

BULLETIN

HSA renews call for enhanced PPE for workers in vulnerable settings

October 7, 2020

HSA is again calling on employers to improve supply of personal protective equipment and preventative occupational health and safety measures for health care workers working through the COVID-19 pandemic.

In addition, all members are advised to ensure they have access to appropriate PPE, and to exercise their right to refuse unsafe work if the appropriate PPE is not provided.

HSA is concerned that employers are ignoring lessons learned from the 2003 SARS pandemic, including guidance provided in the Campbell Commission's final report that said the foremost worker safety lesson of SARS is the precautionary principle. Justice Campbell said, "...safety comes first...reasonable efforts to reduce risk need not await scientific proof" and wrote that "unless this precautionary principle is fully recognized, mandated and enforced in Ontario hospitals, workers will continue to be at risk."

The union has provided to the Ministry of Health an updated report prepared by Dr. John Murphy, an expert on occupational hygiene and adjunct professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health at the University of Toronto, for science-based guidance on the best measures for infection control among health care workers.

Murphy's comprehensive review of the current science and evidence makes it clear that aerosol transmission is a potential feature of the spread of COVID-19, and that health care workers should use higher-rated PPE to improve protection. [See the October Murphy Report here.](#)

Specifically, Dr. Murphy says N95 respiratory infection protection is warranted for more scenarios than the close-quarter aerosol generating medical procedures (APMG) currently outlined in the BC PPE policy.

All health care workers are urged to do a point of care assessment as outlined in [Appendix 3](#) of Dr. Murphy's report, and follow the advice on adequate personal protective equipment.

If you are refused adequate protection, you have the right to refuse unsafe work.

[See how to refuse unsafe work here.](#)

HSA continues to advocate for improved access to personal protective equipment for its members working in health care and community social services, as workers in those settings must have the confidence that their health is protected while they work to care for and protect vulnerable patients and clients.

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