

To/A: Staff Servicing Transit Locals

From/De: Chris MacDonald, Assistant to the National President

Date: March 17, 2020

Subject/Objet: COVID-19

Greetings,

The COVID-19 crisis is having a significant economic and social impact on our workplaces and communities across Canada. As calls intensify around limiting social contact and discouraging public gatherings in order to slow the spread of the virus, we know these measures will have immediate impacts on our members working in the transit sector, which includes school bus drivers, taxi drivers and coach lines. Our transit members work in close contact with the public and are on the frontlines of this pandemic, ensuring people get safely to where they need to be. As such, we must ensure that all precautions are being taken by employers to maximize health and safety for our members and minimize their risks in contracting the virus. In addition, we must ensure that policies and practices are put into place to ease any impacts of temporary job disruptions.

The following are some key measures we expect all transit employers to take:

- **Wage and income protections:** We must ensure full wage protections for all transit workers in times of shut downs or industry-wide slowdowns. These would be most applicable towards transit workers such as school bus drivers during all provincially mandated school closures. School bus drivers must have full access to wage protections, since many may not have access to Employment Insurance entitlements due to the part-time nature of their jobs. In addition, many of our taxi drivers and coach lines will also be hit hard due to slowdowns in travel and tourism, as we see further incidences where flight and/or inter-provincial travel is restricted or discouraged.
- **Sick leave protections:** Ensure employees who call in sick, quarantined or in self-isolation, receive full income assistance. This can include full pay for scheduled shifts that are missed for part-time drivers, or for those facing longer periods of illness (including a 14-day quarantine), full pay based on average weekly shifts over the previous 4-week period.

- Eliminate the requirement to provide a doctor's note in provincial jurisdictions where this is still requested if a worker becomes ill and provide job-protected paid leave if a worker is required to care for an ill or quarantined family member.
- **Health and safety:** We must ensure that transit workers and operators have access to protective gear such as gloves and masks and increased access to hand sanitizing equipment and cleaning stations. Further, employers must ensure that all transit vehicles, buses and cars must be rigorously cleaned and sanitized after each shift with special attention given to areas and surfaces more prone to worker and rider contact.
- **Temporary suspension of operating costs:** Many taxicab and airport limousine drivers, for example, pay substantial monthly operating costs such as vehicle insurance and stand rent. We are requesting that these additional costs be suspended to alleviate the financial burden on drivers.
- In addition, we must communicate clear protocols to workers for:
 - Personal hygiene (i.e. regular hand-washing and regular washing of transit uniforms, where applicable);
 - Physical distancing with co-workers and transit riders (e.g. avoid all unessential close contact with co-workers and transit riders and where possible, encourage entry and exit from doors that are furthest away from drivers);
 - Safety measures with riders (e.g. mandates not to engage with customers who are physical, violent and abusive and protocols to report incidents immediately to managers);
 - Additional useful resources are available through the Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety website: <https://www.ccohs.ca/outbreaks/>

Please ensure that you keep myself and Len Poirier (Road Transportation Director) apprised on any issues that may come up within our transit units so that we can respond accordingly.

Thank you for your attention on this matter.

In solidarity,



Chris MacDonald,
Assistant to the National President.

CM:lmc/cope-343

cc: Len Poirier, Navjeet Sidhu