

It is with heavy hearts that we confirm the first death of a Unifor member due to workplace exposure to COVID-19.

The fact is the death of 61-year-old Leonard Rodriguez on Wednesday was preventable

We have been demanding better protection for frontline workers since mid-March.

I spoke with Leonard's family last night and was horrified to learn that when he got sick, he was wearing a mask he purchased himself at the dollar store.

The Local 40 member did not have the proper personal protective equipment (PPE) needed to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in supportive housing where he worked as a personal support worker (PSW) at Access Apartments in Toronto.

He was sent home sick on April 6, 2020 and tested positive for the deadly virus after spending 14 days in isolation.

His family reports that they struggled to get emergency medical support as his symptoms worsened. He was released from a hospital emergency department two days before his death, despite his worsening condition. He was released with a prescription, and without his family being notified to pick him up as they were not allowed to enter the hospital with him. When he stopped breathing two days later, his family says help was very slow to arrive.

Len deserved better. The loving husband and devoted father went to work every day for more than 30 years to care for others. He was the sole provider for his family.

Today we mourn his death and we intensify our fight for PPE for all frontline workers who care for our most vulnerable. He is the fifth PSW to die in Ontario.

Our union is also gravely concerned for the five other Local 40 members who have tested positive along with three clients at the facility.

We are monitoring this outbreak and will be connecting with members in the upcoming days to offer support. We represent 80 members at three locations run by Access Independent Living Services.

We are demanding an investigation into this outbreak at this facility and will be working with public health officials to ensure proper PPE is in place for all members working at Access.

More information about our union's response to the pandemic, as well as resources for members can be found at unifor.org/COVID19.

In solidarity | en toute solidarité,



Jerry Dias
National President

