

# Community Connections

For OPSEU members working in Sector 17,  
Community Health Care Professionals



*Message from the President and  
First Vice-President/Treasurer:*

## Meeting the challenges – *both ordinary and extraordinary*

Being a health professional working in the community is never easy, but the heart and the desire to help those in need is what drives professionals to continue doing what they do so well.

We're only now coming out of a year and a half of turmoil from the worse public health crisis in many decades. This has made a tough job even tougher, with the majority of COVID deaths taking place among residents of long-term care facilities.

Sometimes the challenges get bigger because of bad management and bad decisions.

Take the [Black Creek Community Health Centre](https://opseu.org/news/strike-ends-for-black-creek-community-health-centre-workers/126454/).<sup>1</sup> The courageous members who work there, almost all racialized women, were put through a gruelling six-week strike because the executive director was refusing to give them a one per cent wage increase – despite the fact that the government had made the extra funding available. But they stood strong and united, achieving the wage increases they'd been fighting for, and more.



### Meet your sector executive

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1. <https://opseu.org/news/strike-ends-for-black-creek-community-health-centre-workers/126454/>





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More widely, many community health professionals are grappling with the government's latest attempt to fix community health care by rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. It's called the *Connecting People to Home and Community Care Act*. The legislation has raised more questions and problems than it has solved.

Know that we understand these added challenges to your professional and personal lives. OPSEU/SEFPO is with you, and supports you as you navigate these changes while continuing to do your best to provide services to your clients.

We're all in this together, but some – like you – are in it more than others. On behalf of OPSEU/SEFPO's 180,000 members and Ontarians everywhere, thank you for all you've done for the vulnerable and others in need – and what you'll be called upon to do in the coming months and years. The selfless dedication you consistently demonstrate is an inspiration to us all.

We hope you'll be able to take some **much** needed down-time this summer to recharge your batteries and reconnect with family, friends and your community.

In solidarity,

Warren (Smokey) Thomas,  
OPSEU/SEFPO President

Eduardo (Eddy) Almeida,  
OPSEU/SEFPO First Vice-President/Treasure







## Health care worker survey finds mental health compromised when workers feel unsafe

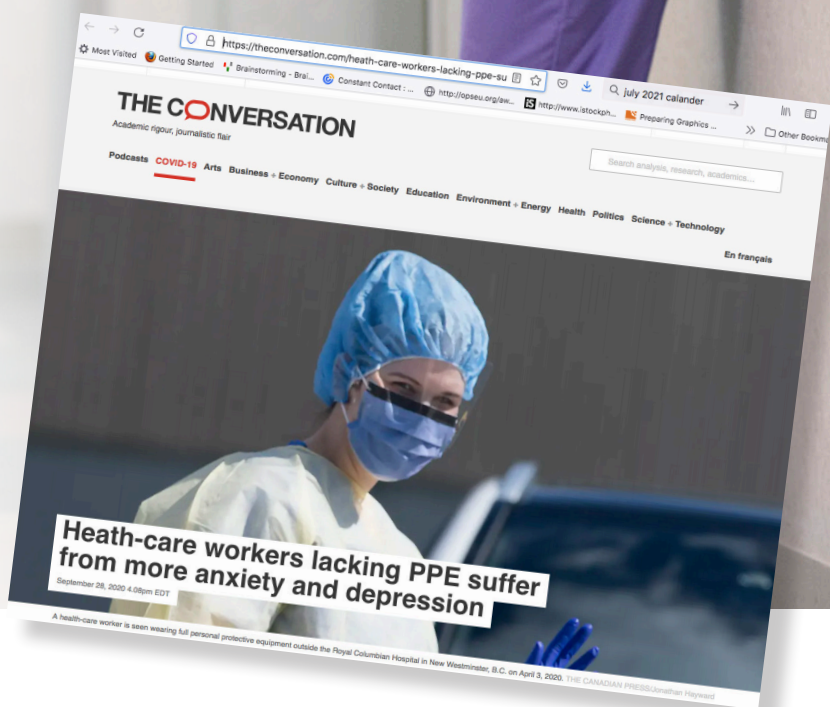
A web-based survey of health care workers conducted by the Institute for Work and Health and Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. examined the relationship between the perceived adequacy of personal protective equipment (PPE), workplace-based infection control practices (ICPs), and worker anxiety and depression.

The survey found very high rates of anxiety and depression among health care workers who had less or poor access to PPE. Workers who felt that ICPs were less adequate also had higher levels of anxiety and depression.

Access to quality PPE and ICPs is key to protecting workers from infection. However, poor or substandard implementation of these health measures was found to further compromise the mental health of health care workers.

