

The Importance of the Ontario Nurses Association

Ella Lachimea

Ontario Nurses Association

July 1, 2022

The Importance of the Ontario Nurses Association

Nurses and other health care professionals are faced with many challenging situations daily. The Ontario Nurses Association helps these individuals by ensuring that their workplace is as safe as possible (ONA, 2022). This association plays a vital role in nurses' day-to-day activities, allowing them to relieve some stress. The mission of ONA is to advocate for nurses to create a safe and unbiased environment (ONA, 2022). Especially with the pandemic, nurses have faced many difficult situations. In this paper, I will discuss the importance of ONA and the impact it has on nurses' careers.

There have been many instances where representatives of ONA had to take charge of what was happening throughout the health care system. One of the most infamous situations is regarding bill 124, which was passed shortly before the pandemic affected nurses nationwide (Szperling, 2022). This bill states that any health care professional may not be given a raise higher than one percent of their wage over three years' time (Szperling, 2022). As a result, ONA put a charter in place to advocate for their right to bargain for equitable pay (ONA, 2022). Nurses worked tirelessly as the pandemic unfolded, enough to push many to the edge and create a shortage of healthcare professionals. Many believed a raise would be beneficial and necessary to uphold adequate nursing practice (Szperling, 2022). Without ONA, nurses would not have the backbone to lean on in situations where they are taken advantage of. Many believed this bill may have stemmed from prejudicial views as it only capped nurses' wages, which is predominantly a women's career (Westoll, 2021). This bill did not affect male-dominant careers such as the first responders (Westoll, 2021). The association also sheds light to many topics that are not talked about enough. For example, ONA fights for healthcare workers' mental needs just as much as physical (ONA, 2022). They understand the importance of nurses' mental health and advocate

for nurses to not be afraid to express their feelings and opinions. ONA also recognizes the potentially discriminating factors that could be found in the healthcare environment and holds individuals accountable (ONA, 2022). This association makes it known that there is no room for any biased feelings or actions toward nurses. In Thunder Bay, Ontario, less than a week apart, there were two separate incidents where nurses were assaulted. Situations like these should not be overlooked and ONA plays a big part in why these individuals are held accountable (Rinne, 2022). As a nursing student, it is evident how vital the association is for nurses. Entering our first-ever clinical placement, the shortage of healthcare professionals was prominent. In some circumstances, this can lead to these workers being mentally and physically exhausted. ONA also makes sure employers are giving the appropriate rights and benefits to their staff. For example, ONA makes nurses aware of all the benefits they are accustomed to, such as sick leave, holiday pay, dental benefits, and many more (ONA, 2022).

It is adamant that without the Ontario Nurses Association, nurses would be in a less than ideal position. There are still multiple issues that must be addressed to create the safest environment in Ontario hospitals. By ONA addressing and bringing light to these situations, nurses feel like they are heard and appreciated. Without advocating for nurses, these situations could reduce nurses' abilities to provide high-quality care. Many nurses are vulnerable in the work setting, and as much as ONA protects the rights and dignity of nurses, it also allows patients of the community to know they are in a safe, compassionate environment.

References

- Ontario Nurses' Association. (2021, October 1). *Education and advocacy during Mental Illness Awareness Week*. Ontario Nurses' Association. Retrieved June 30, 2022, from <https://www.ona.org/news-posts/mental-illness-awareness-week/#:~:text=ONA%20members%20who%20are%20considering,email%20LeapIntake%40ona.org.&text=Visit%20the%20Canadian%20Mental%20Health,mental%20health%20during%20the%20pandemic.>
- Ontario Nurses' Association. (2022, January 19). *About onavision, Mission and History*. Ontario Nurses' Association. Retrieved June 30, 2022, from <https://www.ona.org/about-ona/our-vision-mission-and-history/>
- Ontario Nurses' Association. (2022, June 8). *Your contracts & rights collective bargaining and your rights*. Ontario Nurses' Association. Retrieved June 30, 2022, from <https://www.ona.org/your-contracts-rights/your-rights-at-work/>
- Rinne, G. (2022). *Nurses assaulted in two incidents at Thunder Bay Hospital*. TBNewsWatch.com. Retrieved June 30, 2022, from <https://www.tbnewswatch.com/local-news/nurses-assaulted-in-two-incidents-at-thunder-bay-hospital-5501391#:~:text=TBRHSC%20is%20increasing%20on%2Dsite%20security.&text=THUNDER%20BAY%20%E2%80%94%20Just%20days%20after,about%20assaults%20against%20two%20nurses.>

Szperling, P. (2022, April 27). *Ottawa health-Care Workers Protest to repeal Bill 124*. Ottawa.

Retrieved June 30, 2022, from <https://ottawa.ctvnews.ca/ottawa-health-care-workers-protest-to-repeal-bill-124-1.5878016>

Unified bargaining bulletin 2: Getting the Scoop on Bill 124. OPSEU SEFPO. (2021). Retrieved

June 30, 2022, from <https://opseu.org/news/unified-bargaining-bulletin-2-getting-the-scoop-on-bill-124/138337/>

Westoll, N. (2021). *What is Bill 124 and how is it affecting Ontario's nurses, public-sector*

workers? CityNews. Retrieved June 30, 2022, from

<https://toronto.citynews.ca/2021/11/15/bill-124-ontario/>