

The importance of the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA)  
for nurses and/or health care professionals

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The Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) is a trade union comprised of workers who represent over 60,000 nurses and/or health care workers in Ontario (ONA, 2022). In a profession where safety, overworking, and overloading of responsibility is of concern, it is important to have an organization such as ONA to protect the rights and wellbeing of nurses and/or healthcare professionals. ONA is important for nurses and/or health care professionals as it acts to defend their rights, ensure that they have safe and equitable workplaces, and advocate directly with government, employers, and stakeholders to make positive changes in the workplace.

As a nurse and/or healthcare professional, ONA provides protection in the workplace against unfair practices and unsafe working conditions (ONA, 2022). A collective agreement (contract) is formed between the employer and ONA to outline the workplace rights of nurses and/or healthcare professionals. Specifically, the contract will outline professional responsibility and workload. If the rights in the contract are violated, a nurse and/or healthcare professional can file a grievance to resolve a dispute between ONA and the nurse and/or healthcare workers' employer. This is very important to have as nurses are often more vulnerable to exploitation (Brophy et al., 2021). With arranged rights such as the amount of overtime one can work, scheduling, and layoffs, nurses and or/healthcare professionals will not be taken advantage of and are less likely to experience burnout (Sollazzo & Esposito, 2020). ONA not only protects the rights of nurses and/or healthcare professionals, but it allows for a safe and equitable workplace.

ONA creates a safe and equitable workplace which is very important for nurses and/or healthcare professionals. By ONA achieving fairness, they have provided protection from discrimination and harassment in the workplace, wage increases, and protection from health and safety hazards (ONA, 2022). In a review by Wei et al. (2018), it was demonstrated that safe and equitable workplaces create healthy work environments which allow for higher job performance,

productivity, job satisfaction, and patient care quality for nurses and/or healthcare professionals. Good working conditions are known to promote a greater well-being (Hagedorn et al., 2016). Without ONA, safety and equity would not be implemented nor advocated for, and the workplace would not be optimal for nurses and/or healthcare professionals.

ONA is also important for nurses and/or healthcare professionals because they advocate directly with government, employers, and stakeholders to make positive changes in the workplace. They create major public awareness campaigns that educate others on issues that impact nurses and/or healthcare workers (ONA, 2022). This is important for nurses and/or healthcare workers as it creates discussion and action for positive changes in the workplace (ONA, 2022). Some of the positive changes that advocacy campaigns have provided is public support for staffing levels and quality patient care (ONA, 2022). Without ONA, nurses and healthcare professionals have minimal advocacy that would leave them with little choice to accept the wages and conditions that their employer determines (ONA, 2022).

Going into nursing school knowing that ONA is important because it protects my rights, ensures my safety and equity in the workplace, and advocates directly for me, makes me even more excited to start my career as a nurse and provide the best patient care possible. With ONA, I know I will be protected as a nurse, enter a fair and safe workplace, and be advocated for so I can work under the best possible conditions.

## Resources

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