



unifor
HOSPITALITY AND GAMING

March 12, 2020

Greetings,

**Re: Unifor Hospitality and Gaming Council calls on industry, government
to work together to address looming COVID-19 crisis**

As COVID-19 continues to spread around the world, it is critical that workers in Canada's hospitality and gaming sector receive adequate information, guidance, and support from our industry, employers, governments, and public health officials. Unifor is Canada's largest union in the hospitality and gaming sector with 20,000 members across the country, and as such, we believe it is important for Unifor's Hospitality and Gaming Council to comment on the impact of COVID-19 on our industry and the measures we can take to reduce the risk for workers and the travelling public.

We know that when faced with a global health crisis, the public needs factual, science-based information presented in ways that are clear, transparent, and accessible. We need to hear from public health experts and epidemiologists, and we require frequent and pro-active updates from our governments and elected officials. The same is true for workers in Canada's hospitality and gaming sector – employers have a duty to provide our members with information based on expert advice in order to prevent panic and the spread of misinformation.

The human impact of COVID-19 is our primary concern, and we must all work together to keep people safe and healthy, minimize the spread of the virus, implement prevention measures, and provide care and support for those who become ill. At the same time, based on our experience during and after the SARS crisis in 2003, we believe it is critical for governments, hospitality and gaming sector employers, workers and their unions, and other industry stakeholders to work together to mitigate COVID-19's impact on our sector, as well as the broader economy.

As governments impose travel warnings and restrictions, and travelers voluntarily opt to curtail their own plans, Canada's hospitality, gaming, and tourism sectors will experience a downturn. Some conferences and conventions have already been cancelled, and more cancellations are expected. No tourism market in Canada will remain unaffected.

We are concerned that the COVID-19 situation could create longer-term disruptions to the labour market in our sector. In the past, we've seen employment levels continue to stagnate even as our industry recovered from these crises; in other words, while the revenues and corporate profit-making return, the jobs themselves disappear forever, leaving fewer staff to do more work. It doesn't have to be this way, and we call on employers to share in the prosperity as our sector recovers.

In the immediate, all levels of government must work together to create a host of policy options to protect the livelihoods of workers in the hospitality and gaming sector and the broader tourism sector. We were pleased to hear Prime Minister Trudeau's statement on March 11 announcing an initial \$1 billion package to respond to COVID-19, and waiving the one-week waiting period for Employment Insurance. We expect that further government action and support will be required; including more enhanced benefits coverage and other employment protections to make sure Canadian workers can continue to make ends meet while we address the COVID-19 situation. Unifor has released a public statement with more details on our call for government support, which you can read on our [website](#).

It is critical that we look to public health experts and government officials for reliable, scientifically driven information and advice on steps we can take to address the COVID-19 situation. In addition, Unifor has activated our own internal resources to make sure we are also doing everything we can to provide support for our members in the hospitality and gaming sector. Staff from a number of departments including Research, Pensions and Benefits, Health and Safety, and others – including Dean Lindsay, a Unifor National Coordinator and EI specialist – are coordinating to develop protocols, best practices, and recommendations to make sure we are doing everything we can to make the best possible decisions in the face of the COVID-19 crisis.

The union's most recent Coronavirus Factsheet is also included in this letter, [and can be found here](#).

If you have questions or concerns, please contact a Union Shop Steward in your workplace, or your Local Union executive.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely, and will keep in contact with more information as it becomes available.

In solidarity,

Unifor's Hospitality and Gaming Council

cc: Deb Tveit, Assistant to the National President (sent by email to deb.tveit@unifor.org)
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