

LONG TERM CARE SECTOR (SECTOR 8)

SECTOR SURVEY December 2002

Introduction

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union represents approximately 1,012 members who work in long term care facilities across the province. OPSEU's long term care membership is known as Sector 8 in the union's Broader Public Services (BPS) Division. Our members provide services to residents in nursing homes, homes for the aged, and residences for the physically disabled as well as home care for the elderly.

Our members are overwhelmingly female and the majority work part-time. An estimated 73 per cent are part-time, while only 27 per cent are full-time.

The Executive of the Long Term Care Sector felt it was important to find out more about the pressures our members face in the workplace, especially in the area of health and safety. This survey was intended as a snapshot of our members' working conditions and their concerns.

Who was surveyed

Surveys were sent out to all OPSEU members who worked in long term care facilities in December 2002. Sixty-three surveys, or about 6 per cent of the membership, were returned to OPSEU. Of those that responded, 87 per cent work directly with the clients/residents. Only 2 per cent worked in administration, 3 per cent in maintenance, and 8 per cent were "other". Only 8 per cent held a position on the Union LEC.

Sector 8 has 17 bargaining units. These are listed below with the number of survey respondents. At the time the survey was sent out, Personal Choice Independent Living (Local 454) was not part of Sector 8 and so did not receive the survey.

<u>Local</u>	<u>Employer</u>	<u># surveys rec'd</u>
214	Tanguay	1
221	Cedarwoods	1
261	Allendale	10
262	March of Dimes - Outreach	2
262	March of Dimes - Villa Verdi	2
262	Conway Opportunity Homes	
305	The Pines	13
305	James Street Place	1
328	Hillcrest Village	5
439	Sherwood Park Manor	16
454	Personal Choice Independent Living	
455	Bayview Retirement Home	
501	Casey House Hospice	
550	Salvation Army Dufferin Residence	
593	Clarendon Foundation	3
664	Access Better Living	1
668	Participation Projects	3
	Unknown	5

Our Members Speak

Many of the members who responded to the survey wrote comments next to their answers. Here's a sample of what they wrote:

On Health and Safety:

- *Preventative training – such as back strengthening, i.e. nothing to promote physical fitness is done or encouraged. I have suggested certain things regarding the safe way (as taught by my physiotherapist) to push and pull, yet it has not been included in safe lifting procedure.*
- *Your survey asks some questions that as a direct care worker you're exposed to these conditions everyday several times a day every time you work.*
- *Infectious diseases – lack of money to cover the cost of protective clothing (masks, gowns) supplies. Increase of infections (cross infection) in the facility. P.S.W. and nurses lack time to practice proper universal precautions! Staff are rushed!*
- *No air exchange or exhaust fans in tub rooms. Very hot and exhausting to staff [who are] bathing clients.*

On Clients with Higher Needs:

- *Would like to have better communication in advance regarding residents who are ill or contagious (ex. scabies) – better precautionary measures.*
- *New clients come in every day. [The employer doesn't] tell us their disabilities.*

On Part-time Issues:

- *Part-timers need to get benefits – we work as hard as the full-time staff.*
- *Training – part-time are excluded, which are the majority of the staff. [Cost of] first aid and CPR [training] are not covered for part-time, only for full-time.*

On Workload:

- *Our workload has almost doubled. [We are] short of staff. Two people have to do the work of 3 people. Morale is down. [People's] bodies are getting sore and tired as well as sick.*
- *Too many injuries due to lack of staffing and workload.*

On Training:

- *[Training required for position] initiated by myself through further education – sometimes at my own expense and on unpaid time!*
- *[Employer covers cost of training] for some but not all.*

- *We are not always trained by a professional on how to use new equipment when it comes into the facility. I feel that every staff member should be trained before being allowed to use it. Ex. lifts, posey chairs, reclining geriatric chairs.*

Summary of Survey Results

Top issues

Respondents were asked to identify the top 5 issues that were important to them. Wages was a priority for almost every single respondent. The complete list of issues is below with the percentages reflecting the frequency each issues was mentioned.

Wages	90%
Workload	70%
Health & safety	48%
Accommodation (WSIB)	16%
Communication	48%
Equal treatment of PT and FT staff	56%
Higher needs clients	35%
Layoffs	10%
Bargaining	27%
Grievances	14%
Discrimination	22%
Funding	32%

The top 5 issues, in order, are:

- 1) Wages
- 2) Workload
- 3) Equal treatment of PT and FT staff
- 4) Health & safety
- 5) Communication

Written comments by the respondents show that the issue of communication is one of communication between the union and its members, not between the employer and its employees.

Health and Safety

Working Alone: When asked how often they work alone, 84 per cent of the respondents replied “always” or “often”.

