



COVID-19 Conference Call

May 27, 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 27, 2020
12:00 p.m. EDT

PARTICIPANTS

BCGEU/NUPGE	Doug Kinna
HSABC/NUPGE	Val Avery Miriam Sobrino
HSAA/NUPGE	Mike Parker Trudy Thomson
MGEU/NUPGE	Michelle Gawronsky Charlotte McWilliams
MAHCP	Bob Moroz
OPSEU/NUPGE	Smokey Thomas
NBU/NUPGE	Susie Proulx-Daigle Leigh Sprague
NSGEU/NUPGE	Jason MacLean Sandra Mullen Lynette Johnson
PEI UPSE/NUPGE	Karen Jackson
NAPE/NUPGE	Jerry Earle Trevor King Arlene Sedlickas
AAHP	Virginia Whitten 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 9 Components and 2 allied unions joined the call, as well as Larry Brown, NUPGE President, Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer, and 4 NUPGE staff.

Notes from all prior COVID-19 conference calls and other relevant documents can be found on the meeting [webpage](#).

2. Opening Statement – Larry Brown, NUPGE President

Larry Brown welcomed participants to the call and provided opening remarks. He commented on the reopening happening across the provinces.

A new development to watch is the PEI government's discussion about moving to a 4-day work week in the public sector. The proposal is no reduction of pay, but similar discussion in other provinces would likely include a pay cut.

A positive development this week is the growing discussion about widespread paid sick leave, including the latest push from the federal government.

NUPGE is working to combat austerity narratives, including an upcoming paper on provincial responsibilities and possible work with Jim Stanford and the CCPA. We continue to follow the unequal impacts of the pandemic, including rise in domestic violence. We are concerned with the potential for companies to use investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) within trade deals, to challenge governments' pandemic response.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, there is a court case challenging the government's travel restrictions. This is something we're watching.

NUPGE continues its work on long-term care. Our new poll found that 86% of Canadians are in favour of moving long-term care under the *Canada Health Act*. The military report on long-term care is troubling, but notably none of the facilities reported on were public facilities. NUPGE met with Jagmeet Singh last week on long-term care.

NSGEU noted that the experience in Nova Scotia has been different than the rest of the country. Northwood care home, which has seen the largest outbreak, is publicly-run. As a result, the government has resisted any inquiry, but its missteps will come to light.

3. Updates from Components

NAPE/NUPGE

- Long-term care has fared relatively well. Personal care homes are private, all but one LTC facility is publicly run. Past NAPE campaign fought government on P3s.
- The province enters Phase 3 on June 8. There are still questions about what reopening means for members.

- Pandemic pay hasn't been formally announced but will likely be geared to lower-wage workers in health care.
- NAPE has been involved in a positive campaign around food security.
- Court dates have been set for the charter challenge on travel restrictions.

AAHP

- Focusing on the pandemic pay issue

HSAA/NUPGE

- In Phase 1 of reopening. Phase 2 and 3 will be accelerated.
- Legislature has reconvened and plans to sit through the summer. 20 pieces of legislation are expected, including some that are labour-related.
- Cities are talking about reorganizing, so likely to see layoffs or reduced hours
- Privatization is on the table in labs, long-term care, and EMS
- We need to utilize the military report on LTC to address the issues.
- HSAA conducting audit, member reports as if regular convention

OPSEU/NUPGE

- Military report on LTC: Homes are represented by ONA, Unifor, and SEIU. Only 1 OPSEU-represented home has an outbreak. It is worth noting that the state of LTC is the result of decades of government decisions
- Where OPSEU does have exposure is inspectors. Today the government will announce requirement for 2 inspectors in each home. OPSEU is pushing for safety
- OPSEU is developing a plan for reopening but airing on the side of caution. Triage system and reporting is working well. Much will depend on testing, cases, etc. In-person meetings likely won't happen for 2020. One virtual board meeting per month
- COVID testing is ramping up. The government is prioritizing congregate settings and those with lots of in-person interaction (e.g., group homes, developmental services, LCBO, ODSP, corrections, Service Ontario)

NBU/NUPGE

- Most members who work in government offices are back to work, with distancing measures. Household bubbles are gone, so people can interact as usual.
- Borders are still closed. NBU members (e.g., conservation officers and commercial vehicle enforcement officers) are working at the borders. Need to get those people back to their regular jobs. NBU has been pushing the government to create a job and add them to the bargaining unit
- NBU reopening: Staff are back in offices with distancing (e.g., virtual meetings). Meetings with members or employer reps are done virtually when possible.
- As entering bargaining, concern about austerity impacts

