



COPE Ontario Health Care Report

September 2023

**HEALTHCARE
FOR ALL**



COPE Ontario has instituted a regular health care report for COPE members four (4) times a year. The health care report will keep COPE members updated on the changes occurring in health care and the impact of changes on COPE health care workers. The next COPE Health Care Report will be published in October 2023.

Ontario's New Minister of Long-term Care:

On September 4, 2023, the Ford government announced that the new Minister of Long-term care (LTC) would be MPP Stan Cho. Mr. Cho was first elected to the provincial parliament in 2018 representing the riding of Willowdale. Mr. Cho has been the associate minister of transportation since 2021. Mr. Cho is the fourth LTC Minister appointed in the last five (5) years.

Prior to being elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Mr. Cho was an auditor for Mercedes Benz before entering his family's real estate business. Mr. Cho also worked as an agent for fifteen (15) years before taking over as broker and general manager of a Royal LePage franchise in 2012. Mr. Cho also has a degree in philosophy from the University of Toronto.



The Ministry of Long-term care is responsible for supporting the building of new long-term care homes including the upgrading of existing homes, setting the legislation and regulations and policies that long-term care homes must follow, developing programs to attract and maintain workers, inspecting long-term care homes, ensuring standards are met and publishing plans and annual reports.

Ontario Offers Money to Ontario Public Health Units that Voluntarily Merge:

On August 22, 2023, the Ford Government announced that they will be offering funding to public health units that voluntarily merge and will reverse cuts to the public health funding formula.

The Conservative government in 2019 proposed the consolidation of the province's public health units. The health units would be consolidated, from thirty-four (34) to ten (10). These plans were never implemented because of the COVID 19 pandemic.



Health Minister Jones has stated that there will be a one-time funding increase to public health units that voluntarily merge. The increase to the base funding for the public health units who merge will be one per cent (1%) a year over the next three (3) years.

She also announced that Ontario will now be responsible for seventy-five per cent (75%) of the share of public health costs. In 2019 the share of public health costs was 75-25 for public health cost sharing formula with municipalities cost sharing being 70-30.

Public health units offer healthy living and disease prevention information and programs to their communities. At the local level, public health units lead programs focused on prevention and control of communicable diseases including monitoring local data to tailor their programs to what is needed in their communities.

Ontario Emergency Department Closures:

One of the most important parts of the Ontario Health Care system is the emergency department in hospitals. They vary in size from a small number of beds in an emergency department to large urban technology laden departments.

The pressure on emergency departments throughout Ontario is enormous, with patients being seen and cared for in hallways and waiting rooms sometimes for days.

According to data by Health Quality Ontario (HQP), patients spent an average of 21.3 hours in an emergency room waiting to be admitted. This is up from 20.7 and 20.8 hours in July and August of 2022 and represents the highest wait times for hospital admissions from Ontario emergency departments in the last year according to HQO.

According to a Toronto Star analysis hospital emergency departments across Ontario were forced to **close 158 times in the past year**, resulting in some 4,430 hours—**the equivalent of 184 days**—when emergency care needs of many communities, particularly smaller rural communities could not be met locally.

Temporary emergency closures have long been a concern not only in Ontario but also across Canada.

In most cases emergency department closures in Ontario have been intermittent and last minute usually because a hospital is unable to staff shifts particularly the night shift.

Protest to Stop Privatization of Our Public Hospital's Core Services



The Coalition is planning for a mass protest to stop the Ford government's privatization of our public hospitals.

WHEN: Monday, Sept 25 at 12:00 PM

WHERE: Toronto, Queen's Park & 3 Northern Ontario locations; Thunder Bay, Dryden, & Algoma.

Please also come out to help build a massive show of opposition to the privatization of our public hospitals and health care services on the opening day of the Legislature:

TORONTO at Queen's Park outside the Main Legislative Building at 12 Noon

THUNDER BAY at Mini Queen's Park at South James St. at 12 Noon

DRYDEN outside MPP Greg Rickford's office, 439 Government St. at 11:30 a.m. CST (Dryden time)

ALGOMA outside the Sault Area Hospital at Lukenda Drive at 12 Noon

Please join the protest closest to you.

Yom Kippur alternative date: The Ford government has set opening day for the provincial legislature on Yom Kippur. The Coalition will hold a second event on Sept. 26 at noon for people in the Jewish community who cannot attend on the 25th.

[MORE INFO HERE!](#)

Privatization of the Ontario Health Care System:

The term ‘**privatization of health care**’ refers to a range of health care services, from out-of-pocket virtual consultations at seventy dollars (\$70.00) a visit to publicly funded hip replacements at private medical facilities.



Whether privatization would shorten waiting list by creating a larger number of facilities is arguable. However, it is clear that privatization would surely change who would be waiting. In the United States research clearly shows that well-insured patients have a very short wait list for hip replacement, but the 46 million Americans either without health care or very limited health care may wait the rest of their life for a hip replacement. Research also clearly indicates that privatization will draw off resources----

physicians nurses and allied health care workers –from the public system wait lists would be shorter in the private system, but would grow in the public system, access to health care would be more about ability to pay for medical services than based on patient need.

