to sign our postcards. Postcards (and posters and buttons) have been sent to all Unit Chairs, and their delivery will be coordinated with postcards from across the Province. On September 26th two information pickets will be held at the Versa Care Centre and Roseview Manor. These events are being coordinated with members of the public and other interested groups. Everyone is encouraged to attend and show support for this important campaign. Postings are up in all workplaces with more information, or call the local office to volunteer.

CAW LOCAL 229 HEALTH CARE COMMITTEE MEETS – EVERYONE WELCOME

The CAW Local 229 Health Care Committee will be meeting at the Local Office 3rd floor meeting room on Tuesday September 16, 03 at 7:00PM. The agenda includes the long term care campaign, election issues and VON layoffs. Everyone is welcome to attend.

SUPERIOR NORTH EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES UNIT ELECTION

The CAW Local 229 members who work as paramedics in the outlying areas are having their first election of officers. Due to the unique structure of the Unit, with 14 different workplaces spread throughout the district, a unique voting system was developed under the guidance of Election Committee Chair, George Saaranin. Interest was high from the members, and election results are now being sent to the Local office. Results are expected soon.

FAMILY EDUCATION REPORT By Education Committee Chair, Amy Rubino

This summer I had the most fortunate opportunity to attend the CAW Family Education Program at Port Elgin. For those of you who are not aware of what the Family Education Program is I will fill you in.

The Family Ed program is an opportunity for you and your family to spend two weeks at Port Elgin learning more about the union. I was there as a discussion leader and worked with one of the teen groups. Issues we discussed were social in nature and covered topics such as sweatshop labour, bullying, and the purpose of unions.

During the two week program, family time is valued and daily activities are arranged for both you and your family to participate in. They included everything from beach volleyball, to casino night, to karaoke to movie night. Wednesday afternoons were free time and many families took the opportunity to visit the great flea market in Port Elgin.

The two weeks wrapped up with a mock convention in which each class debated resolutions they had prepared in their groups. The most hotly debated resolution was between the parents and teens on curfew, and is something I will never forget.

The Family Ed Program is a wonderful experience that I will carry with me forever. If you would like more information about the experience or how to apply please feel free to contact me and I will gladly share more details.

FEDERAL NDP LEADER JACK LAYTON TO TOUR CAW WORKPLACES

Jack Layton, the new federal NDP leader will be visiting Thunder Bay on Wed. Sept. 10th. He will tour two CAW Workplaces, the Local 1075 Bombardier Plant and our St. Joseph's Hospital Unit. An open wine and cheese will be held at the Thunder Bay and District Labour Centre, 929 Fort William Road (across from Intercity) that evening at 7:00PM. Everyone is welcome to attend and you do not have to be an NDP member. This is a great opportunity to come out and meet the man who has managed to bring back life to the federal party, and is renewing hopes for a successful election in 2004.

CAW WOMENS CONFERENCE REPORT By Cherie McEvoy, Director of Women's Issues Susan Wragg, Member of the Local 229 Women's Committee and I attended the Women's Conference in beautiful Port Elgin at the CAW Education Centre in August.

As usual this conference was an exciting and educational experience. It was disturbing to learn that according to Stats Canada, violence against women has jumped from one in four to one in two, in Canada. This in itself shows the need for women to unite to speak out strongly for women's issues in the workplace, the community, and at all levels of government. Change comes when women run for office; on school boards, park boards, municipal councils, and provincial and federal parliaments.

Some of the dynamic women speakers at the conference included Libby Davis MP for Vancouver East (NDP), Loretta Wookcock, Commissioner of Vancouver Parks and Recreation, Kira Heinick, Public Education Coordinator, Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, Olivia Chow, Councillor for the City of Toronto, and Doris Anderson, Vice-President of Fair Vote Canada and the long time editor of Chatelaine Magazine.

One of the quotations used by one of the speakers in relation to decision making for elected officers stands out in my mind. Instead of asking "is it good for the corporation" it should be asked "is it good for children."

MORE ON THE 7th CAW CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION "Resistance and Renewal" by Katha Fortier VP

While this was the 7th constitutional convention for CAW, it was the first for delegates of Local 229, and in that sense, very memorable and exhilarating for myself and the other three delegates, President Andy Savela, Executive Board Member for Out-lying Areas, Gary Muzyka, and Roseview Manor Steward Andy Quarrell.

First a little background; this Convention takes place every three years, with delegates elected from locals across the Country. The purpose of the Convention is for the election of most of the officers who make up the National Executive Board (NEB) (others are elected through CAW Council), including our

National President, Buzz Hargrove, and Secretary-Treasurer, Jim O'Neil, who were both acclaimed for their third term of office. It is very clear that the membership is more than pleased with their performance and representation, and they are both extraordinary labour leaders. Additionally, both Buzz and Jimmy gave 100% support to the additional NEB seat for a health care worker.

The four day meeting also consisted of debate of constitutional changes put forward by Local Unions, and plans developed for the direction of the union with the theme "Resistance and Renewal". Every Local Union was asked to establish a new "Union in Politics Committee" (UPC). The purpose of these new committees will extend beyond election time to improve our capacity to talk with our members about politics, to ensure that our political demands and campaigns reflect their views and issues and to involve them more actively in the whole range of political activity.

Convention Delegate Andy Quarrell has volunteered to coordinate the Local 229 UPC, and we thank him for taking on this role. If you are interested in working on the UPC, please call the Local office and let us know.

Throughout the convention a variety of speakers including NDP Federal Leader, Jack Layton, Canadian Labour Congress Vice-President Barb Byers, and Quebec Federation of Labour President Henri Masse. One of the more moving speakers was young Craig Keilburger, founder and chairperson of Free the Children (www.freethechildren.com), who at age 12 began his career and mission to put an end to children working in sweatshops across the world and get them into schools instead.

Another very emotional event was the NAVISTAR video that highlighted the events that led to the 2002 strike there, resulting in one CAW member from Local 444 in Windsor, Brother Don Milner becoming seriously injured. Brother Milner is still recovering from his injuries and is encouraged to receive messages of solidarity and friendship from CAW members across the country. Please feel free to send him an email; donwaynemilner@conego.ca; More convention information news can be found at the CAW National web site www.caw.ca