



**Correctional Officers
and Youth Facility Worker
Representatives
Conference Call Notes**

March 24, 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

**Correctional Officers and Youth Facility Workers Representatives
Conference Call
March 24, 2020
1:00 pm Eastern Time**

PARTICIPANTS

BCGEU Dean Purdy

HSABC Katie Riecken

HSAA Mike Parker

**SGEU Lori Bossaer
Verne Larson
Glen Billingsley
Kim Picot
Jon Urton
Diane Beaulieu**

MGEU Michelle Gawronsky

**OPSEU Chris Jackel – SOLGEN Adult MERC Chair
Chad Oldfield – SOLGEN Adult Vice-Chair
Ryan Graham – SOLGEN Adult Health and Safety
Pete Harding – MCCSS Youth MERC
Tom Gibson – MCCSS Youth Health and Safety
Jonathan Guider – BPS Sector 7 Chair
Joscelyn Ross – OPSEU Health and Safety
Sandra Harper – OPSEU Negotiator**

**NSGEU Rick Weisman
Benny Singler**

NAPE Chris Henley

**NUPGE Larry Brown, President
Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer
Len Bush, Managing Director
Michael Temelini, National Representative
Nadia Ibrahim, Research Officer**

1. Introduction - Larry Brown, President

Participants were asked to send an email to Michael Temelini, NUPGE, to register.

Brown mentioned that the aim of the call was to touch base, share updates from across the country, and determine whether future calls are worthwhile.

NUPGE and Components have been watching corrections following prison riots in Italy. European Public Service Union (EPSU) released an [overview](#) of what correctional workers are facing across the region.

In Canada, there have been media articles on the potential impact on corrections, but the focus has been on inmates. There has been little coverage on the impact on people who work in correctional facilities. NUPGE convened this call to get more information from workers in the sector.

2. Updates from Components

BCGEU

Unanswered questions around sick leave, isolation units:

- If members in adult and youth correctional centres contract the virus and need to be away from work, or need to self-isolate, will they be getting full pay or sick leave until collective agreement provisions?
- What about child care for members who need to go to work? Request for updates from other provinces on this issue.

Inmates: some tests conducted and a couple high risks, but no positive cases.

Several staff have self-isolated after travel or other reasons.

Isolation protocols being rolled out, risk assessment is taking place on intake units.

There is a plan for a quarantine unit if anyone tests positive.

HSABC

- HSABC represents mental health staff in facilities - health authority employees.
- Fewer issues, but concerns about PPE.
- Because these members are health authority employees, not direct government employees, they have access to paid general leave if they have to self-isolate.

HSAA

- HSAA represents health care providers inside facilities.
- No update from the ground, so trusting that things are okay.
- Questions about PPE, child care.
- Currently employees have access to paid leave.

SGEU

Update from both adult and young offenders facilities.

In discussion about staff who need to self-isolate or are returning from travel, the government is saying they need to use their sick leave. If they don't have sick leave, apply for EI.

Constant conversations with the government regarding pay - SGEU argues it should be paid leave. Government is not allowing it right now, but hopefully that will change.

There was fear around a potential case, but the test came back negative.

Adult facilities: concerns for PPE

- Prince Albert facility has cancelled visits entirely, encouraged to take calls, moved to video court where possible. Intake numbers are down and when they occur, sheriffs or police complete an assessment beforehand and the incoming inmate needs to be masked.
- Moving to establish a quarantine unit, new inmates will stay there for first 14 days as a precaution.
- Committees set up at all adult facilities made up of staff and management to address questions, concerns, ideas for mitigating risk.

Youth facilities: things are okay, they have PPE

- Staff have worked hard to inform youth about what's going on.
- All visitor access cut off, any new admissions come with screening sheets and masks before they enter, seen by nurse and intake staff for assessment.
- Isolation and quarantine units set up (new inmate stays in quarantine for 14 days before being moved to housing unit).
- Twice a day units are locked down and cleaned with wipes.
- All professional services are done by phone (e.g. case workers).
- Youth courts moving to video court.

- All shared programming has stopped, staff have implemented other programs.
- Youth-management committees created.

If management sends a corrections worker home because of symptoms, they are on sick leave. If workers are told to go home because there's no work, they will be paid their full wage.

In the province, child-care centres can remain open, but 8 children to a room. The emphasis is on health care workers, but not other essential service workers.

Some lay-offs but not in corrections.

MGEU

Staff representative met yesterday with the Assistant Deputy Minister.

