

April 7, 2020

Premier of Ontario
Legislative Building
Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A1

OPEN LETTER FROM SEIU, CUPE, OPSEU, AND UNIFOR

Dear Premier Ford,

Our unions represent 250,000 health care workers in Ontario who work in hospitals, long-term care and in the community. Our members are working with skill and compassion to support the people of Ontario during this crisis.

Ontario's hospital and long-term care staff have a rate of Covid-19 infection which is 4 times that of the public, although they make up just 3% of the population. Our members are falling ill with this virus because they are inadequately protected at work and some of them go on to infect their family members, other staff and the patients and residents whose frail immune systems are in no position to withstand this virus.

We have three urgent requests which we want to bring to your direct attention:

All of our members (as well as Ontario's physicians and many others) are excluded from the recent Directive issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Ontario. Directive #5 only refers to registered nurses, does not cover long term care and provides for only one union to be consulted about workplace shortages of personal protective equipment. Hospital and long-term care employers and our unions agree on the need for a revised directive. We would be extremely disheartened if the resistance to an inclusive and collaborative protocol is from your government. *We ask that you help facilitate a Directive, enacted and implemented today, that covers all healthcare staff and ensures that all unions are involved in consultations about what happens during any shortages of personal protective equipment.*

Ontario industry is capable of making testing kits, N95 masks, face shields, gloves and gowns and ventilators. The Chinese government established working factories in 2 weeks to meet the Covid-19 challenge. *We ask that your government immediately order Ontario industry to urgently produce these vital products.*

Ontario has the lowest rate of Covid-19 testing of any province. Jurisdictions with aggressive Covid-19 testing have much lower levels of mortality. This is particularly important when we are dealing with the vulnerable patient and resident populations in our hospitals and long-term care facilities. *We ask that your government significantly step up its testing for Covid-19 and particularly amongst vulnerable populations, like hospital patients and long-term care residents.*

Our members will apply all of their skill and training and compassion to nurse, protect, support and comfort those in their care.

Your urgent and immediate support for these urgent requests would be a strong signal to the health care workforce that their advice as well as their sacrifice are valued by your government.

Yours sincerely,



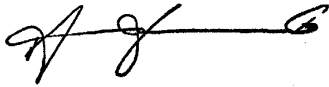
Sharleen Stewart, President, SEIU Healthcare



Michael Hurley, President, Ontario Council of Hospital Unions/CUPE



Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President, Ontario Public Service Employees Union



Andy Savela, Director of Health Care, UNIFOR

cc: The Hon. Christine Elliott, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health
Helen Angus, Ontario Deputy Minister of Health
Matt Anderson, President and CEO, Ontario Health
Anthony Dale, President and CEO, Ontario Hospital Association
Donna Duncan, Chief Executive Officer, OLTC
Lisa Levin, Chief Executive Officer, AdvantAge Ontario