



By Email

March 20, 2020

Hello,

I am contacting you on behalf of our members, PSAC Local 17757 (SECRI-Douglas) regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. As you can imagine, PSAC is very concerned about what the spread of the virus will mean for our members' work in light of increasing public health risks. We want to be proactive in addressing the pandemic. It is also very important that the union be consulted on any plans the employer is looking to put in place. This will ensure our members' concerns are being addressed and plans can be effectively implemented. To be clear, we want to work together to address this public health issue.

There is a general duty on all employers to take all reasonable precautions to prevent harm to employees in the workplace. Employers should have a detailed plan in place to deal with this pandemic and specific protocols, including providing personal protective equipment for workers and the necessary training to use and dispose of that equipment. The approach must be proactive and focus on the protection of the worker.

PSAC is urging all employers to focus on the steps that will be required should the situation escalate within Canada. Employers also have a responsibility to provide appropriate health and safety education and training to all their employees.

Under health and safety legislation, employees have the right to refuse dangerous work. As a union, we have a right to participate in the development of any workplace prevention and preparation strategies dealing with the virus.

We are writing with our immediate concerns at this time. We are seeking clarity on these issues in order to clearly communicate them to our members.

- We want to ensure that none of our members suffer from any loss of pay as a result of having to take leave related to COVID-19. This includes leave due to a need to quarantine (because a diagnosis) or self-quarantine (due to having traveled internationally or experiencing symptoms of the virus or being immune compromised). It also includes leave due to family responsibilities in light of schools and daycare facilities being closed. We are seeking agreement with the employer that in all of the above cases, employees be granted a special leave with pay.
- We are asking the employer to waive all requirements for doctor's notes for accessing leave. If someone is sick or experiencing symptoms, they should not be leaving their home.
- We request that grievance timelines, including referrals to arbitration, be suspended to ensure that the rights of PSAC members are protected.

- We further request that the employer stop requiring employees to report to the workplace, for the health and safety of all staff and the general population, and to help "flatten the curve" of the spread of COVID-19 and limit the strain on our healthcare system.

More and more employers are making the above decisions for sake of all employees but especially those most vulnerable to infection. Anyone who comes in close proximity with a possibly infected individual could be at risk for contracting the coronavirus. The more we can limit people's movements and interactions, the better it will be for everyone's sake. We have an opportunity to curb the impacts of the virus if we all limit our social interactions to essential needs.

We are asking for a reply by end of day. I recognize that you are certainly dealing with a lot at the moment, but it is critical that our members receive this information.

Thank you,



Yvon Barrière
Regional Executive Vice-President
PSAC-Quebec

c.c. Chris Aylward, National President
Yvon Barrière, Regional Executive Vice-President, Quebec
Bertrand Lavoie, Regional Coordinator, Quebec
David-Alexandre Leblanc, A/Coordinator Negotiations Section
Christopher Schulz, A/Coordinator Representation Section and Legal services Branch
Louise Birdsell Bauer, Research Officer
Wesney Duclervil, PSAC Regional Representative, Montreal R.O., Quebec