

Anthony Dale
 President and CEO
 Ontario Hospital Association

July 21, 2022

OPEN LETTER RE: Transparency into the staffing crisis amidst the growing wave of emergency room closures across the province

Dear Mr. Dale,

We write with great alarm on behalf of our combined 70,000 hospital union members and the patients they care for, amidst the growing wave of emergency room closures across the province.

It's undeniable that efforts to quietly manage the health human resource crisis by hospital executives are failing families. The public, and our members serving on the frontline, deserve to know more about what is leading to closed doors, longer wait times, and service disruption inside Ontario hospitals. We're calling on the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) to provide real answers, public commitments, and transparency into the crisis.

Ontario hospitals are no longer safe places to work, and no longer reliable institutions for patients to receive care. Staffing levels in Ontario hospitals rank the lowest in the OECD. Managing hospitals on a razor's edge is just a dangerous game that goes way beyond efficiency.

That's why it is reckless and irresponsible during a crisis for hospital executives to be spending public funds on a misleading marketing campaign. The people of Ontario expect their taxes to be spent on staff and care, not propoganda and spin by the OHA.

Meanwhile, as vacancy rates dramatically rise, management by executives at Ontario hospitals are clearly failing by repeatedly ignoring the underlying cause of the current hospital crisis. Staff no longer want to be called heroes by their corner-office bosses; they want to be recognized as humans in need of urgent support. Driving workers out and relying on agency services is wrongheaded and wasteful.

Vacancy Rate (FT & PT Permanent Positions)	on Mar 31, 2017*	on Mar 31, 2018*	on Mar 31, 2019*	on Mar 31, 2020*	on Mar 31, 2021*	on Oct 20, 2021**	on Mar 1, 2022**
All Hospital	5.57%	3.93%	3.70%	4.24%	5.57%	8.09%	8.84%
RN & RN-Specialty (Total)	6.89%	4.90%	4.81%	4.85%	7.50%	11.73%	12.63%
Service (Total)	6.25%	3.93%	3.81%	4.56%	6.00%	7.94%	8.35%
Registered Practical Nurse	6.75%	4.71%	4.40%	5.13%	6.89%	9.76%	10.24%
Personal Support Worker	5.53%	4.90%	4.95%	6.05%	4.67%	9.31%	9.36%
Paramedical (Total)	3.69%	2.74%	2.78%	3.33%	4.11%	5.01%	6.14%

*Annual OHA HR Benchmarking Survey

**HHR Workforce Survey conducted in October 2021 and March 2022.

It is unacceptable that questions remain about the precarity of hospital care. Patients and staff deserve more information and a commitment to urgent action now.

We are calling on the Ontario Hospital Association to take immediate action on these five steps:

1. Launch a website to disclose in real-time the human resource shortage of each hospital (green to mean safely fully staffed; yellow for fully staffed without margin for staff slippage; red for understaffed and comprised care)
2. Be transparent by holding weekly public press conferences throughout this crisis on the status of hospital management's plans for uninterrupted care delivery and keeping emergency rooms open
3. Agree to joint meetings with the new provincial health minister to discuss retention and recruitment efforts on a quarterly basis
4. Stop the misleading OHA marketing campaign and instead divert the use of those public funds from advertising to care
5. Commit to filling vacancies by ending the use of agency staff and eliminate the cap on mental health support for emotionally exhausted frontline hospital staff

We look forward to your response and commitment on these items.

Sincerely,



Sharleen Stewart
President
SEIU Healthcare



Michael Hurley
President
OCHU/CUPE

cc:

The Honourable Doug Ford, Premier of Ontario

The Honourable Sylvia Jones, Ontario's Minister of Health

Peter Tabuns, MPP, Interim Leader of the Ontario NDP

John Fraser, MPP, Ontario Liberal Health Critic

Mike Schreiner, MPP, Leader of the Ontario Green Party