No confirmed cases in any jails. 10 people in isolation for regular flu-like symptoms.

Testing done in facilities, but only by authorization of Manitoba Health and under condition that the person has travelled or come into contact with a confirmed case.

Jails have purchased foggers and sprayers to disinfect - test run.

Visits have been limited: being done through glass with cleaning right after the visits, asking people not to visit if they have travelled or are sick, lawyers asked to use the phone as much as possible.

One facility (Agassiz) has been designated as an isolation facility if needed.

Escorts being held within corrections offices and no plan to change that.

Social distancing is a challenge, but looking at the ability to release inmates near the end of their sentence if they do not pose a danger.

No lockdowns at this time, but measures in place if they need to (e.g. lots of cases or many staff away).

PPE available and asking officers to use when possible, but limited supply.

Programs closed in the youth centres, no volunteers allowed in.

MGEU: not the time to close the Dauphin jail, asking Minister to reconsider the timing.

OPSEU

3 confirmed cases among staff. One is a contractor coming into the institutions, not an employee.

1 confirmed case among inmates. A federal inmate turned himself in using all precautions and was admitted to the provincial institution. Conversations ongoing to transfer him back.

Presumptive cases awaiting testing.

Union had been told everyone would be getting paid, but nothing in writing until 30 minutes ago. Today's information: "Workers that are self-isolating are being supported. In such circumstances, the exact pay treatment depends on the individual circumstances, but we can confirm that where a staff is required to self-isolate, they will not be without pay for the 14-day self-isolation period. Short-time sick pay or leave with pay are the mechanisms that can be used, for example. This will be communicated to institutions."

This is a step in the right direction, but still questions about how this will apply for people who need to self-isolate for more time or for other reasons.

Child care: Ontario announced there will be free 24-7 child care for all emergency workers, including correctional officers. This is positive, but practical details unclear.

Access to institutions: all volunteer programs are cancelled, contractors are being restricted in some cases (depends on what and where it is, and priority). Some capital programs are on hold, some ongoing.

Courts: OPSEU advocating for more video courts.

Inmate transfers: mixed messages. All non-essential transfers should have already ceased, and the only time would be to reduce overcrowding, when court-required, or due to an urgent health or safety issue. This is better, but still vague.

Some work refusals in various institutions regarding transferring inmates. The worker lost each one with Ministry of Labour, which deemed there was no right to refuse. Reason for transfer wasn't properly communicated to staff.

Communication: daily scheduled calls with ministry officials, other periodic calls with updates, phone lines are open to the union. This is positive.

All corrections staff deemed essential, including rehab officers, social workers, etc. Employer is open to managing them somewhat differently (e.g. split shifts so fewer people in an office, work from home), but still up for discussion.

PPE – Struggling: some institutions have lots, others have very little.

Pandemic plans: Today's documents say plans have been activated in each institution. Impression is that it has only been piecemeal. Government says they will share with the union, so we'll see.

OPSEU President requested meeting with chief medical department (happened March 23, 2020) and it was fruitful. One doctor gave information on social distancing in hospitals (e.g., when a health care provider is required to go in closer than 2 metres, they are required to use PPE). These steps are difficult in corrections institutions, but knowing this advice provides ammunition for the union. The employer seems to be recognizing this issue.

OPSEU began working with employer in January, but only came around in the last few weeks.

NSGEU

Staffing levels described as good at the moment.

Assurance from government that anyone in quarantine or self-isolation as per public health guidelines will be accessing 14-day paid administrative leave. This is a separate bank from others (e.g., regular sick leave bank).

Support for relief employees: If anyone is impacted by this and having to take a leave, the employer will go back over 12 months and pro-rate hours to determine benefits. Based on that formula, if anyone is uniquely disadvantaged (e.g., because they were on unpaid leave or recently hired), the employer will override to ensure no one is uniquely disadvantaged. This is positive.

Relationship with the government has been positive so far. Information has been coming in fairly quickly and in writing. Daily calls with NSGEU.

No cases yet: inmates or staff.

Similar to other provinces, cleaning and other supports have been put into place.

NAPE

Decent staffing levels, except Her Majesty's Penitentiary (St. John's) which has a serious staffing problem.

Communications with the government has been pretty good.

There is a plan for isolation should it be needed, a process for reviewing new inmates.

Very little visitation, programming has been shut down, courts moved to video.

People are being paid if they're off for whatever reason.

No cases yet: inmates or staff.

Similar issues with child care as in other provinces.

Daycare – same problems as reported by other components.

