

**BRITISH COLUMBIA REGIONAL OFFICE**

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**COMMUNITY SOCIAL SERVICES COORDINATOR UPDATE: May 7, 2020**

To all CUPE Locals and Staff in the Social Services Sector,

Again, I would like to start by thanking you and your members for all that you are doing during these uncertain times. If there is anything we can do to assist you, please let us know.

I realize that you have not had a formal update over the last few weeks. Your Servicing Reps and I are constantly in touch with each other through email as well as weekly meetings, and I am ensuring that they have the most recent information to use when working with you. A “reminders” list at the end mentions topics from previous updates that are not addressed in this specific communication.

B.C. in general has been doing an excellent job of slowing the spread of COVID-19. As the situation evolves, the Ministry of Health, Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) continue to provide information updates daily.

**Departure of our Co-Coordinator**

Shortly after the pandemic was declared, CUPE reassigned Sister Cheryl Colborne to assist me as co-coordinator for our Sector. I was very happy to have Cheryl back, with her experience and expertise. Unfortunately, all good things must end, and she has returned to her regular duties. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks for her support and assistance. As always, it was a pleasure working with Cheryl.

**Self Care**

This has been a physically and emotionally exhausting period for many of us, especially those who are providing front-line client care. Ensuring your own self-care is important. Your members are looking to you for support, and you can't provide it effectively if you aren't taking care of yourself. Self care is self preservation.

**MARK HANCOCK**

National President/Président national

**CHARLES FLEURY**

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

**DENIS BOLDUC, PAUL FAORO, FRED HAHN, JUDY HENLEY, SHERRY HILLIER**

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

## **Member Rights**

The latest information from WorkSafeBC can be found by [clicking here](#). It is constantly evolving, so please check it regularly.

Our situation as a Sector has not changed with regards to PPE. While the Province is still trying to procure this needed safety equipment, it is still being directed to frontline health sector workers first. Please continue to adhere to best practices and the health and safety procedures that have been put in to place by your Employer and your OH&S Committee.

## **Job Security & Redeployment (CSSEA agencies)**

As we move past the guaranteed funding deadline of April 30<sup>th</sup>, we have seen direction from PSEC (the Public Sector Employer's Council) to keep Public Sector employees working as much as possible, if there is "meaningful work" to be done. For our sector, this does not really change much – we know there is plenty of work, and in some cases, we are hearing of a lack of people able to perform that work.

What has changed is that Agencies are no longer being encouraged to keep workers at full hours if there is not any work, or if they are not willing to be reassigned to other needed tasks.

The PSEC Secretariat provided guiding principles that Employers should consider post-April when making decisions on business continuity; specifically, that they should do so in consultation with funders, in compliance with Provincial Health Officer and WorkSafeBC guidance, and in collaboration with Unions. This follows the Ministry of Children & Family Development and the Ministry of Social Development & Poverty Reduction's recent statements that contracted service providers are able to receive incremental funding to cover increased costs due to staff shortages, increased overtime, etc. for an extended period of time, from April 30, 2020 to May 31, 2020.

Our members still have rights under the Collective Agreement and the Employment Standards Act. However, some CSSEA agencies are taking a hard-line position. Members who have legitimate reasons and concerns with regards to their own health, or that of someone in their household, should be treated in the same manner as any other accommodation, and on a case-by-case basis. Please consult with your CUPE National Servicing Representative to find the best way to represent these members.

## **Agencies funded by BC Housing**

Last week, BC Housing announced their emergency funding program. Eligible agencies who receive this have been informed by BC Housing to work through the appropriate bargaining agents prior to consideration of using funds to provide temporary adjustments.

### **Agencies who are not part of CSSEA**

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of the Locals who have agencies not covered by the Provincial agreements. I know that they have been doing all they can to protect these members. While some of these agencies have been very cooperative, and creative in finding ways to keep our members employed, others have not. As always, Locals can follow their established process to reach out to their Servicing Rep, who can then contact me for ideas, and comparators that may be appropriate.

### **Single Site Work Orders**

This is a reminder that the single-site orders do not apply to any CUPE units that we are aware of. However, you may have members who work for another Employer that is under these restrictions. Please contact your Local immediately if any members have concerns around this, so that they can assist you or contact the assigned Servicing Rep, if appropriate.

There are some agencies that are trying to limit the possibilities of any transmission between sites. This is not forbidden, especially if they are dealing with redeployment. The key is to ensure that no member loses hours or wages as a result, but your Local Executive and Servicing Rep should be involved in these discussions.

### **Off Work Because of COVID-19**

CSSEA has not changed their position on this, to date. Employers should continue to pay health and welfare benefits for any employee who is away in excess of 20 days if related to COVID-19 in any way, and not be sending those cases to the CSS EIP. Should you hear anything different from one of your Employers, please contact your Local who will be able to provide assistance, or reach out to their Servicing Rep if necessary.

### **Recuperation of Increased Costs**

We understand that some, if not most, members are experiencing increased costs, be it for transportation, childcare, or even just increased laundering of work clothes. CSSBA sent a letter to CSSEA last week, seeking reimbursement for these costs, and a response is still to come.

### **Provincial Round Table Discussions**

CUPE has been sitting at weekly meetings with Government, Funders, and Employers from our Sector, to make our concerns heard. For the most part, all parties are on the same page, and we are happy to have a voice there. All parties are aware of the lack of PPE, and also of the other concerns our members have shared with us. I have reports from those discussions and can make them available via Servicing Representatives should any Locals be interested in seeing them.

## **Teleconference to show appreciation from CLBC**

For anyone who was not able to participate in Friday morning's teleconference, CLBC has indicated that they will post an audio recording on their website. The recording can be heard by [clicking here](#).

## **Reminders (in previous messages)**

- EI and other income support regulations have been announced – see [www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca) for details
- Safe worksite and physical distancing principles still apply at work.
- Government is offering support for childcare providers who stay open to assist critical workers.
- Member rights – health and safety regulations still apply.
- CSSEA is not allowing its member agencies to sign Local agreements around continuation of wages.
- The Deputy Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction has confirmed that provincial funding arrangements with contracted social services providers remain in place.
- Please forward any changes to numbers and agency names for cases of layoffs to your CUPE Staff Rep.
- Please forward any changes to numbers of confirmed COVID-19 cases to your CUPE Staff Rep.
- CSSBA meets on Tuesdays and CSSEA & CSSBA on Wednesdays. You can expect information after those sessions, but we are looking at reducing that frequency to every two weeks.
- CSSBA and CSSEA agreed on a timeline extension to articles in the Collective Agreement, and have extended that until the middle of May. This allows Locals to file grievances outside the normal timelines, but it also allows for delayed responses. Employers SHOULD still be discussing issues with Locals and/or Designates. If they are not, please notify your Local and Servicing Rep immediately.

