



national
union

COVID-19 Conference Call

DRAFT

May 13, 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
May 13, 2020
12:00 p.m. EDT

PARTICIPANTS

HSABC/NUPGE	Val Avery
HSAA/NUPGE	Mike Parker Trudy Thomson
SGEU/NUPGE	Bob Bymoen
HSAS	Karen Wasylenko
MGEU/NUPGE	Charlotte McWilliams
OPSEU/NUPGE	Smokey Thomas
CUBGW/NUPGE	Gaurav Sharma
NBU/NUPGE	Leigh Sprague Susie Proulx-Daigle
NSGEU/NUPGE	Jason MacLean Sandra Mullin Lynette Johnson
PEI UPSE/NUPGE	Karen Jackson
AAHP	Pam Toope
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 11 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:

- At the beginning of the pandemic change was happening so fast.
- As of now, every province has a plan for reopening/renewing/relaunching. Some provinces have a clear phasing in of sectors reopening.
- All eyes are on Quebec as they seem to be breaking their own guidelines in reopening.
- Around the world there are second waves of infection happening after reopening happened too early. Germany was hailed as the European country that handled the first wave best but are now being hit with a second wave.
- We need to keep the pressure on governments to reopen safely and push to be involved in the planning if sectors need to be closed again.
- We're in the middle of some historical developments. Sometimes it's hard to see these changes when you live through them. It's necessary to keep track of what happens in respect to your union: What happened? How did you respond? What lessons were learned?
- Various governments have promised top-ups to workers' wages. Jealousy factor. The federal government is covering 75% of this and the provinces are only covering 25%.
- Still pushing to have long-term care moved under the *Canada Health Act*. NDP leader Jagmeet Singh spoke out on it and formalized the NDP's position being in favour of ending privately owned long-term care and bringing long-term care under *Canada Health Act*. CLC and CUPE have also spoken out in favour of it.
- We recently had a Component call focusing on group homes. Lack of standards across the province. Each group needs to work with the employers directly. Because there is so much fragmentation in the sector, there are concerns about what will happen if there's an outbreak in a group home.

- Doing post-COVID-19 work with the CLC. Fair taxation is the key to going forward and countering the idea that there is no room in the budget for public services.
- Starting to explore public polling on bringing long-term care under the *Canada Health Act* and ending privately owned long-term care. Also polling on the issue of a post-COVID-19 economy (austerity vs fully-funded public services).
- Canada has signed onto a number of trade deals which, if followed, negatively impacting supply lines and our economy. Doug Ford's statements about Ontario being self-sufficient for PPE seem to run contrary to the trade deals. Emergency measures that shut down US owned businesses might have also broken trade deals. Lawyers for corporations who could sue Canada are currently examining the issue. NUPGE is currently trying to get ahead of this problem.

3. Current Situation

CUBGW/NUPGE

- Top issue is ensuring the employer enforces the safety protocol.
- There is some concern that the economy opening will trigger a second wave.

NSGEU/NUPGE

- Northwood (long-term care home) continues to be a hotspot. Still have staff redeployed by the provincial health agency (NSGEU is challenging this order).
- Still having PPE shortages across the province.
- Ground ambulance service was asked to start saving bag valve masks that they use to treat patients experiencing respiratory distress, normally are disposable equipment.
- Provincial health authority is beginning to reprocess N95 masks using various methods. Some methods are more suitable than others.
- No positive cases in group home sector.
- Civil service continues to work remotely when possible.
- Starting to raise questions about how to ensure workers work safely when the economy reopens but social distancing measures are still in place. This is a

concern in the health care sector where they want to reopen ORs and start doing elective surgeries when many workers are still in self-isolation.

- Health Canada is approving PPE reuse guides that were developed in the US.
- Premier didn't want to use provincial funds to top-up workers' wages. Wage increase turned out to be only 50 cents per hour and only for health care workers. Omitted correctional officers working in hospitals and a number of other frontline jobs.
- New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have boarder lockdowns but Nova Scotia's borders were never closed. Government has stated that there will be controls over who can leave and enter. NSGEU has pushed back on these government statements.

NBU/NUPGE

- Province is reopening in phases. Currently in Phase 3. Phase 5 will not occur until there is a vaccine.
- Daycares opening next week. Government offices are running at 50% capacity and will be at 100% capacity in the next 2 weeks. An outbreak of 3 or more unlinked community transmitted positives could mean reverting to a previous phase.
- Got an update from the government on PPE and current levels are good.
- Top concern now is preparing for the possibility of a second wave.
- Currently getting ready to get back to bargaining. Preparing for an uphill battle.
- Interested in finding out what provinces are spending on COVID-19 vs what the federal government is spending – issue of provinces passing off federal funds as their funds.

PEI UPSE/NUPGE

- Currently in Phase 1 of 4 of reopening.
- Lots of talk of telework and are worried about potential downsizing of the public service.
- Just agreed to a joint statement on PPE. Should be posted this afternoon.
- All summer festivals and fairs are cancelled. Waiting for the government to make a statement on large gatherings.

