

Union locals draw attention to health care issues prior to Trooper concert

Kenora Daily Miner & News
Thu 24 Jul 2008

Byline: BY GARETT WILLIAMS, MINER AND NEWS

More than 1,000 people made their way to the Kenora Recreation Centre Wednesday for a free Trooper show presented by the **Canadian Union of Public Employees**.

The show was the second in a series of shows across Ontario the union is presenting to raise awareness on the plight of public services across the province.

President **Sid Ryan** said the union is targeting communities that face the risk of losing jobs and services locally due to privatization and contracting-out language within contracts.

Doug Kurtz, president of Local 3634, representing local paramedical workers, said Wednesday a recent consultant's report recommended blood work, currently carried out through a hybrid public-private pilot model, be put entirely in the hands of private companies, which would see blood tests in Kenora sent to Thunder Bay, increasing the turn around time from six to more than 48 hours.

"That's a health risk that our residents needlessly face, particularly as we have a lab at the hospital that is fully staffed with professional public service workers," he said in a release.

Judy Bain, president of Local 1781 and coordinator of the local show, said the community has to stand up against the health minister and the Local Health Integration Network, who is trying to "bully our hospital into making health care cuts with their restructuring and under funding of hospitals."

The Lake of the Woods District Hospital Board is currently at odds with the network over their deficit budget. The union's second vice-president, Candace Rennick, said the "Rock for Public Services" shows are meant to remind communities that their hard-earned tax-dollars have built, paid for and delivered public services.

"Residents need to stand up for quality public services and not let politicians sell them off through privatization, contracting-out or relocation of these jobs and services," she said.