The results of this survey can support locals and units to hold the employer accountable for strengthening employer-based ICPs and to taking initiatives to proactively monitor the mental health of health care workers throughout the pandemic.

You can learn more by [reading about the survey online](#).<sup>2</sup> More information about the connection between a lack of PPE and anxiety and depression can be found in [The Conversation](#).<sup>3</sup>



2. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0706743720961729>

3. <https://theconversation.com/heath-care-workers-lacking-ppe-suffer-from-more-anxiety-and-depression-145612>



## Health and safety: what we can learn from COVID-19

*Terri Szymanski, OPSEU/SEFPO health and safety officer;  
Marc Casey, OPSEU/SEFPO negotiator*

Health and safety inspections often focus on the physical condition of the workplace, when they should also include *Infection Prevention and Control* (IPAC) principles as well. While public health strategies are based on “acceptable risk”, employers have a legal obligation to take all reasonable precautions to protect the health and safety of their workers.

According to the “precautionary principle” in Ontario’s *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), “When faced with occupational health and safety decisions, the Employer will not await full scientific or absolute certainty before taking reasonable action(s) that reduces risk and

protects workers.” Although this principle is stated in law, it can also be useful to negotiate it into collective agreements.

Communication among local and unit union leadership is key to enforcing, monitoring and proactively bargaining new health and safety language. Joint health and safety committee (JHSC) representatives, highest-ranking, the local executive committee and the negotiation team should all be communicating on a regular basis to share information, advocate for change and bargain health and safety language into collective agreements.



**Workplace  
Safety**

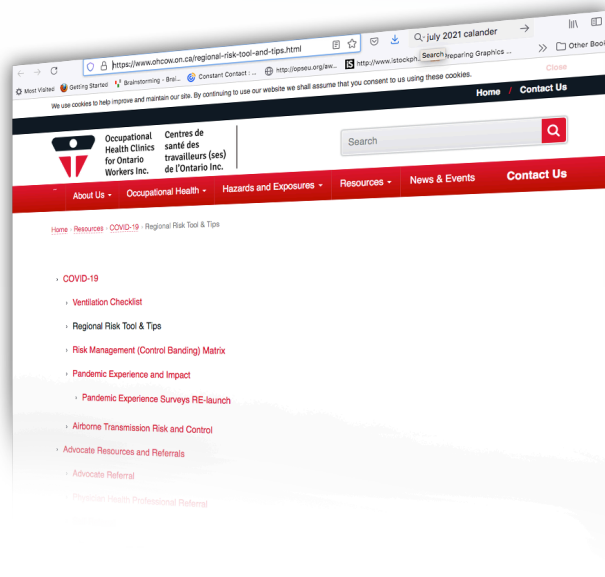


## Health and safety language for collective agreements

Examples of health and safety language that can be tabled in bargaining include: Training and upkeep will be done by the employer with regard to protective clothing, equipment or devices.

- Point-of-care risk assessments will be performed before every patient interaction.
- The employer will maintain adequate stocks of PPE in preparation for a pandemic.
- Organizational risk assessments should include measures to mitigate the transmission of infections.
- Staff who are required by public health or the employer to stay away from work after a positive test for an infectious disease or exposure to a positive individual shall have paid leave for this time.

Additional resources can be found in [Regional Risk Tool and Tips<sup>4</sup>](https://www.ohcow.on.ca/regional-risk-tool-and-tips.html) published by Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW).

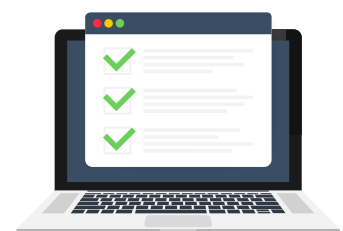


## Update on home and community care support services

Effective April 1, 2021, our members working in the LHINs transitioned to a new employer entity named Home and Community Care Support Services (HCCSS). Patient-direct employees will continue in their roles under the new employer name. Also effective the same date, members not providing direct patient care moved with their collective agreements to Ontario Health.

OPSEU/SEFPO continues to make the following recommendations:

1. Completely withdraw this legislation and begin again with fulsome public stakeholder discussions.
2. Directly fund and operate home care in Ontario to provide greater stability to the sector and increase quality of care.
3. The government should not rely on an expansion of the direct-funding model.
4. The government must properly allocate funding for home and community care.
5. Sections of Bill 175 that remove or relocate public interest protections and oversight to the regulations must be removed.
6. Address the fundamental problems with Ontario Health and the Ontario Health Teams related to public democratic oversight, and engage with health care stakeholders and labour organizations to improve these systems.



4. <https://www.ohcow.on.ca/regional-risk-tool-and-tips.html>





# Community Connections

Effective July 1, HCCSS now have their own governance structure, as outlined in the *Connecting Care Act, 2019*.