NSGEU/NUPGE

- Pandemic pay: verbal direction from the health department that 4 bargaining units in acute care, plus long-term and home care, would be eligible. NSGEU raised concerns with people left out, dividing workers, etc., but still hasn't heard who is included and when they will be paid.
- Pressing the public service commission about protocols for return to work. The commission is receptive to working with NSGEU, but no plans in place yet.
- Provincial health authority has restarted non-urgent procedures but allowing people to continue working from home where possible. Free parking at hospitals will end June 1.
- Northwood situation is improving, but redeployment of staff is still in effect. Labour board complaint on ministerial mandate is still underway. NSGEU calling for an inquiry into what has happened in Northwood and the impact on acute care and home care.
- University sector: voluntary layoffs, including some members. With enrollment expected to drop, concern about support staff in the facilities. The government must step in to support because universities will be needed after the pandemic.
- Testing has expanded to include more who are asymptomatic
- Provincial health authority is continuing discussions with reusing bag valve masks in EMS and repurposing N95 masks. Still concerns here
- Office reopening: A committee of OHS reps and staff has been struck to develop a proposal to have in place for early June. Holding an all-presidents meeting to give a tutorial on using Zoom, as local votes will be happening by Zoom

PEI UPSE/NUPGE

- Government opened border to seasonal residents, causing controversy
- UPSE monitoring the 4-day per week proposal

HSABC/NUPGE

- On 4 day week, Labour minister made a comment that there are flexible work schedules in the province, but leaving it to employers and workers
- Paid sick leave: Premier was leading this, pushing Trudeau. Statement from Premiers Horgan, Silver, and Pallister that the federal government should step in
- Domestic violence: \$10 million in grant money to End Violence Association of BC to support community groups administering services
- More businesses opening, but social distancing is still being promoted.
- Discussion about pandemic pay happening tomorrow between provincial government and health care and social services' unions
- HSABC bulletins about issues with procedure masks in MRI departments that had metal in the nose bridge, posing risk to both staff and patients. This underlines the importance of reviewing PPE and appropriate usage.
- HSABC's first full board meeting is taking place in June

BCGEU/NUPGE

- Pandemic pay: concern with workers being overlooked
- 4-day work week: lots of CAs have flexibility to have a 4-day week by working increased hours, so no drop in pay. This is attractive to members, but also employers due to social distancing
- Provincial health officer has been warning about second wave and is prepared to reimpose restrictions. She opposed Vancouver as a hub city for NHL
- 23 outbreaks in long-term care were in the private sector
- Uneven reopening: some areas opening up, but others like convention centres are looking at layoffs because they likely won't open before a vaccine
- BCGEU is discussing reopening with staff unions, but will do an OHS assessment in each office. So far, if you want to go into the office, you need to ask for permission and give a reason. Zoom calls have worked well. Large gatherings unlikely for 2020.

MGEU/NUPGE

- Phase 2 beginning on Monday, including expanding capacity of child care centres and tutorial days in schools. Reopening of community centres, spas, some team sports.
- Government proposed 5 unpaid days for civil service workers before end of year to avoid layoffs. Still lots of questions on which classifications will be affected, what “minimal layoffs” means
- Pandemic pay known as Risk Recognition Fund. 15 groups were consulted. Presented with 5 options for moving the money forward and the groups voted. Some classifications were missed, so MGEU will be sending a letter.
- Privatization is happening, but don't know exactly where. Suspected changes in highways sector
- Domestic violence is rising. Alcohol consumption is at an all-time high.
- Private company in Ontario hired to respond to mental health
- MGEU office: Staff coming in, practicing social distancing. Developing a reopen plan through OHS. Reps are working from home for the most part and most meetings are virtual. Virtual board meeting went well.

MAHCP

- Pandemic pay: no matter the final scenario, it will divide a line within the membership. Lots of discussion around whether to participate.
- Labour relations staff are working around the clock. All the regular issues that were put on the back burner are coming back. People are having difficulty getting accommodated if they have a pre-existing condition
- MAHCP staff working remotely, but looking at office reopening

Question for NUPGE: Are there discussions happening about a restart program and what does it look like (e.g., meeting dates)?

NUPGE is starting to look at the options. All in-person meetings are cancelled for 2020, with virtual meetings instead. If things change drastically in the fall, we will look at booking in-person meetings. A memo will be sent to NEB with this information.

4. Other issues and next steps

Discussion of the inevitable second wave: we need to keep pressing governments.

The next call will happen in 2 weeks.



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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