

PSW Advocate

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SEIU sends members to PSW/home care conferences

SEIU Local 1 Canada sent members to 2 different home care and PSW events over the past year. One event was the Personal Support Network of Ontario's (PSNO) conference. This event focussed on new strategies and techniques to improve patient and client care. SEIU members also attended a Home Care Expo in Hamilton. This trade show showcased best practices in home care delivery.



New PSW Committee

SEIU is looking for a few good women and men to serve on SEIU Local 1 Canada's renewed PSW Committee. This committee will advise SEIU Local 1 Canada on issues that are important to PSWs in home care, long-term care and hospitals. If you are interested in joining the committee, please call the Member Resource Centre at 1-877-MRC-SEIU.



Share your story

Are you a PSW who works in home care? Would you like to share your insight on important issues affecting home care and your job as a PSW? Then give SEIU a call! SEIU is searching for PSWs who would like to talk about their personal experiences on the home care front. The stories could include the relationship with your clients, health and safety standards, how you feel about your agencies travel time policy, and other important issues. If you would like to share your story, please call the MRC at 1-877-MRC-SEIU.



SEIU unveils all-new PSW Day for May 19th

Nurses have a special day celebrating their profession - Nurses Day on May 12. Paramedics also have their own day, as well as administrative professionals. So why don't Personal Support Workers (PSWs) have their own day to acknowledge the critical role PSWs play in our health care system?

SEIU, one of the largest PSW unions in Ontario, rolled up its sleeves and took action by working with the Ontario government to create a day specifically for PSWs.

The Result: The Ontario Government will declare May 19 in the provincial legislature as PSW Day.

This day salutes all the hard work and dedication PSWs invest into their clients and patients. It recognizes the excellence and vital role

they play in our health care system. It will also raise their profile with the media and decision-makers at Queen's Park.

SEIU Local 1 Canada will be commemorating Ontario's first-ever PSW Day by sending a delegation of

SEIU PSWs to Queens Park on May 19 to speak to Ontario's Minister of Health, cabinet ministers, as well as Liberal, NDP and Conservative MPPs about the state of Ontario's home care system, the important role PSWs play, as well as ad-

vocate for increased investment, training, education, and creating standards for PSWs in the province.

PSW Day in 2010 is another big step in SEIU's effort to spread the word about the valuable work PSWs perform on a regular basis. SEIU expects PSW Day will grow in importance in the future.

Ontario is the first province in Canada to declare a day specifically for PSWs

Member Resource Centre - 1-877-MRC-SEIU



Over 500,000 people across Ontario receive home care. Ontario's rapidly ageing population means demand for home care in Ontario is increasing rapidly.

The home care sector is highly unstable due to the high turnover rate of workers. Instability is caused by low wages, poor working conditions and a system of competitive bidding for home care service providers. The consequence is that home care recipients and people in

their support networks are too often forced to 'start from scratch' with new home care workers. Home care workers know this is not a foundation for quality care.

Ontarians For Quality Home Care is a province-wide alliance of community, faith, senior and rights-based groups who wants to ensure that access to high quality home care services is a priority for the Ontario Ministry of Health. The alliance wants to ensure high

quality continuous care for those who need it and high quality jobs for those who deliver care.

Ontarians for Quality Home Care are committed to:

1. Quality care for seniors and people living with disabilities
2. A living wage for personal support workers and home care workers
3. Promote education, training and certification for PSWs
4. A registry for all PSWs
5. Support continuity of care through growth of stable employment for PSWs, nurses and home care workers.

Seniors and people with disabilities should have access to high quality home care services in their homes in order to improve their quality of life. This means supporting people's choice to stay at home instead of being admitted to hospitals, nursing and retirement homes. Ontarians For Quality Home Care is making sure the choice to stay at home is made possible with high-quality home care services.

SEIU working to beef up home care health & safety standards

The Ontario government has many laws on the books regulating health and safety conditions in the workplace. If employers don't comply, companies can be penalized. But what if your workplace changes each day? What if your workplace is in somebody else's home? That is the riddle home care health and safety experts are busy trying to solve.

"How do you regulate health and safety conditions in someone's personal home?" asks Lisa Blanchette, SEIU Canada Director of Strategic Campaigns and current coordinator of an SEIU government submission on health and safety issues for home care workers. "Home care workers need to know they have the right to refuse unsafe work. That is their legal right."

A client's home may not be a safe place to work. Sometimes home care workers are verbally abused by a client or one of their family members. Others have been physically threatened. Unlike a common workplace, home care workers are

alone on the job.

Many home care workers are unaware they have the right to refuse unsafe working conditions. If a client or family member inside the home verbally or physically threatens the worker, few know their rights.

How can we regulate health and safety conditions in people's homes? PSWs need to know their rights. They have the right to refuse unsafe work without penalty.

Even if PSWs are aware of their rights, managers will pressure their employees to ignore the threats regardless of how serious they are. If a PSW refuses to perform dangerous work, the home care agency will not receive payment from the client. That places a considerable

amount of pressure on home care workers to work in unsafe conditions for a day's pay.

The time spent and the condition of a PSW's car is also important. Home care workers find it difficult to refuse to drive in unsafe weather conditions. If home care worker refuses to drive in an ice storm, the employer will dock their pay.

SEIU, the largest home care union in Ontario, is working with the Ontario government to change the province's health & safety laws to make it fairer for home care workers to refuse unsafe work. SEIU is recommending new legislation to:

1. Outline the steps home care workers need to take in order to refuse unsafe work.
2. Prevent managers from pressuring staff to work in unsafe conditions.
3. Protect wages for workers who refuse to work in unsafe conditions.

Home care workers need to know their rights. That will help employees take the necessary precautions to refuse unsafe work and avoid serious injuries.



SEIU Local 1 Canada - 1-877-MRC-SEIU

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