

WINTER 2021

FOR OPSEU/SEFPO MEMBERS WORKING IN SECTOR 11



# Hospital Support

## Message from the President & First Vice-President/Treasurer

As we have come through the past turbulent year, thanks to each and every one of you, from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you for your hard work and your commitment to taking care of every person who enters our hospitals. Thank you for the sacrifices you have made to support Ontarians and support one another through this extremely difficult time.



When 2020 began, no one could have predicted what was ahead. This pandemic exposed the weaknesses in our healthcare system that OPSEU/SEFPO has been speaking out against for decades; weaknesses like underfunding, understaffing, lack of beds and looming labour shortages. It all came to a head when COVID-19 hit Ontario, and you rose to the challenge of protecting the public under these tough conditions. You are the heroes of this pandemic – countless lives have been saved because of you.

Now, as we begin 2021, know that OPSEU/SEFPO is here for you every day. We will keep fighting to make sure that you have everything you need to do your jobs safely, and that you receive the respect for your work that you deserve. You are never going through this alone; 170,000 fellow members of OPSEU/SEFPO have your back. If you are ever in need of support or have any concerns, reach out to your union representatives. They are always here to help.

We're facing the battle of our lifetime. We are all in this together, we will get through this.

In solidarity,

Warren (Smokey) Thomas  
OPSEU/SEFPO President

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

## Meet your Sector Executive:

### Jill McIlwraith

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[georgiajill@hotmail.com](mailto:georgiajill@hotmail.com)

### Rose-Anne Faubert

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### Lisa Hovinga

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### Jonathan Hopkins

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Sector 11 represents members with a range of job classifications from office and clerical (secretaries, Accounting, Health Records) to Service (cooks, maintenance, security, and electricians), RPNs, and Personal Support workers.

# Message from the Chair

As healthcare workers this year we've faced:

- the fear of risk of infection
- worrying that we may carry the virus home to our loved ones, while balancing our commitment to helping others
- fighting for an adequate supply of PPE
- desperately trying to keep up and decipher the ever-changing recommendations from local officials, medical and public health experts, and political leaders
- working extraordinarily long hours and sacrificing time-off and vacations to fill in for our colleagues who fall ill and are forced to quarantine.

Our ability to tackle challenges head-on, adapt quickly to new circumstances, brave the risks and uncertainty, and commit to providing the best level of care possible is what makes me so proud to be part of such a heroic group of workers.

The sector executive has continued working diligently during this unprecedented year. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have held weekly conference calls every Wednesday night with all highest-ranking members and local presidents to discuss updates and hear about one another's experiences on-the-ground. Recently, those calls have been reduced to every two weeks. We encourage anyone who would like to participate to please email us for call-in details.

Plans are also being made for our upcoming Bargaining Conference taking place in February. We've been staying informed on all evolving health and safety issues, and exploring new language for collective agreements. We also have discussed future campaign initiatives to support bargaining.

I want to take this opportunity to remind our members that it is critical to take the time to care for ourselves during this stressful time. The sector executive and I can always be reached if anyone has any questions.

I encourage you to visit our website for more information about our sector at: <https://opseu.org/sector/hospital-support/>. For members on social media, I invite you to check out the OPSEU Health Care Divisional Council Facebook page to see the latest union-related healthcare updates:

<https://www.facebook.com/OPSEUHealthCouncil/>

In solidarity,

Jill McIlraith, Chair

Division/Sector Executive, Hospital Support

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# Sector Visibility and Campaigns

## Sector Infographic

In order to better assist members of the Hospital Support sector we've produced the following infographic that helps visualize who we represent, how many members we have, and where they work. Please feel free to request a poster of this infographic for your workplace by contacting any of us on the executive.



## Fight for inclusion in Pandemic Pay

In response to the government's poorly planned pandemic pay initiative, our sector participated in a solidarity-building campaign by adding these social media picture frames for one week at the end of May 2020. In addition, healthcare members were encouraged to send the Premier and the Minister of Health [this online message](#) telling them that all frontline health workers deserve recognition. In total we had close to 3,000 messages sent.





## Member Education Update

One of OPSEU/SEFPO's core strengths is the quality and availability of education it provides for its member activists. Knowledge truly is power and these resources help empower the leaders of our locals to support the wider membership in dealing with a number of workplace challenges.

Due to the pandemic, we've had to revise the way we access OPSEU/SEFPO education. For years, regional educationals and other learning opportunities have provided activists with not only the knowledge and tools to do the important work that they do, but also the opportunity to network and gain the invaluable insights and experiences of other activists from other areas. However, as with a great many other things, OPSEU/SEFPO has had to adjust its approach and methods accordingly.

