

Doctors are set for strike protest

by Deborah McFarlane

Doctors at Huronia District Hospital (HOH) are set to strike Thursday and Friday to protest the provincial government's proposed ban on extra-billing.

Doctors from Penetanguishene General Hospital (PGH) who attended a meeting Friday night will strike as well.

In an open letter to patients, doctors say they support the Ontario Medical Association (OMA) in its dispute with the government.

"It was an unanimous decision," says Huronia District OMA representative Dr. Peter Cameron. "We'll be withdrawing our services for two days to protest the attack on our freedom to practise where and when we want."

Cameron says the extra-billing issue is a non-issue and the government is making more of it than necessary. None of the doctors at HDH or PGH are opted out of the Ontario Health Insurance Plan

(OHIP) and none extra-bill. "When the government takes away the right to work how you want, they become monopoly employers and no one can work under those conditions," Cameron says. "They're essentially telling us how to practise and how many patients we can see and we can't do anything about it. We have no choice but to strike."

Doctors across Ontario will be withdrawing all but emergency services Thursday and Friday and won't be in their offices as well. The OMA has asked all doctors to support their position against Bill 94, the Health Care Accessibility Act the Liberal government says they'll introduce into the legislature on Thursday.

The government promised to ban extra-billing as part of an agreement with the New Democrat Party when they formed the minority government last year.

But the OMA says the government cannot be in a position to tell them how to

practise and how to charge patients. If doctors are opted out of OHIP, as 11 per cent are in Ontario, they should be allowed to extra-bill, the association says.

The government says, if it allows doctors to charge extra for their services, the idea of OHIP will fail. It rejected the OMA's offer to exempt senior citizens, those on government assistance and those needing emergency services but can't afford to pay, saying that plan wouldn't work. If doctors are allowed to extra-bill, those who can pay for better services will get and those who can't will not.

The OMA says this wouldn't happen and it rejected a government offer to let the OMA police doctors' extra-billing. The problem is the OMA doesn't want to be treated like civil servants because it is a professional association which says the government shouldn't be involved in its members' relationships with patients.

"It's the government

bureaucrats that treat patients like cost units," says Cameron. "They don't know better than we do how to treat patients and forcing extra-billing on doctors will only result in a decline in the quality of health care in this province."

Although OHIP rates are "fairly reasonable", Cameron says it's the way the Health Ministry administers payments that causes the problem. He says payments are doled out according to averages and not necessarily according to what a doctor bills for.

"It means doctors sometimes get less for their services and have to extra-bill. If the patient agrees, there shouldn't be a problem with it."

Emergency services at HDH and PGH will be available during the two-day strike. Two doctors will staff the emergency wards and interns and orderlies will work as usual.

"It doesn't mean people

won't get looked after," Cameron says, "only that services will be cut back." I

fully expect the government will legislate us back to work and Bill 94 will go through

anyway. This is the only way we can protest something we can't do anything about."



Standing tall and proud

This member of the Midland Legion Massed Pipes and Drums Parade stands still at attention while the members play a song outside Edwards Mall on King Street. The members buy their own instruments and costumes are donated from each legion. The parade lasted almost two hours on Sunday.

Y's Men's annual car draw

The Y's Men's Club, a service club that runs various events throughout the year raising money for the Midland YMCA, will hold its annual car draw on June 7.

Last week, Bernice Loughran won a barbecue valued at \$200 from Canadian Tire in the early bird draw.

First prize in the draw is a 1986 Ford Aerostar Wagon from Bourgeois Motors. Second is a holiday for two in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico. Third and fourth prizes are lawn furniture valued at \$6,000 from Beaver Lumber and a \$300 gift certificate for the Parlour or Here's Looking Atcha.

The car draw will be an elimination draw where the last ticket picked wins the wagon. Jim Worts, chairman of the car draw committee, says there are other prizes ticket holders will win while at the dance in the Midland Arena where the draw will be held.

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Former Midland mayor Charlie Parker in court June 16 to face assault charge

Former Midland mayor, Charles Parker, will appear in court June 16 to face a charge of assault.

Parker was charged earlier this month after an alleged incident involving a youth at the Parkside Video, which Parker owns and operates.

Parker was remanded yesterday by Provincial Court Judge, Gary Palmer to allow him time to find a lawyer.

Parker served on council for 18 years and served 11 one-year terms as mayor.

A Penetanguishene man

has been sentenced to 30 days in jail after pleading guilty to possession of a small quantity of marijuana.

Nelson Leroux, 38, was arrested May 3 by a Penetanguishene police officer, who observed him in a parked car smoking a marijuana cigarette. The officer searched Leroux and found a small plastic bag with approximately \$12 worth of marijuana, provincial court judge Gary Palmer was told.

Leroux admitted the bag contained marijuana.

Acting crown attorney

Robert Main told the court Leroux has a substantial record involving possession of marijuana.

"In view of his record and the fact that it appears to be drug activity at the wheel of a motor vehicle, the court should deal seriously with this matter," Main said.

Leroux admitted he had been arrested several times on drug-related charges and told the court he had previously had an alcohol problem. He said he is an

unemployed single parent and is trying to get help for his drug problem.

"The court has a problem with people drinking and driving. Smoking cannabis marijuana is the same thing except with a different name. I give you credit for pleading guilty today but since 1973 you have had a propensity for involvement with drugs."

"At 38, you hardly qualify as a young offender experimenting with drugs, as some youths do," Judge Palmer said when he passed sentence.



Playing hard on a sunny day

The Midland Legion held its fourth annual Massed Pipes and Drums Parade on Sunday where people lined Yonge and King Streets to see the procession. With a police escort, the band stopped twice to perform for bystanders who ate ice cream in the sunny weather and clapped after

each number. The 130-member band, consisting of 100 pipers and 30 drummers, are volunteers from legions across Ontario. The band will be travelling to Germany next summer to perform.

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