In fact according to research studies most Canadians oppose privatization. Studies show that for-profit and health care that this type of private care is always more expensive and of a lower quality. It makes no sense that for-profit organizations can be expected to provide similar health care services while still extracting their profits and business costs from the system. It is obvious that for-profit organizations are required to provide profits to their investors.

Labour Relations Update on Collective Bargaining in the Health Care Sector:

COPE:

Thunder Bay Regional Health Centre and COPE Local 96 were proceeding interest arbitration on July 18, 2023. However, COPE Local 96 and Thunder Bay Regional Health Centre were able to reach a negotiated Settlement just prior to the arbitration hearing.

OPSEU:

The Ontario Public Sector Employees Union (OPSEU) received a reopener interest arbitration award (Kaplan) for hospital paramedical workers on July 29., 2023. The award provided for the following wage increases effective September 1, 2023,

Sensenbrenner Hospital and COPE Local 523 have been bargaining for a renewal collective agreement. An impasse has been reached, and the Union has advanced the dispute to interest Arbitration.

London Health Sciences Centre and COPE Local 468 reached a negotiated settlement on May 10, 2023. The settlement has been ratified by both parties and is now in effect.

COPE Counselling Centres have either concluded bargain or are continuing negotiations. ongoing.

COPE Local 550 and the Toronto Central HCCSS (LHIN) A second day of conciliation has been scheduled for September 28, 2023.

Canadian Red Cross Society Emergency Management:

Negotiations for a first collective agreement continues for this new COPE Local 343 bargaining unit. Another four (4) to six (6) days have been confirmed for the continuation of negotiations.

CUPE & SEIU:

The **Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Service Workers International Union (SEIU) and the Participating Hospitals** received an interest arbitration award (Kaplan) for the reopener years of 2022 and 2023. The arbitration award affects approximately 70,000 health care workers in the hospital sector primarily service and clerical workers and Registered Practical Nurses (RPN). The Interest Board of Arbitration (Kaplan Christen and Herbert) awarded

an increase to the maximum rate for RTs and above the grids by 1.75%.

Effective April 1, 2022, an additional 3.75%, effective April 2, 2023, an increase of 2.5 % and effective April 1, 2023 an increase of 2%. These increases are in addition to the 1% increase received under Bill 124.



The Board also ordered a one-time lump sum payment as of August 13, 2020, for employees in the bargaining unit who did not receive pandemic pay under the government program. The amounts awarded are as follows; full-time \$1,7250, part-time \$1,250 and for casuals \$750. Increases were also awarded for shift premiums, vision care and health spending accounts.

Ontario Nurses Association:

Ontario Nurses Association (ONA) and Participating Hospitals received an arbitration award dated July 20, 2023 for the renewal of a collective agreement for the period April 1, 2023 until March 31, 2025. The Interest Board of Arbitration awarded an increase on **average** of 11% over a two (2) year term.

Effective April 1, 2023, the Board awarded a new salary grid with an average increase of 4.75% and an additional 3.5% wage increase. Effective April 1, 2024, an additional 3% wage increase was awarded.

the following wage increases for CUPE for 2021 3.75% and 2022 2.5%. For SEIU the wage increases awarded were 2022 3.75% and for 2023 2.5%. The Board also awarded an additional two dollars (\$2.00) for the RPN maximum, double time for call back, an increase of one dollar (\$1.00) for shift premium and an increase of one dollar and fifty cents (\$1.50) for weekend premium.

Increases for team leader, student and mentorship premiums were also awarded. The Board also awarded salary continuation for employees if they were required to quarantine.

Bill 124, Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019

Bill 124 which was passed by the Ford government in 2019 limits all public sector workers, including health care and educational workers to limit wage increases to one percent (1%) for a three (3) year period, but exempts police and firefighters, both male dominated sectors. **Bill 124 was struck down by the Superior Court of Ontario on November 29, 2022.** On December 29, 2022, the Ford government filed an appeal of the court decision that struck down **Bill 124.**

The Court of Appeal held hearing in June 2023. No decision has been received at this time from the Court off Appeal.

State of Ontario Hospitals:

According to documents obtained by the Globe and Mail show that Ontario hospitals have an extensive backlog of needed repairs and that it would be more cost-effective to replace them. The Ford government initially tried to keep this information from being released publicly but lost on appeal.

According to the data **26% of hospitals are in “poor” condition, around half are in “fair” condition and 17% are in “good” condition.** Two percent (2%) are in need of replacement. The province plans to spend \$208 million on repairing hospitals in 2023-2024, but some hospitals report they need \$40 million per year for repairs.

COPE HEALTH CARE SECTOR MEETINGS:

COPE Ontario is holding regular Health Care Sector meetings. The next health care meeting is scheduled for November 30, 2023, from 6 pm until 7:30 pm. All COPE members are invited to attend these meetings.

If you would like to attend the regular healthcare sector meetings, please notify Pina@copeontario.ca and she will send you the zoom meeting link for the November 30, 2023, meeting.



In Solidarity,

COPE Ontario
<https://www.copeontario.ca/>



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