



**COVID-19
Conference Call**

April 22, 2020

The National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) is a family of 11 Component and 3 affiliate unions. Taken together, we are one of the largest unions in Canada. Most of our 390,000 members work to deliver public services of every kind to the citizens of their home provinces. We also have a large and growing number of members who work for private businesses.

Larry Brown, President

Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer

COVID-19 Conference Call – NUPGE Components and CHPS Members
April 22, 2020
12:00 p.m. EST

PARTICIPANTS

BCGEU/NUPGE

Joanna Lord
Kari Michaels

HSABC/NUPGE

Val Avery

HSAA/NUPGE

Mike Parker
Trudy Thomson

SGEU/NUPGE

Bob Bymoen

HSAS

Karen Wasylenko

MAHCP

Bob Moroz

OPSEU/NUPGE

Smokey Thomas

CUBGW/NUPGE

Gaurav Sharma

NBU/NUPGE

Leigh Sprague
Susie Proulx-Daigle

NSGEU/NUPGE

Sandra Mullin
Lynette Johnson

PEI UPSE/NUPGE

Karen Jackson

NAPE/NUPGE

Arlene Sedlickas

NUPGE

Larry Brown, President
Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer
Len Bush, Managing Director
Anil Naidoo, National Representative
Jeryn Daly, National Representative
Nadia Ibrahim, National Representative

1. Welcome and Introductions

Participants from 12 Components and allies joined the call, as well as Larry Brown, NUPGE President, Bert Blundon, NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer and 4 NUPGE staff.

Notes from all prior COVID-19 conference call and supporting documents are available online <https://nupge.ca/content/documents-covid-19-conference-call>.

2. Opening Statement – Larry Brown, NUPGE President

Brown gave a recap of activities since the last meeting. He spoke about:

- A number of countries seem to be past the worst of the crisis (Italy, France, Germany).
- Japan thought they were past the worst of it but the situation has worsened significantly.
- COVID-19 is starting to impact Russia. The virus has still not hit Africa.
- Study found that in 11 countries 28,000 more people than expected have died. Unclear as to whether these are unreported COVID-19 cases or are people who have died from other health conditions because they couldn't get treatment in hospitals overwhelmed by COVID-19.
- Direct and indirect COVID-19 deaths are well over 300,000 worldwide
- EMS reported that people were let out of hospitals earlier than normal to make room for COVID-19 patients. Those people were then brought back to the hospital because their conditions worsened significantly.
- Provinces where people obeyed social distancing and emergency orders did not have the anticipated surge in hospital admissions and ICU cases. This is a sign for cautious optimism.
- Angus Reid Institute did a survey and found 27% of Canadians are barely keeping their heads above water financially and only 12% said they were in good shape.
- CBAC meeting went well. Also had first meeting of long-term care workers. There is a visible pattern of private care homes being hit far worse than public care homes.
- A multi union EMS call also took place. Found that some workers who purchased their own PPE masks weren't allowed to wear them on the job as they were not issued by the employer, despite being better protection. These workers were threatened with discipline.

- Upcoming on Friday there will be a street level CSW call.
- In Canada, there was a new outbreak at a slaughter house in Alberta. Outbreaks in long-term care homes also continue to be severe.
- Have circulated legal opinions about how to proceed with conventions and elections given the emergency orders and unions constitutions.

3. Current Situation

SGEU/NUPGE

- Good language regarding redeployment.
- Dealing with PPE issues and trying to stay ahead of issues in long-term care.
- Public service is managing the situation. Initial concerns are being addressed.
- Liquor stores are open and operating in a safe manner.
- Community services are lacking PPE and training. They are also worried about funding.
- 25% of inmate population is moved out of correction centres which is putting more pressure on community-based support systems.
- Overall, business is moving forward. Internal structures are looking at how to manage the situation so a convention and election can happen this year.
- Premier making an announcement tonight about plans to reopen the economy.

HSAS

- Order has gone out for long-term care workers to limit their work to one workplace. Some long-term care workers are working in public and private workplaces. Government working together with private homes to manage distribution.
- Concerned with how post-COVID-19 economy is going to treat healthcare workers. Expecting to face cuts.

HSAA/NUPGE

- Re-entry rate (when a person is discharged too soon from hospital and brought back in by EMS) in Alberta is a concern. Advertising that you can still go to the hospital if you need acute care for non COVID-19 conditions.

- Western Canada will be experiencing problems with food supply chains with shutting several meat packing plants due to COVID-19 outbreaks.
- Premier's claims of PPE being shipped to other provinces doesn't appear to be happening.
- Minister of Labour wrote a ministerial order that called for long-term care workers to pick a single work site. Employer, as well as, the unions were unhappy with it. Spent a weekend drafting a new ministerial order, but there are still complications.
- Question on how to have a face-to-face meeting of the NEB in the fall.
- Window displays that say, "I heart public health care" have been distributed.
- PSAs are running to thank the members.
- Some posturing starting from government that economy should reopen.
- Oil was down to \$-1.00 on the weekend.
- HSAA had bought pension insurance before the pandemic. It was just announced that the pension company lost 4 billion dollars

BCGEU/NUPGE

- Homecare funding announcement from the provincial government. Will be coordinated through Community Living BC. Hoping it will help with staffing shortages.
- Rural and Remote Indigenous Communities strategy rolling out including new testing, contact tracing, housing options, and medical transportation.
- Continuing to push for presumptive coverage for COVID-19.
- Community social services sector hoping to hear for funding extension.
- BC Ferry layoffs being rescinded but not out of the woods yet.
- Transit Union Council met around layoffs issue. Talks nationally about getting federal funding to support transit in all provinces. Transit in BC aren't municipally operated. Exploring whether private contractors are able to access the federal funding that's available for employers.
- Potentially gearing up to have a national call with the federal government regarding transit. Essential and core workers rely on public transit and layoffs would result in people being unable to social distance and possibly not even able to get to work.

