

A GENDERED ANALYSIS OF COVID19: WORKERS IN LONG TERM CARE

WOMEN ARE DOMINATING HIGH-RISK JOBS IN THE PANDEMIC:

- Nurses (RN, NP, RPN, psychiatric nurses): 92% women
- Medical lab technicians: 80% women
- Respiratory therapists: 75%
- Personal support workers: 90%
- Child care: 99% women
- Community and social services: 75- 80% women
- Cashiers: 84% women
- Food prep/service: 72%
- Cleaners: 71%

Sources: Katherine Scott, "COVID-19 crisis response must address gender faultlines" (March 20, 2020) <http://behindthenumbers.ca/2020/03/20/covid-19-crisis-response-must-address-gender-faultlines/>; Melissa Moyser, *Women and Paid Work*, Statistics Canada (2017); Canadian Nurses Association, "Nursing Statistics" (2018); Ontario Nonprofit Network, *Decent Work for Women* (2018); Kendra Coulter, "The Gender Wage Gap in Ontario's Retail Sector: Devaluing Women's Work and Women Workers." (2016)

2016 Census data on annual earnings (Canada-wide):

- Women with disabilities: 56% gender pay gap
- Immigrant women: 55% gender pay gap
- Indigenous women: 45% gender pay gap
- Racialized women: 40% gender pay gap
- On average, women across Canada face a 32% gender pay gap.

- **Women** – particularly racialized women, immigrant women, women with disabilities – make up 70% of precariously employed

workers. ■ Part-time

- Short-term contracts
- Temporary agency workers
- Casual

- Who is at greatest risk of layoff due to COVID-19:

- 13% of ALL WOMEN
- 25% of part-time workers
- 42% of workers making \$14/hour or less and 32% workers making \$14-16/hour are at immediate risk of layoff
- 1% of workers making \$40/hour or more are at risk of layoff

Source: David Macdonald, "Unemployment may hit 70-year high, but new EI replacement will help", Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: 26 March 2020; see also Sheila Block, Grace-Edward Galabuzi, Ricardo Tranjan, *Canada's Colour Coded Income Inequality*, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives: December 2019

RISK FACTORS THAT PREVENT SOCIAL DISTANCING...

- Performing essential work
- Performing high contact

personal care work with at-risk

WORKER-SIDE

population

- Low pay
- Insufficient hours of work
- Precarious forms of work that require multiple job holding
- Lack of access to paid sick days

...MEET GOV'T & EMPLOYER-SIDE RISK FACTORS OF PRECARIOUS WORK

- Systemic underfunding of sector combined with for-profit

care

- Leads to lean staffing with heavy workloads
- Reliance on family members, volunteers & family-funded private care workers to bridge care gaps
- Contracting out of key services (cleaning, laundry, food services, security)
- Reliance on part-time workers to reduce benefits/increase employer flexibility
- Reliance on agency workers

- BC Provincial Health Officer issues Order under Public

Health Act on 27 March, updated 15 April

- Order applies to direct employers, contractors and subcontractors
- Medical Officer of Health takes over staffing of long-term care facilities and private hospitals for at least the next six months
- Order articulates a detailed set of principles that will guide decision-making
- Province promises a review of long-term care sector, including specifically addressing the pay and precarious conditions of work in the sector

▪ Conditions of work under the Order

- Centralized allocation of staff results in each facility being assigned staffing that is sufficient “to safely meet patient care needs”
- Centralized staffing ensures that workers will work at only one facility (unless specific approval by medical health officer)

- All workers are treated and paid as full-time workers
- Workers receive living wages (increased to unionized wages in government-run facilities – represents up to \$7/hour wage increase)
- Employers are prohibited from terminating employment and prohibited from terminating or reducing benefits

- Under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act, issued Orders that takes effect on 22 April
- Directly orders each employee in a long-term care facility or retirement home not to work at more than one facility
- Orders long-term care providers and retirement homes to ensure that employees are only working at one facility
- The Order expires in 14 days and can be renewed for another 14 days

- Workers must take unpaid leave from their other jobs in the sector
- Employers are “encouraged” to offer full-time work but it is entirely discretionary
- No top up to wages
- Entire burden of the restricted staffing falls on precarious workers – low pay, racialized and immigrant women
- The Order does NOT apply to temp agency workers

THANK YOU!