Working With Aggressive Clients: When asked if they work with clients who may become aggressive, 65 per cent of the respondents replied “always” or “often”. This could be particularly difficult for workers who work alone. Of those direct care workers who always or often work alone, 60 per cent always or often work with clients who may become aggressive.

Exposure/Contact Risks: 78 per cent of respondents reported coming into contact with body fluids. Many commented that such contact happens on a daily basis. 62 per cent reported that they work in facilities with poor air quality, especially in the summer heat and humidity.

Injury and Illness: 19 per cent reported having lost time at work due to a work related injury in the past year.

Only 24 per cent reported an increase in their use of sick leave, but for those who did, work stress and workload were reported at the most common reason for this increased use (80 per cent of those reporting an increase).

Interestingly, while only 24 per cent reported an increase in their own use of sick leave, 49 per cent of the respondents reported an increased use of sick time in their work places, while only 19 per cent stated that the use of sick time had not increased. The remaining 32 per cent did not know whether sick time had increased or not.

84 per cent of the respondents believe that workload is the single largest contribution to the increased stress levels at work.

Work Related Training

84 per cent of the respondents reported that fire safety training is required by their employers. Some of the responses appear to be contradictory. For example, some respondents would report that fire safety training was mandatory, while other respondents from the same facility would report that it was not. Some respondents reported that training was not necessarily available to all staff. Some facilities would only allow direct care workers to take certain courses, while others such as dietary aides, would not be allowed. A few respondents reported that training was restricted to full-time employees only.

62 per cent of the respondents reported that their employers covered the cost of training, though some respondents stated that it had to be on their own time or that their employers were not consistent in their approval.

62 per cent of the respondents also reported that they received the training required for their position, though given the above, some of the training may be at the employee's time and own expense.

Long Term Care Sector Survey Results (63 responses)

1) Please identify the top five issues you would like to have addressed:

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Wages	57	90%
Workload	44	70%
Equal treatment of PT and FT staff	35	56%
Health & safety	30	48%
Communication	30	48%
Higher needs clients	22	35%
Funding	20	32%
Bargaining	17	27%
Discrimination	14	22%
Accommodation (WSIB)	10	16%
Grievances	9	14%
Layoffs	6	10%

2) How frequently have you been at risk due to exposure/contact to the following in the last year? Please enter number of times.

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Needle pricks	8	
Uncleanliness	33	
Poor air quality	39	
Handling of drugs	5	
Body fluids	49	
Chemicals	14	
HIV	5	
Other*	12	
None identified	5	

* includes scabies, Norwalk virus, Hepatitis and skin rashes.

- most reporting exposure do not know the frequency of exposure.

3) Direct care workers: How often do you work alone?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Always	12	22
Often	34	62
Rarely	5	9
Never	4	7
Total	55	100

4a) Direct care workers: Do you work with clients who may become aggressive?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Always	14	25
Often	22	40
Rarely	19	35
Never	0	0
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Total	55	100

4b) How frequently have you experienced or been exposed to the following in the last year? Please enter the number of times.

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Kicked	27	43
Punched	28	44
Hair pulled	12	19
Abusive language	50	79
False Allegations	19	30
A threatening statement	31	49

- most reporting abuse do not know the frequency.

5) Do you have a health and safety committee in your unit?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	56	89
No	5	8
Don't know	2	3
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Total	63	100

6) Have you lost time at work due to a work related injury in the past year?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	12	89
No	50	8
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Total	62	100

If yes, how many days?

Impossible to calculate, since responses range from “a few days” to 1.5 years.

7) Has your use of sick time increased in the last year?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	15	24
No	47	76
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Total	62	100

If yes, by how much?

Again, impossible to calculate, since responses range from “used all sick time” to “double” to 2% to 100%.

What was the cause?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Disease / physical illness	8	53
Disability	3	20
Work Stress	9	60
Home stress	1	7
Work Load	7	47

- Only those 15 people who reported an increase in their use of sick time are included in the responses, and the percentages are based on those 15 respondents.

8) Has sick time use increased in your work place?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	31	49
No	12	19
Don't know	20	32
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Total	63	100

9) Do you believe the current climate (such as lay offs, workload, underfunding, current “hard bargaining climate”) has contributed to increased stress levels at work?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Layoffs	16	25
Workload	53	84
Underfunding	33	52
Hard bargaining climate	26	41
Other	1	2

10) Does your employer require mandatory training?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Fire safety	53	84
Back care	42	67
Food handling	14	22
CPR	35	56
Nutrition	13	21
First aid	26	41
Non-violent crisis intervention	17	27
Infectious disease control	23	37
Pharmacology	3	5
Other	5	8
None listed	4	6

Does the employer cover the cost of this training?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	39	62
No	16	25
Sometimes	2	3
Don't Know	6	10
Total	63	100

Do you receive the training you require for your position?

	<u>Responses</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Yes	39	62
No	14	22
Some, but not enough	8	13
<u>Don't Know</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
Total	63	100