HSABC/NUPGE

- Only 109 COVID-19 patients in hospitals in BC. 51 are in critical care.
- Very concerned about people avoiding emergency rooms (only operating at 50-60% capacity). New initiatives to let people know it's still safe to come to the hospital.
- Poultry processing plant has 28 cases. Still have hotspots appearing even though provincial average is low.
- PPE supply issues ongoing, not just in acute care but family physicians. Questions about quality of the materials that are arriving from new suppliers. Ministry has purchased a machine that's designed to test masks more quickly. Going to start doing modeling on where PPE should be distributed.
- Over 400 healthcare workers have tested positive for COVID-19. At least 31 of those were hospitalized with a couple in critical care. 1 healthcare worker death (dentist).

MGEU/NUPGE

- Government sent out an email to all public workers saying layoffs coming soon.

MAHCP

- Yesterday was the deadline for public workers to undertake a 30% cut to operating costs.
- Layoffs in civil service are going ahead.
- Official line is that everyone has to take a cut so resources can be redirected to the frontline, but no definition of what the frontline is.
- CSW workers unsure whether their funding will be reduced.
- Enormous PPE issues ongoing. Government designing new healthcare zones (red zone, green zone, orange zone, etc.) under the guise of keeping workers safe but it's likely due to PPE shortages.
- Premier has turned his back on medium and small businesses to the point where his supporters are running op-eds saying the government needs to do more.
- Regional (rural) paramedics are seeing procedures being changed constantly based on the availability of PPE.
- City of Winnipeg paramedics have been issued reusable respirators. Regional paramedics bought the same equipment as paramedics in Winnipeg but employer threatened disciplinary actions if they use that equipment on the job.

- Paramedics in Winnipeg will occasionally take regional shifts. Issue is that paramedic from Winnipeg can use the reusable respirators but the regional paramedic working beside them cannot.
- Workers in Brandon are apparently being issued homemade PPE with no clear understanding of where it came from.

OPSEU/NUPGE

- Biggest issue is still PPE supply.
- 3,078 members laid off. Anywhere between 5,000-10,000 layoffs expected in coming weeks (mostly from colleges).
- Still track 7 regions, members that have tested positive, workplaces where a member has tested positive, workplaces where employers are changing policies due to COVID-19.
- Starting today, long-term care workers must work in one work site. Homes affected by COVID-19 are still very short-staffed.
- 170 members at home on 14 day self-isolation after outbreak at correctional centre.
- Homeless shelters in Toronto experiencing outbreaks.
- Some hospitals are at 40% capacity. An Ottawa hospital put an ad out calling for patients to keep coming in.
- Problems with long-term care home inspections happened as a result of a previous Liberal government. They laid off nursing home inspectors and changed it to a general inspector.
- Naming and shaming CEOs and directors is an effective way to deal with bad employers.
- Concerns about how to fight forest fires and maintain social distancing.
- Premier is scheduled to announce plans to start reopening the economy today.

CUBGW/NUPGE

- Continuing to run at full capacity.
- 1 incident with COVID-19 at the beginning of April but was fairly well contained. Still a few days left on the quarantine period, but so far everyone remains healthy.
- Continuing to ensure the company keeps workers safe.

- Workers that presented with symptoms were sent home and told to use their sick days. CUBGW got employer to reimburse sick days and create separate paid leave.

PEI UPSE/NUPGE

- Premier announced phasing of reopening the economy yesterday. Very strong in messaging that the safety of the population would come ahead of business interests.
- Working with other unions on redeployment and PPE agreements.
- Government continues to pay members—including the recall of seasonal workers.

NBU/NUPGE

- Mobility agreement expires on April 30.
- There has only been 1 new case in the last 6 days.

NSGEU/NUPGE

- Husband of the member who was killed in the mass shooting has been very vocal on how scared his wife was going to work every day without proper PPE.
- Staff learned through social media that they were ordered to show up at a COVID-19 unit at Northwood Manor nursing home. Over 200 positive cases at that site. Assumption is that everyone in the facility has it. Protections that should be in place are not. No hand sanitizer, 3 protective gowns, no clean areas, no infection control, no isolation of residents, etc. See associated [press release](#).
- Civil service employer has recalled and is paying seasonal workers.

NAPE/NUPGE

- Approximately 256 total cases, 109 have recovered. 2 in ICU and 4 in hospital.
- Despite no new cases, government is not looking to reopen yet.
- Premier has stated he has no intention of laying-off any public workers.

Follow-ups

Task	Responsibility	Completed
Send any relevant documents to Anil (anaidoo@nupge.ca)	Participants	
Update existing materials and circulate	NUPGE	
Schedule next call for next week	NUPGE	



NATIONAL UNION OF PUBLIC AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES

- B. C. Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU)
- Health Sciences Association of British Columbia (HSABC)
- Health Sciences Association of Alberta (HSAA)
- Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union (SGEU)
- Manitoba Government and General Employees' Union (MGEU)
- Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU)
- Canadian Union of Brewery and General Workers (CUBGW)
- New Brunswick Union of Public and Private Employees (NBU)
- Nova Scotia Government and General Employees Union (NSGEU)
- PEI Union of Public Sector Employees (PEI UPSE)
- Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Public and Private Employees (NAPE)

The National Union of Public and General Employees is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress and a member of Public Services International.

15 AURIGA DRIVE
NEPEAN, ONTARIO
CANADA / K2E 1B7

[613] 228-9800
FAX [613] 228-9801

www.nupge.ca

national@nupge.ca

