

BULLETIN

## **NUPGE social services conference underway in Edmonton**

April 4, 2007

Edmonton - A national conference for community-based social service workers, sponsored by the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), wraps up today in Edmonton.

The three-day gathering is focusing on key challenges faced by the sector in all parts of the country.

-Workers in this sector live in a trying environment of frequent government restructuring, under funding, low wages and job insecurity, rising incidents of violence, and the growing presence of for-profit providers," says NUPGE national president James Clancy.

"These are workers who devote their lives to ensuring a decent standard of living for some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. But their own work is often unrecognized and under-appreciated. Our goal this week is to address key issues facing these workers and chart the best way forward for everyone."

Attending the conference are front-line workers from the following community social services sub-sectors:

### Adult Mental Health

• Addictions

• Psychiatric Care Children's Treatment Services

• Youth Outreach

### Developmental Services Workers

• Community Living

• Sheltered Workshops

• Attendant Care Group Homes

• Children

• People with Disabilities

### Women's Services

• Shelters

• Rape Crisis Centres

• Transition Centres

Discussion topics at the conference include:

• The introduction of alternative service delivery models.

• Funding and accountability.

• Health and safety.

• National disparities in conditions of employment.

• The public profile of workers in the sector.

In the last decade a number of new service delivery models have emerged.

In a growing number of instances the results have been reductions in quality programs, funding instability, a decrease in standards, less accountability and a devaluing of their work.

Compared to a decade ago, federal funding for the sector is almost non-existent. Health care and post-secondary education have received the most attention while community-based social services have been left behind.

"This conference provides a valuable opportunity for dedicated and knowledgeable front-line workers to discuss important issues, build strength from experience, and develop common strategies to address the key challenges facing the sector," says Clancy.

The National Union is also hopeful the conference will serve as an important step towards ensuring these workers receive the recognition they deserve.

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