



THE CANADIAN PSW NETWORK

The Professional Voice For PSWs

www.canadianpswnetwork.org

**Feedback on Bill 283, Advancing Oversight and
Planning in Ontario's Health System Act, 2021**
Submitted to Social Policy Committee related to Bill 283

May 12, 2021

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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian PSW Network was founded in 2018. It is a federally incorporated, not for profit-based organization. Formed by Personal Support Workers (PSWs) with a passion to ensure that the voices of fellow PSWs were heard the association was built on the desire to ensure that they would be the professional, genuine voice and that all activities would be completed with integrity. Now, three years later the “PSW Network” as it is often referred to is comprised of a board of directors that are still very much dedicated to volunteering their time ensuring that PSWs in Ontario feel supported. The board consists of PSWs and nurses who bring a wide variety of experience. Sectors such as home care, long term care, community and education are represented, and the network’s business is conducted in satellite offices throughout Ontario.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of what the Canadian Personal Support Worker Network is and the work its members do to fight for title protection, regulation, permanent pay raises and paid sick time in addition to supporting PSWs who need someone to talk to. We are proud to share that we collaborate with all levels of government to ensure that issues related to being a and working as PSW are heard.

CURRENT ISSUES

- Recruitment and Retention of PSWs into the profession
- Low wages, especially with raise in minimum wage makes this not a career of choice
- Working conditions, like lack of full-time hours, benefits are unstable
- Abuse of patients/residents go unreported or PSWs just switch jobs
- Unpaid sick days especially during the pandemic are weakening this workforce. Community sector pay is not the same as facility based
- Lack of standardization of education, scope of practice, entry to practice
- PSWS being asked to preceptor copious number of students, no extra pay- no recognition, extra time provided = burnout
- Staffing ratios

WHO ARE PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS (PSWS)

PSWs are the foundation of healthcare: they provide the highest level of intimate care, whether it be physically, mentally, spiritually, or socially. Many clients they care for are house/LTC bound, having limited to no mobility. Often, the PSW is one of the few connections between the client and the outside world. PSWs are not only the eyes and ears of the healthcare team, more so they are the stethoscope on the heartbeat of our vulnerable patients.

The data collected at time of this survey publication in mid 2020, over 550 frontline health care workers gave us this valuable information for statistics on gender, age, and sector: (see next page)

CROSS SECTION OF THE PSW WORKFORCE

86.2% - PSWs with certificate & 8.9% of all surveyed work a combination of sectors/employers

Gender	Age Bracket	Years as a PSW	Sectors
93.1% Female	33.6% aged 50+	21.2% - 20+ years	38.5% - Home Care
5.8% Male	18.9% aged 45-50	20.5% - 15-20 years	23.6% - LTC
	20.7% aged 40-45	24% - 10-15 years	9.4% - Retirement
	12.3% aged 35-40	10.2% - 7-10 years	8.7% - Community
	7.6% aged 30-35	9.8% - 5-7 years	3.1% Hospital
	5.3% aged 25-30	13.8% - < 5 Years	1.5% - Group Home
			0.9% Hospice

PSWs make bottom-of-the-barrel wages: from as little as a starting wage of \$13-14/hr, to the Government's current minimum wage of \$16.50/hr, in Home Care & Retirement. Those who work in LTC generally have a pay scale from \$18/hr to \$22/hr to start. This varies depending on location (urban vs rural).

Many PSWs have teen and adult children making only \$2-\$3 less an hour than they do. For example: Students employed at a fast-food restaurant make the current minimum wage of \$13.40 an hour. Many retirement homes and private care sectors offer \$14.70 an hour to their PSWs.

- Northern and rural regions are in far worse shape than more densely populated areas.
- Home care PSWs pay their own expenses out of pocket including car payments, vehicle maintenance, vehicle insurance, liability insurance, cell phones and gas.
- Very few companies offer reimbursement or allowances for these expenses.
- Majority of PSWs in home care work alone, not knowing what situation they may be walking into.
- PSWs in Homecare are often only paid for the time they are with clients; this can result in PSWs needing to work 12–14-hour days just to be paid for 8 hours of work, depending on the travel between each client.
- PSWs need a higher wage to recoup those expenses and still afford to live.

No one knows exactly how many PSWs (certified or non-certified) there are working in the province. There is an estimated guess of approximately 145,000 but no one knows. When a PSW comes to provide care in the community to a vulnerable person, how do we know they have had adequate training or have a certificate?

All this data speaks to the need for permanent pay raises rather than temporary pandemic pay hikes.

NEED FOR TITLE PROTECTION

A protected title would provide:

- Giving much needed respect and recognition for current PSWs
- Entice more into the field as they would have a sense of recognition and respect.
- Create more jobs
- Industry stability
- Advance public safety
- Wage floor increase
- Assist with mandatory staffing ratios
- Create a Regulatory Body for oversight & accountability where there currently is none.

