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MEDIA ADVISORY

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**Montfort clerical wins province-wide recognition award;
presentation at the hospital Wednesday**

OTTAWA, ON – They are the unsung heroes of the hospital system who are often patients' first point of contact before stressful surgeries, tests and diagnosis appointments. On Wednesday, one of them, an administrative secretary at the Montfort, will be recognized for her contribution to patient care.

Jennifer Carriere, who has since 2011 worked with the Montfort Hospital's Assertive Community Treatment Team (ACTT), an out-of-hospital centre that provides patients with persistent mental health disorders, counselling and other support services, was nominated for the award by several of her co-workers. Carriere is known as a conscientious team player and problem-solver, with boundless energy and a keen dedication to helping patients. She will be presented with the annual Ontario Council of Hospital Unions' (OCHU) Administrative, Clerical Hospital Worker of the Year Award on June 5, 2019, at 4:00 p.m. in the Montfort Hospital (713 Montreal Road, Ottawa) Auditorium.

Hospital administrative staff process patient records, do admissions on wards and surgical floors and transcribe confidential physician and nurse practitioner patient orders. In community-focused care serving vulnerable patient populations, such as the satellite Montfort service where Carriere works, front-line clerical staff are essential face-to-face patient contact.

"It is important to acknowledge that administrative staff are part of the patient care experience. They do valuable work, which is often sensitive, involving patient privacy issues. It is short-sighted of hospitals to eliminate clerical staff and replace them with patient kiosks, and other automation access, when patients actually see these staff as part of the care team who help them navigate the hospital system," says Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) 4721 president Laurin Lévesque.

Recent CUPE polling found that those surveyed thought the best patient care is provided by dedicated hospital staff, not robots. Seven-in-ten respondents opposed the privatization or automation of hospital clerical support services, with the vast majority rejecting using an auto kiosk to check into a hospital rather than a hospital worker.

With Premier Doug Ford's government's coming health system restructuring and mega mergers, hospitals may see clerical and administrative staff as "expendable cuts. But that is a misguided approach to patient care," says Louis Rodrigues, Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU) first vice-president.

OCHU is the hospital division of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) in Ontario and represents over 40,000 hospital staff across the province. Thousands of them are hospital administrative and clerical workers. Among CUPE's newest hospital administrative members are nearly 700 administrative workers who, in May, opted to unionize when facing workplace instability at the newly merged St. Michael's Hospital in downtown Toronto.

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