



## **Memo to Unifor members working in agencies providing violence against women residential services**

**April 17, 2020**

This week, the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services issued a temporary order in the fight against COVID-19 that affects staff at Women's Shelters and working in Crisis Line services.

The temporary order allows agencies in this sector to take steps to respond to, prevent and alleviate the outbreak of coronavirus and COVID-19 by carrying out measures such as:

- Redeploying staff within different locations in, or between premises where a service agency provides services and supports including premises at which the service agency has been contracted or designated to provide services on a temporary basis in response to the declared emergency;
- Changing the assignment of work, including assigning non-bargaining unit employees or contractors to perform bargaining unit work;
- Changing the scheduling of work or shift assignments;
- Deferring or cancelling vacations, absences or other leaves;
- Employing extra full-time, part-time or temporary staff or contractors, including for the purposes of performing bargaining unit work;
- Using volunteers to perform work, including to perform bargaining unit work; and
- Providing appropriate training or education as needed to staff and volunteers to achieve the purposes of a redeployment plan.

While we acknowledge that this crisis requires some unusual and urgent responses, the approaches should be able to be carried out in discussions with your union representatives before any temporary work deployment or staffing changes are made. Employers have been directed by the Ministry to engage in good faith discussions with bargaining agents and we need to ensure that happens. You still have a collective agreement and health and safety rights.



The union raised several issues about the temporary order with the government. First, that agencies should only enact these directives in response to a demonstrated need. We also raised the issue of worker responsibilities for child and elder care in their own homes, reiterating that those requirements must be considered when making changes to hours of work.

We also raised the issue of health and safety highlighting the difficulty women's shelters have had in accessing personal protective equipment (PPE). If you are concerned about the availability of or access to PPE in your workplace, please bring this to the attention of your joint occupational health and safety committee. If you have questions about the actions your employer has taken in implementing these orders please notify your union.

Unifor will continue to provide updates as information becomes available at [unifor.org/COVID-19](https://unifor.org/COVID-19).

Please sign up for the union's weekly newsletter at [unifor.org/subscribe](https://unifor.org/subscribe) and download the Unifor mobile app on the Google Play store or the Apple App Store on your smart phone.