



Action memo

Date: November 1, 2016
To: All OPSEU members, Mental Health Division
From: Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President, OPSEU
Ed Arvelin, Chair, Mental Health Division, OPSEU
Re: **On November 2, take action for safer workplaces**

Dear friends:

We were saddened to hear, last week, of another violent assault on a mental health worker. A nurse at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, in Toronto, suffered damage to her optic nerve, facial fractures, and multiple bruises after a patient punched and kicked her repeatedly.

This assault was the latest in a long string of attacks on mental health workers in Ontario. Every day we hear from members who are afraid to go in to work. They wonder if they will be the next victim of an epidemic of violence that their employers, and the province, have done too little to stop.

According to Statistics Canada, one-quarter of all violent incidents, including physical and sexual assault, happen at work. And health care workers are much more likely to be attacked than most.

Those of us who work in mental health care want nothing more than to treat our patients. But we can't do it if we're not safe in the workplace.

For more than a year, OPSEU has been taking part in the Workplace Violence Prevention Leadership Table. The Leadership Table, sponsored by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Labour, is where we've been pushing hard to get safer workplaces for all health care workers in Ontario. Our next meeting is on Wednesday, November 2. On that day, we're asking all OPSEU members to help us tell this government that all violence against health care workers is unacceptable. **The time for action is now.**

At the Leadership Table, we are asking the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to take several steps.

The first step is to increase funding to ensure proper staffing levels at all times. **More staff are safer staff. And if staff are safe, patients are safe, too.**

But there is much more that can be done to make our workplaces safer. We need better risk assessment. Better communication systems. Better equipment. Better buildings. More training. We need the tools to do our jobs – right across the mental health system.

On November 2, help us get the word out.

On November 2, when OPSEU goes to the Leadership Table, we're asking every OPSEU member to support us. We'll be looking for real, immediate improvements to workplace safety – right across the system. Here's what you can do:

- ✓ Please print attached leaflet and share with friends, family and colleagues.
- ✓ Help spread the word through social media. Sample messages could be:

@Kathleen_Wynne pls instruct @DrEricHoskins & @MPPKevinFlynn to keep our @OPSEU mental health workers safe #staysafe #onpoli @MHDivision

@MPPKevinFlynn @DrEricHoskins help stop violence and make real change for @OPSEU mental health workers #staysafe #onpoli @MHDivision
- ✓ Email the Minister of Health, Dr. Eric Hoskins (ehoskins.mpp@liberal.ola.org) AND the Minister of Labour, Kevin Flynn (kflynn.mpp@liberal.ola.org). Tell them to fix the system and fund safe workplaces as a top priority.
- ✓ Take part in a lunch-and-learn, coffee break, or other local action in your workplace. Discuss actions you can take to support OPSEU's push for safer workplaces.

For more information, please visit the OPSEU Mental Health Division Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/OpseuMentalHealthDivision/>.

Together, we can make safety a priority.

In solidarity,

Original signed by

Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President

Ed Arvelin, Chair, OPSEU Mental Health Division