Many of our locals have seasoned activists who carry a substantial body of knowledge and experience waiting to be passed along to those interested in becoming active in their locals. Where and when possible, I would encourage new stewards to avail themselves of this invaluable experience and knowledge. Your OPSEU/SEFPO Staff Representatives can be helpful in this area as well, and your Regional Executive Board members can provide information regarding virtual conferences and other events.

I highly encourage you to visit <https://opseu.org/member-education/> and check out the latest online resources.

As Benjamin Franklin once said: "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

In Solidarity,

John Vanderputten

Education/Communications, Division/Sector Executive  
Hospital Support

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## Fight against cuts to healthcare

Back in the Spring 2020, hospital staff were labeled heroes by Premier Ford, MPP's, and other public figures. From nurses and registration clerks who were on the frontline, to the cleaners and facilities staff who ensure the next patient experiences the same cleanliness and comfort as the patient before; we were called heroes and given much praise and thanks by the CEOs and Vice Presidents of the hospitals we work for.

In the second wave of this pandemic, we're seeing layoffs in the healthcare sector in some parts of the country.

This past year, Alberta Health Services announced a plan to lay off up to 11,000 employees, most of whom work in labs, linen, cleaning, and food services, to contract the work out to private companies in hopes of saving millions. But as many of us know, contracting out is never as good as the savings or the quality of work that public healthcare provides.

In Ontario, this pandemic is creating significant financial pressures on our hospitals. If additional funding is not provided by the government, hospitals may be forced to make difficult decisions in the coming months.

If your hospital announces any type of layoffs, please make sure to inform your local OPSEU/SEFPO Staff Representative so that we can strategize on the best ways to campaign against these cuts.

Feel free to reach out to us on the Hospital Support Division Executive and we will assist in any way we can.

You all have my absolute appreciation and admiration for your incredible efforts during these trying times.

Stay safe and stay informed.

In solidarity,

Jonathan Hopkins

Vice-Chair/Job Security, Division/Sector Executive  
Hospital Support

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# Member Appreciation

## Small town with big hearts

Living in a small, tight-knit community is such an amazing thing. We care for and look out for each other day in and day out! But when COVID-19 hit our small community, we saw the true greed come from the outside.

When we went to our local community groceries stores to get the basic necessities, the shelves were bare! For the first time, our little community wasn't a little community anymore. With an unprecedented influx of early summer visitors, we witnessed folks putting in orders of over \$900 in some cases at the local grocery store for toilet paper, paper towels and canned goods. Stockpiling at its finest. But our little community didn't riot or fight over products; we took things one day at a time. We were there to help each other, offering to pick up supplies when we went out of town. The community got through the first wave despite its unexpected challenges.

In our little 20-bed inpatient unit and seven bed ER at St. Francis Memorial Hospital, we went into full pandemic mode. Our very talented maintenance team constructed a makeshift four room COVID section, with the installation of a negative pressure room on one unit. An outside area was dedicated to those who failed the screening and went directly to our COVID rooms. Staff donned full PPE and cared for individuals without hesitation and treated them no differently.

Yes, we were all scared, but as health care workers we know what it means to step up to a challenge. Our staff never once wavered in caring for someone who might have been COVID positive.

Screeners were in place 24/7, doors were locked, and new policies were implemented. There was increased education for staff, increased staffing, and our administration was there with us every step of the way, keeping us informed of every change that was coming down from the government.

Our local area set up a hotline for people to call to limit the number of people coming into our emergency leading to potential exposures. This service was well-received and widely appreciated

in our community. Our ER remained opened and staffed 24/7. Thankfully, our small town has only seen one positive case of COVID-19 and this was at the very beginning.

To the staff at St. Francis Memorial Hospital, thank you for keeping our community safe! To everyone in the community, wear your mask, wash your hands, and practice physical distancing. Please keep doing your part to stay safe.

Lisa Hovinga  
Treasurer, Sector/Division Executive  
Hospital Support  
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## Gratitude at the start of a new year

OPSEU/SEFPO brothers and sisters are strong, and we can beat this pandemic. How do I know this? Because of the many positive things that have come out of the seemingly endless challenges and tragedies caused by this virus.


As we start off this new year, here are a few things that I find myself feeling grateful for:

- **Acts of goodwill**

It's been remarkable to see how many people have come forward to help their communities, doing things like donating blood. Many families have reaped the benefit of this one act of selflessness. I appreciate all of our OPSEU/SEFPO brothers and sisters who have donated this year.

OPSEU/SEFPO also set a record with our local food drive in Chatham-Kent, held on May 16th. In total, we collected 6,728,200 lbs of food; a heartwarming gesture of goodwill from everyone who donated and made this achievement possible.





