

# Without a contract for over a year Hospital workers await arbitration decision

By BRIAN MACLEOD  
Herald Staff

Over 100 registered nursing assistants, orderlies, dieticians, and housekeeping staff at Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital are anxiously awaiting a new contract.

A provincially appointed arbitration board has been studying the issue since June, and the long wait has affected morale at the hospital, says Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 145 president George Storm.

The 56 full-time members and 60 part-time CUPE members at the Georgetown hospital have been without a contract since September, 1987.

The arbitration board's decision will affect more than 17,000 CUPE members in hospitals throughout the province, said CUPE national representative Gordon Allan.

In Georgetown the contract dispute, coupled with the possibility of phasing out the hospital's one part-time and two full-time orderlies, have lowered morale, said Mr. Storm.

"All the union people who are the backbone of the hospital haven't had a raise in two years," said Mr. Storm.

Union members want the hospital not to phase out orderlies, but they also want the hospital to make repairs to the building which Mr. Storm says is "falling apart."

Housekeeping staff, dieticians

and laundry cleaning staff make approximately \$10 an hour now, said Mr. Allan.

Nursing assistants make slightly more and registered nursing assistants, along with orderlies, are paid just over \$11 an hour, he said.

He could not give exact details of the union's argument before the arbitration board but Mr. Allan said CUPE is asking for a wage increase of "at least the rate of inflation."

The hospital support staff is forbidden to strike by the province.

Morale at Georgetown hospital began to decline during the controversy surrounding the hospital's decision to withdraw the hospital privileges of Dr. Jack Ford, according to Mr. Storm, RNA Laura Pickett and Local 145 vice-president Pauline Himeshazi. In April, 1987, the Georgetown Hospital Board withdrew the popular gynecologist and obstetrician's hospital privileges. An Ontario Hospital Appeals Board supported that decision following a hearing which ended early last year.

The three say many workers at the hospital are working long hours due to understaffing.

Orderlies won't easily be replaced by male RNAs and the mechanized lifts, designed to make it easier for nurses to move patients, have limitations, they say.

And the hospital hasn't got many applications for male RNAs, said

Ms. Himeshazi.

Male orderlies can do much of the "heavy" work, such as lengthy applications of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation, lifting patients, helping to shower patients and they even help in autopsies, said Mr. Storm.

And the long shifts members must put in at the hospital, in which people work seven days in a row, with three days off followed by another seven days work with two days off, puts additional strain on the workers, said Ms. Himeshazi.

Hospital Executive Director Mark Rochon, said no decision has been made about phasing out orderlies and the hospital has been

putting money into much needed equipment directly related to patient care.

The hospital is hiring five people, including a nurse and a security guard, said Mr. Rochon. Funding approval for the five positions came through from the Ministry of Health in December, he said.

Mr. Rochon acknowledged the hospital has leaks in the roof, old carpets and needs painting but the administration has been directing its money - about \$365,000 in the last two years - towards new equipment, he said.

The hospital has requested a new \$500,000 roof from the MOH, he said.

Georgetown is the only hospital

in the area which still has male orderlies, said Mr. Rochon.

And the security guard is needed to make rounds and perform security functions after hours when there is no security presence in the hospital, he said.

Mr. Rochon agreed that morale could be affected by the lengthy time union members have gone without a contract.

But the hospital "doesn't seem to be having any problem recruiting" compared to other Toronto area hospitals, said Mr. Rochon.

He said there have been no staff cuts in the hospital in recent years and the five new people will not take up administrative positions at the hospital.

## Five new positions to be filled

priority, said Mr. Rochon.

Among the five new people to be hired are:

- a pharmacy technician to help improve the distribution of pharmaceuticals in the hospital;
- a "quality assurance" person who makes sure hospital programs meet standards and to help educate and update staff on new techniques;
- an infection control person who will help in cases of people with

highly infectious diseases, such as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and hepatitis. That person will also be responsible for staff health, said Mr. Rochon;

- a security guard to make sure the hospital is safe after business hours;
- and an extra nurse in the emergency room to work evenings and weekends.

## New equipment totals \$365,000

The Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital has purchased more than \$365,000 worth of new equipment in the last two years, said Executive Director Mark Rochon.

The hospital has put all the money it could find into purchasing the new equipment, he said, acknowledging that structural repairs need to be made to the hospital.

The Georgetown hospital was built in 1961. In 1972, an addition with the administration offices was built.

- Some of the new equipment includes:
- a fluoroscopy retrofit for setting bones (\$47,000);
  - a new operating table (\$40,000);

- retrofitting the sterilizer (\$37,000);
- energy saving equipment was installed on the flues (\$23,000);
- a new mobile X-ray machine (\$42,000);
- a new fetal monitor (\$14,000);
- a new incubator (\$11,000);

- two patient lifts (\$8,000);
- an electric cautery unit (\$10,000);
- a new blood bank refrigerator (\$7,000);
- a new birthing bed for obstetrics (\$12,000); and
- a new electro-cardiogram machine (\$9,000).

## Region tax hike

Continued from Page 1

said Regional treasurer Joe Rinaldo.

On top of that, Halton had assumed a five per cent assessment growth as a conservative estimate. That prediction proved to be accurate, so the tax base wasn't expanded as much as financial planners hoped.

The budget also allows for an increase of almost 10 per cent in the police budget, but Halton's board of police commissioners are reported to be considering an even higher increase, said Mr. Rinaldo.

But it's Halton's \$16 million solid waste disposal budget which has hiked the taxbill significantly. Halton is paying 56 per cent more this year to dispose of its garbage (mainly by sending it to Niagara Falls, New York for incineration). Halton's garbage disposal costs are expected to remain high until a new landfill is opened, sometime in the early 1990s.

Halton managed to keep the budget increase down to about

seven per cent by cutting out some capital projects and transferring funds from its reserves, said Mr. Rinaldo.

And the extensive road maintenance program will be restricted to just a six-per-cent increase in the budget, he said.

Mr. Rinaldo blamed the province for part of the increase.

"The effect of increasing property taxes will place a greater burden on the lower income sector whereas increasing provincial tax rates would impose burden on middle or higher income sectors," said Mr. Rinaldo.



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