Among their functions and responsibilities, HCCSS:

- maintains the same regional identifiers as existing LHINs (e.g., Erie St. Clair, Central, Champlain and North Simcoe Muskoka); and are governed by a common set of cross-appointed board members with a streamlined leadership team starting in

summer 2021. The membership of these boards will eventually be distinct from the board membership of Ontario Health.

The government also established a new board on July 1, 2021, cross appointed to all 14 HCCSS corporations. Additional details about the leadership and governance for HCCSS will be provided at a later date.

## Minister of Health provides notices of transfer under *Connecting Care Act*

*Tracy More, OPSEU/SEFPO negotiator*

Affected members received notice from Ontario Health that CUPE had filed a S69 application. OPSEU/SEFPO is named as a third party to the application.

This application is filed with respect to the legacy LHIN positions that were non-direct patient care members who moved from the LHINs to Ontario Health on April 1, 2021. OPSEU/SEFPO has two units with two single impacted incumbents. OPSEU/SEFPO has an agreement with Ontario Health for a single incumbent, single bargaining unit at Ontario Health-Eastern and Ontario Health-West Region.

Ontario Health-Eastern Region is a new bargaining unit in Local 4101.

Ontario Health-West Region is a new bargaining unit in Local 274.

CUPE's application may impact two OPSEU/SEFPO units (only Champlain was named, not Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant), as they have filed to have their eight

bargaining units merged into one bargaining unit.

OPSEU/SEFPO has filed a response to the application to maintain our rights and representation. This matter is before the Labour Board. Of note, this application does not impact any HCCSS bargaining units.

Please offer support to Local 4101 as they move through an upcoming transfer order that originally provided notice effective August 1, 2021, and has since been postponed until after the start of the school year.

The preliminary notice provided transfers of the paediatric support services team out of the HCCSS-Champlain (Local 4101) into CHEO. There is a professional bargaining unit at CHEO represented by OPSEU/SEFPO and a registered nurses bargaining unit represented by ONA. The parties are meeting to support the transfer and its application under the *Connecting Care Act* and *Ontario Labour Relations Act*.





## Home and Community Care Support Services (formerly LHINs) bargaining update

Home and Community Care Support Services bargaining units have ratified their collective agreements. It was a tough round of bargaining because of Bill 124. The parties agreed to one per cent wage increases in each of the three-year moderation periods and other non-wage-related monetary proposals, as prescribed by the legislation.

A letter of understanding was agreed to with respect to a wage reopener on monetary proposals, should Bill 124 be amended or repealed and/or found to be unconstitutional.

WSIB coverage for personal support workers (PSWs) and developmental support workers (DSWs)

In March 2021, the government announced it was initiating PSW/DSW coverage consultations for WSIB. The deadline for submissions was April 28.

The ministry is exploring extending mandatory coverage to employers who commonly employ PSWs and/or DSWs, but who are not subject to mandatory coverage. Should legislation be passed to include coverage for these groups, all staff, both full-time and part-time, would be afforded WSIB coverage protections.

OPSEU/SEFPO strongly supports coverage, not only for these groups, but also for other workers excluded from the act.

You can learn more on the [Ontario Regulatory Registry](https://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/view.do?postingId=36732&language=en).<sup>5</sup>

5. <https://www.ontariocanada.com/registry/view.do?postingId=36732&language=en>



# Congratulations to Black Creek Community Health Centre members on gains after a six-week strike

The members of OPSEU/SEFPO Local 5117 working at Black Creek Community Health Centre have ratified their new collective agreement, ending a gruelling six-week strike for the community health care workers.

Local 5117's members ratified their new collective agreement, which succeeds in achieving the long-term wage increases that they've been fighting for. The agreement also includes language that holds their employer accountable to the union for wage-specific

funding, where it was previously up to the employer's discretion, and ensures that this funding will be distributed equitably on their wage grid.

The division thanks all the locals, members and groups that made donations to our sisters and brothers during the strike and joined them on the picket line. This is what solidarity is all about.



## Stay connected and get the latest news from OPSEU/SEFPO

### Stay in touch!

To get communication directly from the sector, please send your personal email address to Chair Lucy Morton at [lucyamorton@rogers.com](mailto:lucyamorton@rogers.com).



#### OPSEU/SEFPO Member Portal

Make sure your local president or highest ranking has your current contact information. You can also register through the [OPSEU/SEFPO member portal](https://members.opseu.org/) <https://members.opseu.org/>.

Have a question for the division? Please email Anne-Marie at [aleeshatyanna@hotmail.com](mailto:aleeshatyanna@hotmail.com).



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