



**national  
union**

# **COVID-19 Videoconference**

DRAFT

**June 10, 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**  
**June 10, 2020**  
**12:00 p.m. EDT**

## **PARTICIPANTS**

<b>BCGEU/NUPGE</b>	James Coccola
<b>HSABC/NUPGE</b>	Val Avery Miriam Sobrino
<b>SGEU/NUPGE</b>	Bob Bymoen Tracey Sauer
<b>MGEU/NUPGE</b>	Michelle Gawronsky
<b>NBU/NUPGE</b>	Susie Proulx-Daigle Leigh Sprague
<b>NSGEU/NUPGE</b>	Sandra Mullen
<b>PEIUPSE/NUPGE</b>	Karen Jackson
<b>NAPE/NUPGE</b>	Arlene Sedlickas
<b>NUPGE</b>	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 8 Components 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 spoke about the reopening processes across the country, with varied experiences. Recent developments on the wage top-up programs include the program release in Manitoba, and an expanded list of eligible workers in Saskatchewan.

The federal government is fast-tracking its infrastructure funding to municipalities, but reports indicate many municipalities are on the verge of crisis.

Brown highlighted some recent studies related to the pandemic and the economic recovery.

- A study in the US confirms that the lockdowns have prevented millions more COVID infections, with almost 5 million catching the virus by April 6, 2020.
- In Ontario, the infection rate among health care workers is on the rise with 50 health care workers infected daily. 83% of deaths in long-term care in Ontario have been for-profit homes. Staffing levels were lower in for-profit LTC.
- An OPSEU poll found that 3/4 Ontarians want a recovery based on investment in frontline workers and health care.
- A recent Angus Reid poll on public support of their governments' pandemic response and voter intentions may cause some concerns politically.

Upcoming reports from NUPGE on (1) the provincial role post-COVID and (2) considerations for unions on working from home (covers productivity, work-life balance, cost savings, environmental impact).

NUPGE had a call with post-secondary school workers. Almost all provinces are shifting to 100% online learning. Worried that this could become permanent even after the pandemic ends. Newfoundland has a hybrid model of in-person and online.

The legal opinion commissioned by NUPGE on workers' compensation claims while working from home was circulated to the NEB. Current workers' compensation does not serve the needs of workers in the current situation.

A webinar is planned for June to discuss the Cambie case before the Supreme Court. Components are asked to notify NUPGE if interested in joining. Decision will likely be

handed down this summer. BC preparing for what to do if the verdict does not go in our favour.

NUPGE released a statement on anti-racism and is establishing a special anti-racism committee to examine our internal work and response to combatting racism.

### **3. Updates from Components**

#### **NSGEU/NUPGE**

Discussions on reopening the NSGEU building are underway

Many members who work for the provincial government are going back to work, so those protocols have been released (Friday). Many workers will be working from home for as long as possible, bringing in only who is needed.

Child care opening on June 15 at only 50% capacity

Still battling with pandemic pay, with no commitment on when the pay will be received. Government has offered front line nurses a \$2000 top-up.

An NSGEU member died tragically this week.

NSGEU had all day board meeting via Zoom. Looking to have in-person negotiations and arbitrations happening soon. Will have a half-day board meeting via Zoom in July.

Many government offices never closed, just reduced number of service locations.

LPN reclassification is currently in arbitration

#### **NBU/NUPGE**

The province wants to create new border guard positions for another 18 months. The members doing this work now were initially told no vacation this summer, so this is positive as new hires will allow members to take vacation. Government says hiring 67-100 new positions.

Still no single-site agreement in place.

Difficulty getting health care workers to deploy to the special care home experiencing an outbreak, so the offer has been extended to the civil service.

Paramedics applied for a reclassification and the government decided to move them to NBU. CUPE has challenged the decision and the hearing begins in the fall.

Decision to move came from paramedics with no NBU involvement in this decision.

## **PEIUPSE/NUPGE**

Staff are back in the office, but office is closed to the public. Small meetings for investigations, arbitrations, and negotiations are happening virtually.

Preparing for virtual negotiations with employer.

The government wants to maintain telework and civil service members are overwhelming in favour. UPSE's lawyers have looked at the proposed policy. The aim is to ensure telework happens carefully and that members are protected.

