

It's my nature to **care.**

OPSEU LONG TERM CARE, RETIREMENT HOMES, AND RELATED FACILITIES



News & Information for OPSEU Members From Sector 8 Long Term Care

May 2020

Message from the President

The COVID-19 crisis has been a challenging and unsettling time for all Ontarians, in particular our members who work in long-term care. The strength of character you are all showing, working tirelessly to take care of your clients during this crisis, is admirable; OPSEU is immensely proud to represent you.

This pandemic has exposed shortcomings in the long-term care system that OPSEU has been fighting to fix for years. These include the lack of full-time permanent positions in one facility, insufficient pay, understaffing, attracting and retaining workers, and health and safety concerns – specifically, the lack of sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and training with regards to infection control.

Now, more than ever before, we are also seeing the importance of keeping our healthcare services public – prioritizing people over profits – as we've, tragically, witnessed higher fatality rates in for-profit facilities as compared to our public facilities.

We mourn for those brothers, sisters and residents who have lost their lives as a result of this virus. We will continue to do everything in our power to protect our frontline workers in long-term care. If you have a concern, please reach out to your union representative. We will never stop fighting for you – your workplace health and safety is our top priority.

Together, we will overcome this.

In solidarity,

Warren (Smokey) Thomas

OPSEU President



Introduction

In November 2019, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) hosted its bi-annual Broader Public Service (BPS) Conference in Toronto. Each Local was asked to send their highest-ranking member to the conference so that the Divisional Executive (Divex) could be elected and set a work plan for the next two years. In this newsletter, you will get to know more about your Divisional Executive, your sector and the resources available to you through OPSEU.

Your Divisional Executive

Joan Corradetti Chair

As Chair, this term has proven to be more challenging – new, yet similar, issues and concerns. My 25+ years of work experience and union activism in the long-term care sector, working at a municipally-run facility in Milton, has given me the knowledge to assist you. Throughout the years, I have held several terms in my local on the LEC, including President. I have been on the Joint Health and Safety Committee for almost 20 years, I have been a Certified Worker Co-Chair for 15 years, and I am also qualified as an Instructor through Worker's Health & Safety Centre. During my six terms on your Divex, I have served in a variety of positions.

The Sector Divex is here to help you with your concerns. Please forward any workplace issues, including your wins. You are not alone with OPSEU; it is our 'Nature to Care'. Thank you for all that you do.

During this time of COVID-19, I ask you all to stay informed. Stay safe and well. I am starting to sense a public swing to our side about the current Personal Support Worker (PSW) crisis in Ontario and about the state of health care. We will be joining Ontario Health Coalition and other partners, in an upcoming campaign once we are clear of COVID-19. Please stay tuned for more information.

Corrina Cadeau Vice Chair

I have worked in long-term care for close to 29 years where I have held several positions. I am currently a certified member and co-chair on my employer's health and safety committee,

President of OPSEU Local 328, and the Vice President of Area Council. I attend HCDC meetings and I am the Vice Chair on the Sector 8 Divex. Let's all keep fighting for a better, safer workplace for all of Ontario!

Terri-Lyn Long Secretary

I am a Health Care Aide (HCA) and I have been working in this sector since 1986. I have been an active OPSEU member since 1999. I am President of my Local, Unit Steward in my workplace and Secretary of Sector 8. There have been many changes in long-term care, and staff shortages (particularly amongst HCA's and PSW's) are growing at an alarming rate. I would like to advocate for our communities to be aware of this shortage and lobby our government to help remedy this urgent situation. I want to continue to be involved in making the lives of our ageing population better for all.



Stephanie Lafleur Treasurer

I am a Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) who began working in long-term care right out of college, nearly 10 years ago. I wanted to be a voice for the staff in my facility, particularly as health care fell into a state of crisis and we faced a shortage of staff, so I became active in OPSEU. The more I learn, the more I want to be the voice of workers and stand up for what is right. Over the past several years, I have held a number of positions including Unit Steward, Bargaining Team Member, LMC Member, Pay Equity Committee, Commissioners Task Force, First Aider and now, most recently, Sector 8 Treasurer.

