



CANADIAN FEDERATION
OF NURSES UNIONS
LA FÉDÉRATION CANADIENNE
DES SYNDICATS D'INFIRMIÈRES
ET INFIRMIERS

MEDIA RELEASE

Nurses call on federal government to urgently enact COVID-19 safety measures for health care workers

March 24, 2020 (OTTAWA, ON) – The Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions is urging federal decision-makers to rapidly enact emergency measures to keep health care workers safe from COVID-19.

“Frontline nurses across the country are frustrated and insulted that many of them are being denied N-95 respirators and other safety equipment they know they need,” said Linda Silas, CFNU president. “Nurses want more than our leaders’ gratitude and kind words; they want the federal government to guarantee access to the protective equipment they need when their professional judgment tells them to protect themselves.”

The CFNU, which represents 200,000 nurses across Canada, is calling for pan-Canadian implementation of point-of-care assessment – an assessment health care workers routinely conduct during the course of their work to determine their personal risk of exposure to potential hazards.

Given the current COVID-19 pandemic, it’s essential that governments respect nurses’ employment rights, like any other industry, to determine their personal level of risk and provide them with the protective equipment they need to ward off infection.

“All health care workers at risk of exposure to COVID-19 should be provided with and have access to a fitted N-95 respirator or one of a higher grade,” said Silas. “The key lesson we learned from the 2003 SARS outbreak is that when the scientific debate has not been settled, we must err on the side of caution. Right now, we still don’t know everything we need to know about this new virus.”

“We have to be safe, rather than sorry. We have to take reasonable precautions.”

The [position statement](#) released today provides nurses with guidelines on screening and triage, swabbing, and designating “hot spots” in health care facilities where certain medical procedures that can spread COVID-19 through the air take place. It also includes a safety checklist for health care employers and workers.

“Many current guidelines treat the safety of health care workers as an afterthought,” said Silas. “They fail to trust the judgment and expertise of the very people tasked with seeing us through this pandemic.”

“Our nation’s health care workers are leading the fight against COVID-19. The least we can do is to keep them safe.”

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