PEIUPSE has raised concerns about WSIB protections for working from home.

No news on the 4-day work week

Still working to get PPE for home care workers. Health PEI is rejecting it because there is no community spread, but there are concerns with the border reopening and rise in community spread.

## **NAPE/NUPGE**

Government offices reopened on Monday, but this is happening carefully. Employees are still allowed to work from home. Overall the reopening is happening slower than some other provinces.

NAPE staff and other tenants are back in the office, but not opening to the public.

2 lawsuits filed against the province related to the travel ban, one from an individual and second is class action lawsuit.

Liberal Party leadership race is underway. Anticipating a provincial election in the fall.

## **HSABC/NUPGE**

Gradual easing of restrictions seems to be going well.

Surgeries are ramping up, so hospital occupancy is rising. Private surgical facilities are also assisting with the backlog. This is concerning related to implications for the Cambie case and narrative around role of private facilities.

## **BCGEU/NUPGE**

Within the public service, still lots of concerns around pandemic pay.

BCGEU is looking at reopening the office and establishing protocols.

Watching the federal government announcement around paid sick days and impact on existing collective agreements

BC Target Pension Plan is faring quite well. Mostly divested from fossil fuels.

Return to work: ministries are drafting plan wherein a certain portion will come back, but a large portion will be working from home indefinitely. In 18 months, some ministries will be up to 40% working in the office. The questions are around child care and school, so the province is pushing to reopen schools

## **SGEU/NUPGE**

With reopening, concerns rising around maintaining PPE for health care workers.

Concerns around hand sanitizers in health care settings, as these pose a risk for workers who are pregnant or nursing.

SGEU, SEIU, and CUPE have released a petition regarding recognition pay for health care workers. There has been confusion around the top-up for long-term care workers.

Government is currently giving out a \$400 supplement for those making less than \$24 per hour. Wording is confusing on who qualifies and SGEU is seeking clarity.

Members who work in private care homes and government facilities have been cohorted in the SHA and losing work as a result. Some members are looking at resigning and moving to casual, but SHA has said that you will still be cohorted and assigned shifts. The government signaled they will continue cohorting long-term, beyond pandemic.

Plans underway to reopen SGEU office and implement protocols.

Preparing for Convention in 2020: hoping for an in-person convention, but the government has signaled there may not be any large group gatherings until June 2021

Designated COVID hospital, non-COVID hospitals, and alternate level of care facilities. The latter closed their emergency rooms and there was concern from communities. Those ERs are being reopened.

Members convey thanks to NUPGE for meetings.

Layoffs not being pressed at the moment, but potential is looming for cuts.

## **MGEU/NUPGE**

MGEU office: Some staff are working from home and looking at returning on alternate days.

MGEU restructured so that Resource Centre could open full time.

Challenges associated with both in-person and virtual meetings. Convention postponed until January, but still uncertain

Surgeries are restarting, but some follow-up care services aren't reopening. This is causing problems with follow up and recoveries.

PPE: concerns in municipalities where there is flooding response.

Some staff are back in schools. Students have begun coming in by appointment and for 30 minute sessions with teacher.

Risk Recognition Fund: leaves out many groups including no space to indicate casual worker. To be eligible make less than \$2500 per month, barely over minimum wage.

Single-site restriction in health care: Unclear what it means for those with multiple jobs.

MGEU ensuring members get hours before private health care companies.

5 days without pay: negotiated a no-layoff clause for workers forced to take days without pay, until at least April 2021. Also protections for agriculture workers successful.

Privatization: anticipated in the highways sector. Some areas of health care will be pulled out of the civil service and moved to Shared Health. Some of the areas government is looking to restructure.

### **Discussion on working from home**

Members having varying opinions on working from home. There is an impression that even those who want to work from home will want a hybrid model. Many of our collective agreements don't have language for telework. These arrangements may also present challenges for staying in touch with members and maintaining relevance.

### **4. Other issues and next steps**

NUPGE will circulate a note to gauge the response on frequency of these calls.

Send relevant documents to [anaidoo@nupge.ca](mailto:anaidoo@nupge.ca)





## 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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