- Borders still closed to everything except essential travel. Ongoing investigation into an employer smuggling stowaway workers in the back of their truck and bringing them to the island.
- Government announced the top-up for essential workers. Any essential worker earning less than \$3000 a month or \$18.75 per hour is entitled to the top-up. This eliminates most of the civil servants and has caused a firestorm.

AAHP

- NFLD moved from Level 5 to Level 4 of the reopening plan.
- Managers are taking quick action to bring everyone back without any plans in place.
- Received a version of joint PPE protocol with government.
- Department of Health (not minister) set out guidelines for employers to use when implementing the protocol. This is the original version of the protocol and is being used as a way to get around the protocol.
- No decisions as of yet as to where federal funds will be used re: wage top-ups.
- Policies are still putting workers at risk.

OPSEU/NUPGE

- Biggest problem is PPE supply. Bureaucrats finally admitted there's a shortage worldwide. OPSEU proposed they establish table. Government agreed to set up a Science Table.
- Ethics Committee established to prepare for the day when a decision has to be made on who gets PPE. Unions have no decision-making authority in this process.
- Another new table on the production side. CUPE and ONA do not accept that the province can't be manufacturing N95s. It takes approximately 6 months to retool a plant. A plant in Woodbridge can make the masks but because they cannot access the materials, they don't count as N95s, but they would be a great replacement for surgical masks.
- Pandemic pay plan is not final. Still deciding who qualifies for the top-up. Stuck on whether respiratory therapists should qualify. OPSEU's position is that if workers belong under a collective agreement with workers who qualify, they

should receive the top-up too, but they are not releasing a list of workers who qualify.

- If anyone has directives on PPE, please send to NUPGE.
- 80 guidelines for reopening. Ministry of Labour has a table forming for reopening.
- Long-term care paper will be sent to the government shortly. Also includes a discussion on homecare.
- Premier has promised a review of all sectors. NDP is calling for a public inquiry into long-term care.
- Working on an hour-long video to send out to members in lieu of a Convention.
- Canadian National Exhibition is cancelled. Many fall and winter activities are also cancelled.
- Deficit in Ontario is projected at 42 billion dollars.
- Starting to get layoffs in community colleges. Much of the learning will be moving online.
- There a danger of layoffs in the public service sector as things like Service Ontario move online.
- Organized a couple of units. Life Labs vote is tomorrow. Video billboard truck has been paid to circle Life Labs' offices stating they are anti-union.

SGEU/NUPGE

- Biggest outbreaks are in the Northern communities.
- Rehab programs are coming in.
- Testing is the main plan in the province. Ramp up testing and isolate faster.
- Opening some businesses back up.
- Does not seem to be a rush to bring government workers back to work.
- Looking at own internal plan for reopening.
- Continuing to push for PPE for frontline workers and show the value of public services.
- SGEU has put out a position on wage top-ups for all frontline workers. Some frontline workers have not received any recognition for their work at all.

HSAS

- Not clear how the government will distribute federal funds re: wage top-ups.
- 40,000 N95s at the current burn rate (will last for 1 month). Case numbers are low (5 new cases in the north reported yesterday). Northern community of La Loche needs more staff.
- Large gatherings are cancelled into August.
- Converted some smaller hospitals to Alternative Level of Care buildings which will operate without emergency rooms.

MGEU/NUPGE

- Province has cut 700 hydro worker jobs.
- Cut jobs in the agriculture sector, but still advertising for student summer jobs.

HSABC/NUPGE

- Number of positives are good. Moving into Phase 2 of the 4 Phase plan next Tuesday.
- Phase 2 sees starting elective surgeries, reopening dental clinics and coffee shops. All is predicated on the ability to social distance.
- Looking to reopen hotels, film industry, etc. in June.
- Exploring mixed in person and online learning for K-12 students.
- Public Health Officer has announced they're surveying the public. Goal is to get as many citizens to respond with their experience during the pandemic. Hoping to use these responses to guide reopening. Also asking if people want to participate in blood surveying to see if they had been exposed to COVID-19 and see if you have immunity anti-bodies.
- Opposition leader has advocated for businesses be given access to surplus acquired from workers compensation pay which would be a gross misuse of funds. The only reason there's currently a surplus is because regulations cut back how much money workers could access if they were injured.

HSAA

- The idea of "restarting" the economy is a misnomer as it never ended. Unpaid work continued at home.

- MLAs are quoting from the [Financial Post](#) and calling for a rollback of 20% in the public sector.
- Hair salons appear to be the first businesses to reopen.
- Bought a load of hand sanitizers which are being distributed across the province.
- Third COVID-19 death at the meat plant. Still hasn't been an OH&S investigation.
- Nurses' Union is taking the position from their national union that they don't want long-term care brought under the *Canada Health Act*. They instead want a separate, parallel act.
- No concerns about top-up pay so far.

Follow-ups

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

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