

# Order Waiving Contract Protections for Hospital Staff Is “Unnecessary, Disrespectful and Coercive”: OCHU

March 23, 2020 06:00 AM Eastern Daylight Time

TORONTO--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--It is profoundly unfair to a dedicated mostly female hospital workforce who due to the lack of protective masks, face shields and other equipment are already in harms way and greater risk of COVID-19 infection that the Ontario government gives itself broad powers to take away their workplace rights, says Michael Hurley president of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU/CUPE).

“But if our members are willing to sacrifice themselves to provide high quality care, they deserve to be consulted about what changes are needed in the workplace to accommodate the emergency, and they have not been. The government order is unnecessary, disrespectful and coercive.”

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On the weekend the Ontario government announced it would use its emergency powers to override hospital staff’s contract. Under Ontario labour law, hospital workers have very limited rights to refuse unsafe work. They do not have the legal right to strike as other workers do.

“Why is the female dominated hospital workforce, who have stepped up to deliver high quality care with limited resources and some of whom are already falling ill from COVID-19, treated so badly by this government?” Asks Hurley. “First the Ontario government fails to order enough masks, face shields and gloves, then it waters down its standard for protection for health care staff to suit its supply shortage and then it gives itself broad powers to take away many of their workplace rights without a word of consultation.”

Hurley is reminding the government that despite the extraordinary time for Ontario and globally there has been no difficulty transferring staff from closed day clinics and outpatient surgeries to screening centres and to other services.

“We would certainly help to overcome any such problem. Hospital workers have been there and will be there for the people of Ontario as the pandemic intensifies. We can be counted on,” Hurley says. “But if our members are willing to sacrifice themselves to provide high quality care, they deserve to be consulted about what changes are needed in the workplace to accommodate the emergency, and they have not been. The government order is unnecessary, disrespectful and coercive.”

Hurley is urging the government to use its emergency powers to order Ontario industry to produce masks and ventilators, which are short supply. Both will be needed to protect the health care workforce from infection and the sickest of COVID-19 patients.

“Our members want to focus on care, and they do not want to be distracted from that. We need the government to ensure that this order expires as scheduled. An extension would be very problematic.”

## Contacts

Michael Hurley President OCHU/CUPE 416-884-0770

Stella Yeadon CUPE Communications 416-559-9300 [syeadon@cupe.ca](mailto:syeadon@cupe.ca)

## CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES

### Release Summary

It is profoundly unfair to a dedicated mostly female hospital workforce to take away their workplace rights, says OCHU president.

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### Contacts

Michael Hurley President OCHU/CUPE 416-884-0770

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