Sector overview

OPSEU's long-term care sector is comprised of approximately 3,500 members, organized into 32 locals, working in a variety of settings. While each of your employers are unique, they can be categorized into five main clusters:

Independent Living: Independent living facilities focus on providing care and assistance to people of all ages living with physical disabilities.

The basic philosophy of independent living is that a person with a disability is best able to define their own needs, and with appropriate support services, direct resources to respond to these needs. It is the individual's right to live with dignity in their chosen community and to participate in all aspects of their life. Care is provided to people living who have a physical disability in their home or, if necessary, in a housing complex.

Residential Care: Like independent living facilities, Residential Care employers provide support to persons living with physical disabilities. The difference is that a greater number of residential and housing supports are provided. A number of our residential facilities offer disabled or chronically ill clients access to 24-hour care in a supportive living environment.

A number of employers also provide community-based services to people affected with physical disabilities that they are either born with, or have acquired throughout their life. These care providers connect people with devices, services and employment opportunities within their own homes and communities.

Palliative Care: Casey House is a unique employer type in this sector. Not only is it the only palliative care group in the sector, but it is the first and only standalone hospital in all of Canada offering holistic support to people living with HIV and AIDS.

As HIV/AIDS became more treatable, the facility has evolved to be more like a hospital than a hospice, offering a wider variety of services over and above palliative care. As the function of Casey House has evolved, so too has their funding structure; the facility is now funded more like a small hospital than a palliative care facility.

Retirement Homes: The Ontario Ministry of Long Term Care (OMLTC) characterizes retirement homes as privately-owned residences that rent out accommodations to seniors who can live with little or no outside assistance.

Retirement homes do not receive ministry funding. They operate on a for-profit basis and generate revenue by charging residents to live in their facilities and access the services they offer. There are a few non-profit retirement homes, however the vast majority are private, for-profit residences.

Long-Term Care: The OMLTC characterizes long-term care homes (LTCHs) as residential settings that provide seniors accommodation and 24-hour nursing care and supervision in a secure setting. There are three types of homes in Ontario: For-profit, not-for-profit and municipal.

Long-Term Care facilities are licensed and inspected by the Ministry of Long-Term Care. The Ministry is responsible for enforcing standards, inspecting LTC homes and enforcing regulatory standards as outlined in the Long-Term Care Homes Act. The Ministry also assesses the stability of the residents within a home and provides funding on a per diem basis, based on the patient mix within the home.

Covid-19: a challenge for us all

No matter where you work, COVID-19 presents a challenge for all members of our sector. Retirement homes, long-term care, residential care and independent living facilities are under enormous pressure. Keeping our residents and clients safe while protecting our own health is a challenge, especially if management is keen on putting profits ahead of people.

We want to take this opportunity to remind you that we are here for you. As your Divex, we stood for election to help you, our sisters and brothers on the frontline. Like you, we work in the sector, and we know the challenges you face. If there is something we can do to help raise awareness about a challenge, triumph or success at your workplace, let us know. All of our contact information can be found on the OPSEU website.

We also want to take this time to let you know about some of the resources OPSEU has available to you. OPSEU's website contains a wealth of information about the COVID-19 virus, personal protective equipment and what your union is doing to keep you safe during these times. Your Staff Rep is also a vital resource who can help you navigate this challenge. Additionally, there are a number of Head Office staff including a sector Negotiator, Research Officer, Health and Safety Officer behind the scenes helping to keep you safe. If at any time you feel you are alone, know that you are not. There's a strong OPSEU team standing by, ready to help.

Ontario Health Coalition – Day of Action for Long-Term Care

On May 1st, OPSEU, along with hundreds of other supporters, participated in a one-day online rally to demand that the Ford government address LTC workers' urgent need for:

- Permanently improved wages and full time work
- Immediately improved access to PPE
- 4 hour minimum care standard
- Better infection control
- No more for-profit care.

Your sector executive continues to work hard alongside the OHC, developing and supporting their efforts to advocate for all the critical issues facing health care.

Brought to you by OPSEU's Long-Term Care Division Executive

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Authorized for distribution by:

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