



**Speaking Notes for a Presentation by  
Naureen Rizvi, Ontario Regional Director**

**To the Standing Committee on Social Policy  
Regarding Bill 283,  
*Advancing Oversight and Planning in Ontario's Health System Act***

**May 13, 2021**

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Good afternoon. Unifor welcomes the opportunity to share our views with the Committee regarding the proposed Bill 283. Thank you for the invitation to appear.

I am the Ontario Regional Director for Unifor, elected to represent the interests of our members here in provincial matters. I am joined today by our Health Care Director, Andy Savelle, and our Health Care Researcher, Mike Yam.

Unifor is Canada's largest private sector union with 315,000 members working in virtually all sectors of our economy. Over half of our members live and work in Ontario, making Unifor one of this province's largest and most important trade unions.

Despite our footprint in various private industries, Unifor represents a significant number of workers in public services, including the health care sector. We represent more than 26,000 health care workers in Ontario who work in hospitals, long-term care homes, retirement homes, ambulance services, home care and health clinics.

I would like to speak to the part of this bill that would create a new regulatory authority for Personal Support Workers through the *Health and Supportive Care Providers Oversight Authority Act*.

Bill 283 has been tabled during an unprecedented time – a time when our health care system and health care workers have been stretched to the limit. We have tragically lost so many Ontarians to COVID-19, including several health care workers who had been on the front line.

I must acknowledge the tireless work that PSWs across the province have been doing throughout the pandemic. PSWs – like other health care workers – have been putting their lives on the line in order to take care of our seniors in long-term care and retirement homes, provide care for vulnerable communities in assisted living settings or in their own homes, and help care for COVID-infected people in our hospitals.

Unifor and its PSW members have several concerns regarding Bill 283, a piece of legislation that seems to raise more questions than answers.

First, the legislation outlines a procedure for complaints and investigations. This proposed regulatory authority would have broad investigative power for complaints against a PSW. This includes determining if a registrant has breached the prescribed Code of Ethics that would be determined by regulation.

It is unclear how this complaints process will interact with provisions in collective agreements between unions and employers, as they relate to discipline. The Authority would appear to add an unnecessary, additional layer of accountability.

We know that PSWs regularly work in situations where they are understaffed or work short, which could present opportunities for undeserved complaints. Could this lead to potential abuse of the complaints process? Would this disciplinary process supersede rights afforded to PSWs who are covered by collective agreements? Will privacy be protected for PSWs during and after an investigation?

Second, what will the cost be for PSWs to register with the authority? Any registration fees would be a financial burden for PSWs who are typically low paid in most areas of the health care sector. We have seen numerous reports over this past year that have overwhelmingly concluded that PSWs are underpaid and low compensation has been one of the biggest factors behind the current staffing crisis.

Third, registration with the authority would be voluntary according to the legislation. However, what would be the implications for working PSWs who choose not to register? Will non-registered PSWs be treated differently by employers? Will employers make registration with the authority a condition of employment? Will there be any differential treatment or penalties for PSWs who do not want to register with the authority?

Fourth, there is no clear criteria for appointing the Board of Directors and CEO for the proposed authority. Board appointments would be made by this government, but there is a lack of accountability for selecting these members, who will also appoint the

authority's CEO. Unifor has raised concerns in the past about appointments made by this government to various health care related groups and commissions.

As you can see, Unifor has many questions about the intention of this authority and the powers that it will have.

For all of the reasons previously mentioned, Unifor is very concerned about the repercussions for PSW's under this proposed authority. There are still a lot of details that we do not know and will not be clear until we see regulations.

We also urge you to examine the structure that was recently proposed in Nova Scotia for Continuing Care Assistants – the equivalent to PSWs in Ontario. Unlike Ontario, the proposed legislation does not establish a regulatory authority or oversight mechanisms for complaints or discipline. Rather, Nova Scotia is proposing to establish a registry, of which the function is to collect data and track the CCA workforce for government planning initiatives. The legislation also does not include the ability for any authority to charge a fee to CCAs for the registry or for fees to be set in regulation.

Finally, I would like to raise the concern we have with the Ontario PSW Association – an organization that has applauded and supported Bill 283. OPSWA purports to represent thousands of PSWs, but there is no proof of this claim. OPSWA is run by Miranda Ferrier and a self-appointed Board of Directors that is not accountable to its membership.

Unifor has already voiced our opposition to Miranda Ferrier being appointed to the long-term care Staffing Supply Accelerator Group. OPSWA does not have any real credentials or authority to be involved with any government initiative. This includes involvement with any potential regulatory authority or registry, and its current partnership with HealthForceOntario for a program that “certifies” internationally trained nurses to work as PSWs in Ontario. Unifor urges this government to distance itself from this sham organization that has been profiting from misinformed PSWs and through this government pilot program.

Once again I thank you for your interest in our views, and I welcome your questions and comments.