

## The Importance of the Ontario Nurses' Association for Nurses

The Ontario Nurses' Association has been an essential support system for nurses since 1973. ONA is made up of 68,000 nurses and 18,000 nursing student affiliates. This wide variety of individuals allows the union to gain new perspectives and proficiently support health care professionals. The efforts of ONA ensure that health care professionals, and in turn patients, are treated properly. To do so, ONA works hard to protect the rights of nurses and other health care professionals. This includes advocating for pay rights and ideal workplace conditions for nurses.

Nurses are front-line workers that are invaluable to our health care system. The work done by nurses and other health care professionals is crucial to the upkeep of health care in Ontario. Since the work done by these individuals are so important, their rights must be properly maintained. The rights of nurses have always been extremely important, but they have become increasingly significant during COVID-19. Since the start of this virus, nurses and other health care professionals have been under even more stress and pressure than usual. The responsibilities of health care workers have skyrocketed during this time, forcing them to work longer/more shifts, take on insane amounts of patients, and sacrifice breaks/lunches. ONA has worked towards solutions for these issues in order to preserve our nurses and their safety. Their efforts are essential in ensuring that our nurses are not struggling to stay afloat during these difficult times.

Not only does ONA protect practicing nurses, but they also are involved in the shaping of future nurses. ONA is passionate about making others aware of the challenges nursing students are currently facing. This includes the difficulties students are met with when doing clinical placements, especially with the extra measures being taken during COVID-19. The lack of clinical practice has left many new nurses entering the workplace feeling unprepared and overwhelmed by the intensity of the job. This is detrimental to the wellbeing and work output of the students. ONA is a firm supporter of nursing students and their right to proper education and preparation for their future career. These students are the future of our health care system, and without them our patient care level cannot be maintained. ONA cares about these students and understands how crucial they are to the future.

In conclusion, the Ontario Nurses' Association plays a crucial role in protecting current and future nurses. They advocate for the rights of these individuals, without which our health care system would completely fall apart. The safe and fair work environment that ONA strives for is what enables patients to be cared for at the high standard which they are. Therefore, ONA protects our nurses and sequentially protects the quality of health care in Ontario.