



The Professional Institute
of the Public Service of Canada
Office of the President

L'Institut professionnel
de la fonction publique du Canada
Bureau de la Présidente

Anthony Dale
President and Chief Executive Officer
Ontario Hospital Association
200 Front Street West Suite 2800
Toronto ON M5V 3L1
By Email: adale@oha.com

December 4, 2020

Dear Mr. Dale,

I am writing today regarding an issue of great concern to some 435 Ontario health care workers represented by the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC).

During the first wave of the pandemic, hospital employees who were unable to work due to a self-isolation requirement arising from a suspected COVID-19 exposure were provided leave with pay in instances where they were asymptomatic and not eligible for sick leave or WSIB.

In accordance with direction received from the provincial government through the Ontario Ministry of Health, individual hospitals have begun to implement a very significant change in direction on this critical issue. Asymptomatic employees required to self-isolate due to a suspected exposure while awaiting test results will no longer be paid and are instead being urged to use other forms of leave such as vacation days. This is also being applied to situations where exposure is known to have occurred in the workplace.

This new approach is completely unacceptable to our members. While there is no disputing the importance of self-isolation for any and all suspected cases of exposure to COVID-19, particularly in health care, it is abhorrent to penalize essential services workers unable to work due to self-isolation requirements meant to protect their colleagues and their patients. This is especially so when the exposure may have occurred in the workplace itself. Furthermore, we are concerned by this deviation from the established past practice whereby hospitals have provided paid leave to workers sent home as a result of workplace exposure to an infectious disease, for example MERS.

We are also informed that situations are to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. "Management discretion" is not an appropriate determining factor when the health of Canadians is at stake. Throughout the pandemic, public service bargaining agents have had to deal with a number of cases where local managers have denied paid leave for their staff despite a clear directive on this issue. We are therefore legitimately concerned about the inconsistent and inequitable application of "management discretion" in the current context.

Finally, please keep in mind that millions of women across the country are disproportionately bearing the brunt of pandemic-related employment impacts. This new approach to paid leave can only add another layer of distress to the thousands of women who constitute the majority of Canada's first-line responders to the pandemic crisis.

I am therefore calling on you to discuss the situation with the provincial government and to find a suitable solution allowing paid leave to continue to be used by our members in these exceptionally difficult circumstances.

I appreciate and thank you for your immediate attention to this critical matter.



Debi Daviau
President,
The Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada

