



MEDIA RELEASE

Ontario Nurses' Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Front-Line Nurses Demand Safety: Call Comes as More RNs Attacked in the Workplace

TORONTO – Three more front-line registered nurses have been assaulted in the workplace, leading the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) to demand immediate legislation to protect RNs and allied health care workers.

The latest attacks on nurses occurred at Toronto's Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) during the week of November 12. Two of the nurses are suffering from critical injuries that occurred in the attacks, while a third has suffered injuries not requiring surgery.

One of the nurses had been attempting to call a "Code White" (psychiatric emergency code) for a situation involving a patient. The nurse was attacked in the nursing station after the patient jumped a half-door. The nurse was taken to hospital with injuries that include a broken shoulder, while a second nurse suffered multiple injuries. The patient was transferred to another floor in the hospital with a more secure environment.

Another assault occurred at the facility when a patient pushed his way into the nursing station and attacked the nurse there. Security staff was unable to enter the unit because a security door required that they be buzzed in. This nurse was also taken to hospital by ambulance with multiple injuries, including a broken jaw.

"This situation is outrageous and is beyond unacceptable," says ONA President Linda Haslam-Stroud, RN. "We're seeing more and more of these types of attacks on our front-line nurses." The Occupational Health and Safety Act requires employers to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of workers from all hazards.

"These recent attacks show that employers are not taking every reasonable precaution," she adds. "Therefore, nurses are now demanding the precautionary principle be embedded in health and safety legislation and adopted in all employer policies, government directives and regulations." This was the critical recommendation by the late Justice Archie Campbell in his 2007 SARS final report, to keep health-care workers safe in the workplace. A resolution and action plan is before the delegates this week at the OFL 50th anniversary convention.

Haslam-Stroud believes that every health-care worker must be protected from all forms of violence, including violence perpetrated by supervisors, visitors, workers, domestic violence and unpredictable and unstable patients.

"It is devastating to hear about nurses being attacked," says Danielle Latulippe-Larmand, RN, the ONA Bargaining Unit President who represents CAMH nurses. "We need every precaution in place to ensure our safety, particularly in settings where we are dealing with potentially unpredictable and unstable patients."

The Ministry of Labour has been called in to investigate the attacks at CAMH. One procedure at the facility has been modified at the request of the hospital's Joint Health and Safety Committee, with security doors no longer requiring access by buzzing staff in.

ONA is the union representing 53,000 front-line registered nurses and allied health professionals working in Ontario hospitals, long-term care facilities, public health, the community and industry.

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