This past year made Ontarians become even more creative, innovative, and supportive. We came up with unique and helpful ways to help in the pandemic. For example, the making and donating of PPE for hospitals, food bank donations, local street music performances for neighbours, and the list goes on and on.

- **My fellow healthcare members**

I'm proud of working alongside so many bright, smart, and intelligent OPSEU/SEFPO healthcare members who have sacrificed so much while dedicating themselves to saving lives. Happily, we can report that in some parts of OPSEU/SEFPO's regions there have been few to no COVID cases reported such as, for example, in Chatham-Kent and Kingston.

During this pandemic, I have been scared, I have cried, and I have been incredibly sad during many tough working days, as I'm sure many of you have. But I can also say that many of us have become stronger than we ever thought possible. We have learned how to persevere through trying times, and we are better for it.

- **Union Solidarity**

I'm grateful for the enthusiasm and support from our OPSEU/SEFPO leaders and staff. OPSEU/SEFPO has been there, supporting us all along the way. For example, in March 2020 OPSEU/SEFPO launched a Charter challenge against the damaging Bill 124 wage cap, which fundamentally violates public sector workers' constitutional right to collective bargaining by capping their wages for three years. It means a lot to be part of this great union, who stands by their members no matter what.

I'm grateful for the love we've shown and received this year. The pandemic has highlighted what is most important in our lives. It made us step back for a moment to realize that we are fortunate. We are lucky to have each other, and to have our OPSEU/SEFPO family to help push through this and stay together.

As we continue through this trying time, we can start each day with a grateful heart. Let's keep spreading love and kindness, and being supportive of one another.

Rose Anne Faubert  
Secretary, Division/Sector Executive  
Hospital Support  
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# Bargaining 2021

## Who's in Bargaining?

Local	Employer
159	St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital
226	North Wellington Health Care
360	Stevenson Memorial Hospital
475	The Ottawa Hospital
345	Peterborough Regional Health Centre
715	Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre
132	Chatham-Kent Health Alliance
260	Grey Bruce Health Services
275	South Bruce Grey Health Centre
374	Mackenzie Health
473	St. Francis Memorial Hospital
476	Deep River & District Hospital

### Bargaining language for pandemic disease outbreak

It's been over a hundred years since the world has seen an outbreak like the one we are currently experiencing. We have been through epidemics such as SARS, MERS, H1N1, and Ebola, to name a few, but we have not faced the kind of challenges across the world that we are dealing with today.

The universal PPE protocol, which we have all learned and followed for many years, has been rendered impossible due to a shortage of supplies. The modern way of stockpiling PPE and other healthcare supplies is the "just-in-time method" where stocks are kept at minimum levels on sites. Although this procurement style made sense economically, in a pandemic situation, we – and many medical workers around the world – suffered tremendously as a result of sudden supply shortages and skyrocketing prices.

In our next round of collective bargaining, we must closely examine how we can negotiate contract language so that we may be better prepared and equipped for pandemic conditions. We need to educate and protect both employers and members as part of our collective agreements.

We must address questions such as:

- What are employers' duties and responsibilities during a pandemic?
- What are employees' rights? How can OPSEU/SEFPO locals be most effective in joint labour committees during the handling of a pandemic outbreak?
- How can we identify what the high-risk conditions are?
- Which members are the most vulnerable and medically at risk?
- How can they be accommodated accordingly?
- How do members report when they are exposed to high-risk scenarios while performing their jobs?
- If an exposure happens at a workplace, how can it be traced to the source to be eligible for WSIB coverage?
- How can we ensure members are paid for sick time regardless of where the exposure occurred?

When we get through this, I am sure our collective agreements will be even stronger to best protect our members, our patients, and to keep our workplaces and communities safe.

Harjinder (Harry) Sangha  
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# Upcoming Events

## 2021 Hospital Support Division Virtual Bargaining Conference

**February 2021**

The Sector Executive is currently hard at work planning for our first virtual bargaining conference which will be held in February 2021.

Due to the pandemic, we will not be able to meet in-person for the conference. However, we will be able to meet virtually via Zoom.

At the upcoming conference, we will look at common bargaining priorities and best language for our collective agreements. Furthermore, we will learn about Bill 124, the Ford government's regressive compensation restraint legislation, and look at health & safety priorities and lessons from the pandemic.

Please stay tuned for more information in the near future!

But, by coming together,  
we can also push for better  
contracts.



Authorized for distribution

Warren (Smokey) Thomas  
OPSEU President



FOR OPSEU/SEFPO MEMBERS WORKING IN SECTOR 11