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Community Social Services Bargaining Association Update: March 31, 2020

To Community Social Services Bargaining Association and CUPE Staff in the Social Services Sector,

On March 26, 2020 the B.C. Government used its extraordinary powers, under the *Emergency Program Act*, to issue ministerial orders to ensure a coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic across all levels of Government. These orders have direct implications for workers in the Community Social Services Sector.

1. All Community Social Service Workers are Essential Service Workers under the *Emergency Program Act*

We have always known that the critical services and supports you provide to our most vulnerable members of British Columbia are “essential”, and, of course under the Government’s orders you have now been legally defined as essential to the functioning of our society in this pandemic.

The Government press release stated the following:

Essential services are those daily services essential to preserving life, health, public safety and basic societal functioning. They are the services British Columbians rely on in their daily lives.

Developed by Emergency Management BC in consultation with other government ministries and the provincial health officer (PHO), this definition is intended to clarify what qualifies as an essential service in the context of the Province’s response to COVID-19. In consultation with the PHO, these services should and are encouraged to remain open. They must, however, follow the orders and guidance provided by the PHO to ensure safe operations and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

The PHO has ordered some types of businesses to close. Any business or service that has not been ordered to close, and is also not identified on the essential service list, may stay open if it can adapt its services and workplace to the orders and recommendations of the PHO.

Childcare providers and schools providing care and/or in-class instruction for children are to prioritize placements for those children whose parents are employed as front-line workers in direct to public health and health services, social services, law enforcement, first responders and emergency response.

MARK HANCOCK

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National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

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General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

Specifically, essential services under the *Emergency Program Act* include all of the workers providing the services you provide in community social services. [See here for the link to the full list of workers](#) that the government has defined as essential to the maintenance of our Province.

What does it mean to be declared an essential service worker?

The work you do has been determined to be critical to the functioning of the Province and the Government has ordered that the agencies that deliver these services and support must remain open, wherever possible. Employers must still comply with all orders of the PHO and with the *Occupational Health and Safety Regulations*.

2. Community Social Service Workers Can Work at Multiple CSS Worksites and for Multiple Employers

We know that the PHO, some Health Authorities and Community Care licensing have provided conflicting information to employers in the Community Social Services sector. Now we have clear direction.

If you work at a long-term care facility anywhere in B.C., you cannot work at another long-term care facility anywhere else. These are facilities that provide care to the elderly and are, typically, funded by the Ministry of Health. This order was made by the PHO to avoid the transmission of COVID-19 to vulnerable seniors in long-term care. There are very few of these long-term care facilities in the Community Social Services Sector.

However, if you work at a long-term care facility, you are permitted to work at any other worksite in the Community Social Services sector or elsewhere. Other than the limitation on workers working at more than one long-term care facility, workers in the Community Social Services sector are free to work for multiple employers and to work at multiple sites.

We know that some employers have been asking you for information about other employers that you work for or have been trying to compel you to select one employer. They cannot do this and must cease and desist from trying to limit your employment in any way, other than as mentioned above. If an Employer persists in asking you for this type of information, please contact your Steward or Union Representative for assistance immediately.