

A PUBLIC MESSAGE TO CAROL LAMBIE, CEO OF WAYPOINT CENTRE FOR MENTAL HEALTH CARE FROM THE
ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION.

WE ALL NEED TO WORK TOGETHER AT WAYPOINT

Safety code malfunctions. Lock malfunctions. Destroyed rooms. Seized weapons. A high-profile elopement. Unsafe staffing levels. Power outages. Assaults resulting in staff injuries. It's not the best of times at Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care.

Waypoint is different from most mental health centres.

Whether in treatment voluntarily or ordered through the courts, most patients seeking help for mental illness are no more dangerous than anyone else. Often they are a greater risk to themselves. However, there are also individuals who at times can be extremely dangerous to others. When other hospitals are no longer able to provide the care these volatile patients need, they are sent to Waypoint.

For that reason, Waypoint needs to be particularly vigilant when it comes to the safety of both the patients under its care and the staff who provide that care. Recent events would suggest it is not.

Earlier this year Waypoint said goodbye to the former Oak Ridge facility and opened a new \$474 million building on its campus to replace it. The new Atrium is the only high-security all-male standalone facility of its kind in the province. Unlike other new provincial hospitals, Waypoint never extensively engaged its front line staff in that design.

Now the new building is presenting numerous challenges including a high-profile elopement in August. The union that represents workers at the facility wasn't notified of the elopement until the next day, and the public even later. Like our local community, we were not happy about being kept in the dark.

The union has been at odds with management over new risks, including items permitted in patient rooms that have been fashioned into lethal weapons.

A strong health and safety environment can mean the difference between life and death in Ontario's specialized mental health hospitals. In October, for example, using a pen a patient repeatedly stabbed a Brockville nurse in the neck narrowly missing her carotid artery. She survived the encounter and now that mental health centre has received an extraordinary interim order by the Ontario Labour Relations Board to provide formal security in the nurse's unit 24/7.

MINISTRY MUST BE PREPARED TO LAY CHARGES

Waypoint had 10 Ministry of Labour health and safety orders issued prior to moving into the new building. Ministry inspectors have made repeated visits since and have met with union representatives. We anticipate more orders will eventually follow, and without an appropriate response to all orders, we ask the Ministry of Labour to be prepared to lay charges.

Nobody wants to go to work frightened that they may not return home to their loved ones. No patient should be afraid to be receiving care at Waypoint.

Waypoint managers need to do better.

We are asking CEO Carol Lambie to schedule a high-level meeting as early as possible in January to meet with OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas with the goal to address our concerns around critical health and safety hazards at Waypoint.

Management also need to recognize that the staff who provide care are not the enemy – they are part of the solution.

We will not rest until Waypoint is as safe as it can be.