



April 6, 2020

Dr. David Williams
Chief Medical Officer of Health
393 University Avenue, 21st Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2M2

Dear Dr. Williams

Re: Direction to front-line workers

On behalf of thousands of workers on the front-lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, we write to request your immediate assistance and direction.

In recent days, the media have reported dramatic changes in the medical information provided by federal authorities and Dr. Tam, the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada. We have now learned, for example, that 50% of people with COVID-19 may have no symptoms at all, and that such “asymptomatic carriers” may account for significant transmission of the virus. Only a few weeks ago, Dr. Tam advised that people without symptoms were not contagious. In fact, being asymptomatic was a condition of attending an essential workplace. Now, we are told that “silent spreaders” and “stealth transmission” are dominant concerns. Over the weekend, we even learned that tigers have tested positive in New York City, which raises the question of transmission with other animals.

OPSEU represents more than 165,000 employees of the public service and broader public service of Ontario. OPSEU members are working their hearts out across the healthcare sector, including for hospitals, long-term care facilities, and in mental health and community care agencies. Thousands of members work with vulnerable and exposed populations, such as those with mental health concerns, in shelters and in Corrections.

Ontario Public Service Employees Union | www.opseu.org

Head Office: 100 Lesmill Rd., Toronto, Ontario M3B 3P8
Tel: 416-443-8888 **Fax:** 416-448-7469 **Toll Free:** 1-800-268-7376
TDD: 416-443-9898 or 1-800-663-1070 opseu@opseu.org

Syndicat des employés de la fonction publique de l'Ontario | www.sefpo.org

Bureau principal : 100, chemin Lesmill, Toronto (Ontario) M3B 3P8
Tél. : 416-443-8888 **Téléç :** 416-448-7469 **Sans frais :** 1-800-268-7376
ATS : 416-443-9898 ou 1-800-663-1070 sefpo@sefpo.org

OPSEU members have significant concerns regarding the advice and direction they have received to date regarding screening mechanisms and personal protective equipment (PPE) in their workplaces. Increasingly medical direction now seems to indicate asymptomatics are at least an equal threat to front-line workers as patients or clients who are under treatment. You will appreciate that nobody wants to make other people sick or in any way contribute to the spread of COVID-19. At the same time, OPSEU members perform essential duties during this crisis, and they cannot create “social distance” from their work.

We ask for your direction as Ontario’s Chief Medical Officer of Health. The media has now reported that members of the public should wear masks when leaving their homes. In this context, which essential workers should continue to attend work, and who should have access to what types of PPE?

In your view, what does the science indicate regarding “asymptomatic transmission” of COVID-19? OPSEU members appreciate your earliest attention to our request.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Smokey Thomas', written in a cursive style.

Smokey Thomas,
President

C: The Honourable Christine Elliott, Minister of Health
The Honourable Merrilee Fullerton, Minister of Long-Term Care