



November 10, 2020

Via Email (dr.david.williams@ontario.ca)

Dr. David Williams
Chief Medical Officer of Health
393 University Ave, 21st Floor
Toronto, ON M5G 2M2

Via Email (president@oahpp.ca)

Colleen Geiger
President & CEO (Acting)
Public Health Ontario
661 University Ave, Suite 1701
Toronto, ON M5G 1M1

Dear Dr. Williams & Ms. Geiger:

Re: Aerosol Transmission of SARS-CoV-2

We are writing to you on behalf of the Ontario Council of Hospital Unions (OCHU)/CUPE, the Service Employees International Union – Healthcare (SEIU), and Unifor. Together, we represent over 100,000 members working in hospitals and long-term care facilities across Ontario.

As you are no doubt aware, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has updated its guidelines this week on how COVID-19 spreads. The new guidelines acknowledge what unions and other worker representatives have been saying for months: SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, can spread via aerosols.

The significance of this recognition cannot be overstated. For months, despite compelling evidence to the contrary, Ontario officials have stubbornly maintained that in all but the rarest of cases, COVID-19 is transmitted by large droplets that do not travel further than two metres and quickly fall to the ground. PHAC's recognition of aerosols as a mode of transmission reflects the reality that COVID-19 can spread across much further distances and may remain in the air for hours. This has significant implications, particularly for individuals located in indoor settings.

PHAC's recognition of aerosol transmission is not a novel one. We remind you that both the WHO, in July, and the CDC, in October, revised their guidance to reflect the reality of airborne transmission. Canada was late to the game. There is no excuse for Ontario to be even later.

We are writing to request that you revise the Ontario government guidelines, policies, and other documents within your respective jurisdictions to be consistent with the current federal (and international) guidance. The precautionary principle requires that you do not wait for absolute certainty before recommending reasonable steps be taken to protect the health and safety of all residents of Ontario. The science is sufficiently clear that Ontario's publications must reflect the reality of aerosol transmission.

Without limiting the generality of that request, we specifically request that the Public Health Ontario ("PHO") document *COVID-19 Routes of Transmission – What We Know So Far*, dated July 16, 2020 and the PHO Technical Brief entitled *IPAC Recommendations for Use of Personal Protective Equipment for Care of Individuals with Suspect or Confirmed COVID-19*, dated July 27, 2020 be revised immediately. Both documents insist that COVID-19 is spread via droplet and contact transmission and that airborne spread is limited to aerosol generating medical procedures. We know this is not true.

Further, we also request that the current version of CMOH Directive #5, dated October 8, 2020, be updated to reflect aerosol transmission. We invite a meeting with your representatives and the Ministry of Health to discuss the implications for health care workers and the relevance of the two metre rule.

Ontarians deserve to know how to protect themselves from COVID-19 and the current guidelines are misleading and dangerous.

We look forward to the government's revised guidelines.

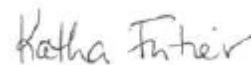
Sincerely,



Michael Hurley
President, OCHU/CUPE



Sharleen Stewart
President, SEIU Healthcare



Katha Fortier
Assistant to the National
President, Unifor