

Dear Members

March 26, 2020

As we get closer to the end of Spring Break each of our 3 School Districts are beginning to provide their CUPE and Teacher Unions information on what their plans for March 30 and beyond look like. Wednesday School District 83 sent out an email to all employees with their tentative first week plan. School District 67 sent theirs today and SD 53 will be sending out employee communication emails on Friday.

Wages and Benefits

We have learned that all school districts in BC will continue their funding of regular and temporary positions. Last evening during a CUPE K-12 Presidents Council telephone conference we were informed this funding is secure from the Ministry of Education up to the end of April, and they will then re-evaluate their current plan of action to determine funding and services to the end of June. Any member who holds a regular position or is currently posted in a temporary position will begin collecting regular wages and benefits for their assigned hours. Casual or relief staff will be issued Records of Employment so they can apply for and collect Employment Insurance.

EI for Casual Staff

The CUPE National website has a section dedicated to information for members who will need to access EI and possibly other funding options. Please go to <http://cupe.ca> for more information and click on the COVID-19 icon.

Upcoming information

Throughout the last 12 days myself and our Unit Chairs have been answering members questions through text, phone, email, Facebook and Messenger. We have met with each employer multiple times at an appropriate social distance and have collaborated with other Locals all over the province to make sure we have the most updated information and strategies to help keep our members safe during the pandemic. We have been compiling the most asked questions and over the next two days, we will be working on creating helpful resources to guide our members through the coming weeks as everyone wades through this new reality. When in doubt, always contact one of your Shop Stewards your individual Unit Chair or myself. We are available by phone or email and have been working incredibly hard to answer all questions in a timely fashion with accurate information. All contacts can be found on our website <http://523.cupe.ca>

In recent days there have been two significant Provincial legislative changes to the Employment Standards Act which can be found at <https://news.gov.bc.ca> This changes will help support workers both during the COVID-19 public health emergency and in the long term.



Helpful Resource

One of my most used apps that I have been using daily is BC Covid-19 Support App. It can be downloaded from the APP Store. This free app contains provincial stats on the virus, resources including a self-assessment, BC Centre for Disease Control recommendations, as well as links to Ministry of Health and Interior Health Authority

One of the biggest challenges for our members has been dealing with anxiety. Navigating news sources, social media, waiting for our government to determine our job status and now waiting

for concrete information of what that job will look like in the coming weeks can be overwhelming. Adding social isolation and, for many of us trying to occupy children and family responsibilities under quarantine can test the boundaries of our sanity. I strongly encourage everyone to opt for healthy ways to alleviate many of these stresses. Seek out positive information and practical solutions to the many obstacles that stand in our way.

I recently heard a quote from Dr Bonnie Henry, BC's provincial health officer that has really resonated with me "This isn't forever, it's for right now." This is very true, and we need to be mindful of this. We live in communities that are well connected. Our grocery store clerks, truck drivers, delivery drivers, city workers and emergency personal are our neighbours and now our most sacred hero's.

We have cleaning products (hopefully toilet paper), WCB regulations and health techniques that help reduce exposure. We have Collective Agreements and benefits that many in the private industry don't have. Above all we can turn to each other during these times for support and guidance. Look for positive outlets, address your level of anxiety and talk to trusted sources to alleviate and manage stress.

In the meantime, your Local Executive will continue to engage with your employers and advocate safe working environments if/when you are required to return to work at school sites and or work from home. We will provide you with the most up-to- date information prior to March 30th including information on processes for self-isolation, right to refuse unsafe work, safe work practices on site and Interior Health recommendations.

Continue to check your employer email, our Facebook page and Website for updated information and the other resources that we have included in previous emails. You will soon hear from your immediate supervisors and we are asking that you share any information that you receive with your Shop Stewards.

For many of us (myself included) this has not been a very restful or tranquil spring break, but we ought to take full advantage of the few days we have left. Stay connected and stay safe
In Solidarity,

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