THE PSW NETWORKS ADVOCACY FOR TITLE PROTECTION

Recognizing the need to have ONE title; The PSW Network began working with a MPP on protected title concepts. In late 2019, we discussed why title protection was crucial using as a basis of the conversation the fact that there are currently over 50 terms for “PSW” in the Province of Ontario (see reference 1).

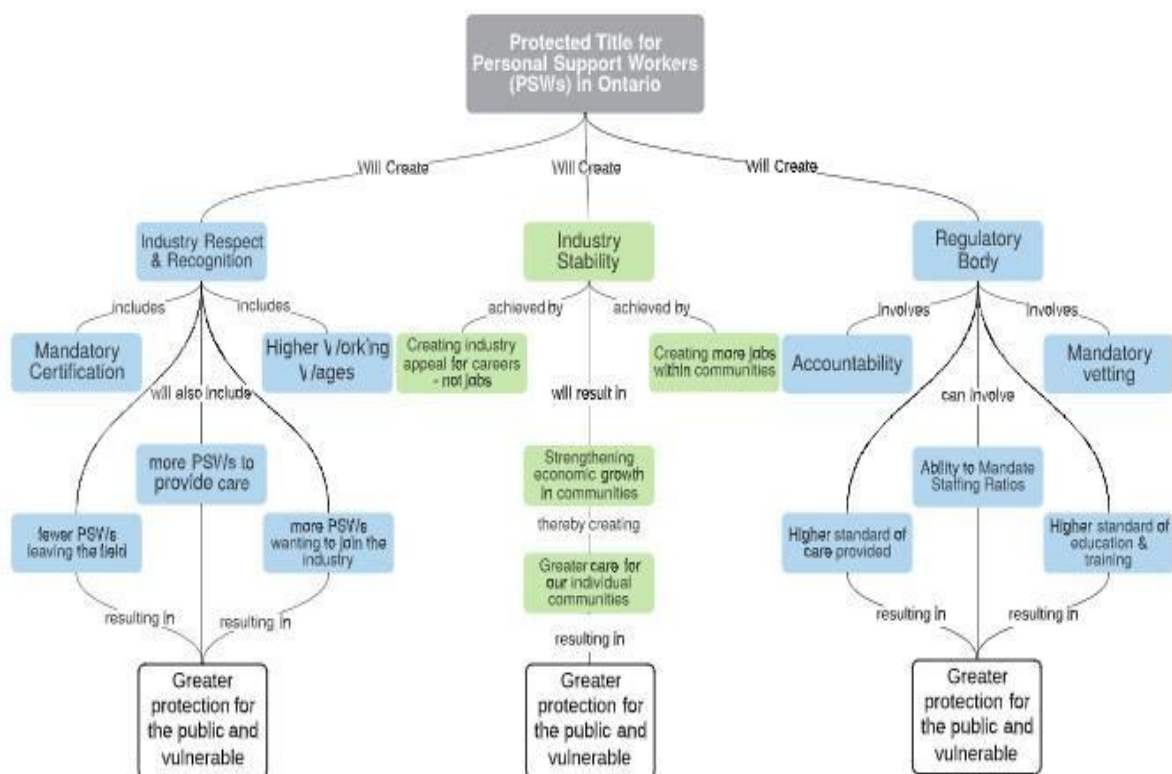
We were then asked to assist with a structure for it so a Private Members Bill could be brought forward by Spring of 2020 including why this and regulation was paramount to PSWs, the public, and the industry. This was then brought to the MOH & MOLTC in mid/late 2020 to assist with the staffing crisis being faced primarily in LTC. As of today, we have not heard back from the Ministry regarding this plan.

Following are the concepts provided to the Ministry to support title protection for PSWs

PSW Protected Title Concept for 2020

Created and submitted by The Canadian PSW Network

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(PSW's Partnering Everywhere)



PSW PROTECTED TITLE CONCEPT 2020

Created and submitted by the Canadian PSW Network
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POSITIVE IMPACT OF TITLE PROTECTION AND REGULATION

It is well documented that the recruitment and retention of PSWs in Ontario is a challenge. To that end, here are our thoughts on how implementing change will have a positive impact:

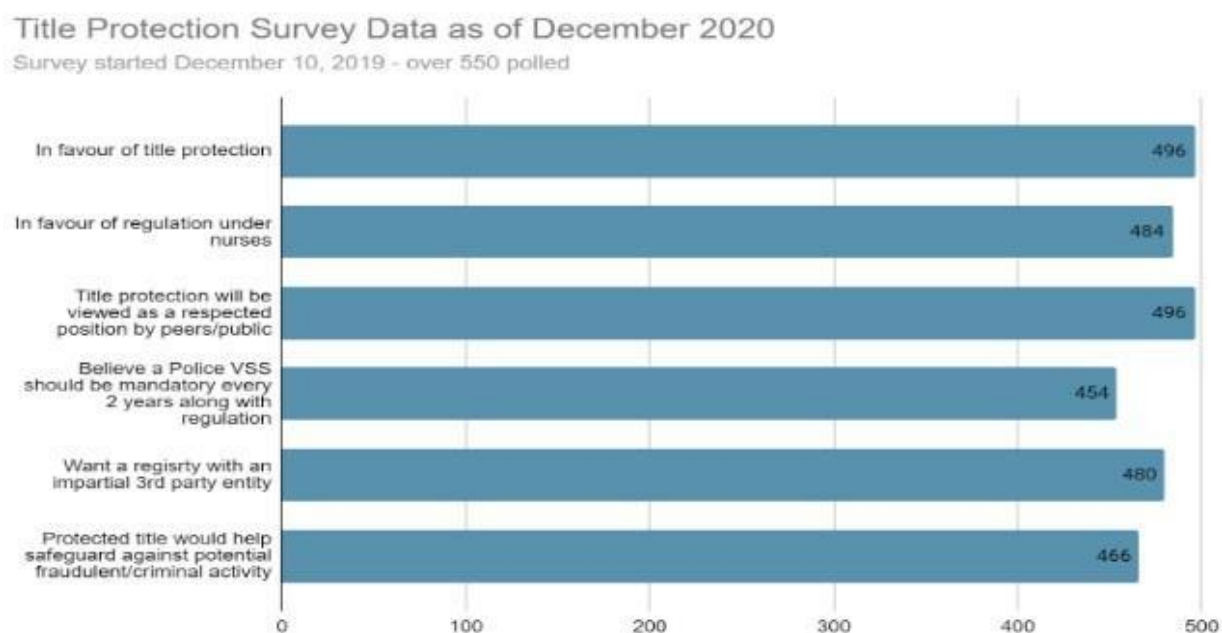
- Give existing PSWs a reason to stay in the industry & entice more into the field
- Job creation will strengthen communities and help lower unemployment rates
- More jobs will improve the stability of the industry and the consistency of care provided
- More PSWs increases staffing ratios - fewer missed home visits & fewer unfilled shifts in LTC
- More PSWs means fewer sick days due to illness, injury & burnout
- Mandatory Police Vulnerable Sector Screening (VSS) every two years will help ensure public safety. (Currently, if a PSW does something that does not fall under criminal

prosecution, they can simply move to another employer, or town and "fly under the radar" and continue doing this until they are caught. Most regulatory bodies leave it to the "Honour System" to self-report)

- Regulation would also ensure a standard of education, standard of training, and standard of practice

TITLE PROTECTION SURVEY 2020

In December of 2020, the PSW Network conducted a survey of PSWs in Ontario to determine their opinions on having a protected title and regulatory body. Following are the key results.



CONCLUSION

The message is loud and clear, PSWS in Ontario want title protection and regulation. The PSW Network will continue to advocate for what PSWs want. The data provided speaks to the PSW voice- it's now time to listen!

Reference 1

Following is a list of the current terms used for individuals doing “PSW” work in Ontario. It is important to note there are more being added every day to try to entice more people into the role by giving fancy titles that are equal to the role of the PSW - with, or without the training or certificate.

Personal Support Worker	Patient Care Attendant
Guest Care Attendant	Continuing Care Aide
DSW- Developmental Services Worker	Continuing Care Aide Assistant
HSW- Home Support Worker	Continuing Care Aide Attendant
HSW: Hospital Support Worker I	Patient Care Aide
HSW: Hospital Support Worker II	Patient Care Aide Assistant
HSW: Hospital Support Worker III	Patient Care Aide Attendant
Support Worker	Caregiver
Client Care Aide	UCP- Unregulated Care Provider
Client Care Assistant	Homemaker
Client Care Attendant	Companion
Residential Aide	Respite Aide
Residential Assistant	Respite Assistant
Residential Attendant	Respite Attendant
HCA- Health Care Aide	CSW- Community Support Worker
HCA- Health Care Assistant	HCA- Home Care Aide
HCA- Health Care Attendant	Home Care Assistant
PSW- Perioperative Support Assistant	Home Care Attendant
PSW -Perioperative Support Attendant	Support Services Aide
Care Attendant	Support Services Assistant
Personal Attendant	Support Services Attendant
Personal Care Aide	Home Health Aide
Personal Care Assistant	Home Health Assistant
Personal Care Attendant	Home Health Attendant
Continuing Care Aide	Personal Care Advisor
Continuing Care Aide Assistant	Personal Care Aide
Continuing	Personal Care Assistant
Care Aide Attendant	Personal Care Attendant
Patient Care Aide	Guest Care Aide
Patient Care Aide Assistant	Guest Care Assistant
	Guest Care Attendant

Source: Google search term “PSW job” - search results based on employment job postings Secondary source: 3. (PSW HQ)

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