3. Discussion

Request to see questionnaire from Saskatchewan for new inmates - SGEU will send.

Question: What is the chemical being used in Manitoba? Michelle will send.

- Ontario has recommended DECON-7 that comes in fogger form. It neutralizes anything on a uniform. Employer hasn't approved.

Saskatchewan: only two Labour Relations Officers are fielding questions from all members from across the province, and they have one contact in the government. When they receive questions, the answers are being posted on the SGEU webpage. This has been beneficial because there are many common questions.

4. Next Steps

If Components have other updates or paperwork that will be useful, share it with NUPGE and we will send it back out.

There was interest in convening these calls going forward. If possible, it would be helpful to submit questions ahead of time so people know what information to provide.

Notes from SGEU

YO Facilities

1. No visitor access to the buildings (limiting access to the building to employees working only – even access to the building through certain areas by employees – certain employees entering through various areas of the building).
2. Facility wide cleaning happens twice daily – facility is locked down and cleaned with special disinfectants and wipes.
3. New admission process – COVID screening sheets come from RPS and Courts with every new admission – every new admission comes already masked and then goes through a special intake process with a nurse / intake staff before being cleared to enter the facility.
4. Isolation unit has been set up for any admission showing signs symptoms of infection.
5. Multiple sources of education have been placed around the facility for staff and youth in regards to the COVID virus – how to eliminate the spread, posters hung around the facility on proper handwashing, proper use of PPE equipment, nurses have put on face to face demonstrations with all staff and youth on proper hand washing techniques.
6. PPE has been provided for all units.
7. Anyone able to work from home has been reassigned to work from home.
8. Professional services (lawyers, youth workers, addictions counselors, all conferences, etc. have been moved to over the phone).
9. All courts have been moved to video court.
10. All shared programming (wood shop, gym, art, classrooms have been cancelled).
11. Minimal movement between units – social distancing within units – assigned seating within the units for youth – distanced apart on the floor.
12. Created a youth / management committee to give the youth input and communication to the ongoing changes and allow for them to have a voice in to what their needs are and how we can meet them through all this.
13. Purchasing of new equipment to enable the times being spent in the units more manageable (board games, puzzles, video games, etc).

Adult Facilities

Saskatoon Correctional Center continues to review reintegration leave candidates.

One of our units were placed on quarantine due to a number of inmates displaying signs and symptoms. This again was based on the recommendation from Public Health.

Number of concerns have been raised about PPE. All units will be reviewed to ensure they have the required supplies going forward and provincially an inventory is being developed for PPE to assist in supporting those areas that are in need or short supplies.

The COVID-19 Response Team is continuing to develop contingency plans and work with units and staff regarding the pandemic as well as ensuring materials are being ordered for emergency measures.

The Medical Unit is being supplied with iPads to assist with face to face with doctors to ensure inmates can be seen by our contract doctors.

All visitors, including lawyers are no longer allowed to enter SCC.

The Polytechnic Cooking Program at Urban Camp has been cancelled.

Elders and Chaplains have been asked to remain at home during this time period and we are working on methods for inmates to be able to still be in contact as needed.

We are having portable hand washing stations installed on Monday at the door for incoming inmates and Sheriffs to use prior to going to Admitting.

We have been authorized to hire extra nurses to ensure we have sufficient medical resources as well as ensuring our stock of PPE and medical supplies are adequate and sufficient.

Front end screening tools for new admissions will be used for nurses to utilize on inmates when first admitted as well as a screening tool staff can use on inmates.

A second BSW crew has been hired to help with cleaning within the Centre and they will be working 1pm to 9pm.

The COVID-19 Response team continues to develop contingency plans and provide as much information to staff as possible.

The current protocol with Urban Camp inmates coming to the main building are as follows: (Urban Camp is not attached to our main facility)

-When Urban Camp inmates come to the main center for medication, nurses will bring all necessary medications up front and distribute there.

-At the moment there are no Urban Camp inmates requiring methadone. If an Urban Camp inmate was to come to the main center for methadone, the Urban Camp staff will walk with them to the main building, and nurses will distribute methadone up front. Urban Camp staff will then walk back to Urban Camp to supervise the inmates, and the inmates are to finish their 20 minute observation out at Urban.

-If an Urban Camp inmate is to be released, CST will pick up the inmate as per usual and bring the inmate to the main building. Admitting staff will then meet the inmate up front to be released. CST will still be required to verify and sign for the inmates release.

If you are required to be away from work due to a COVID-19 related reason you can use entitlements as follows:

Self-Isolation – Sick Leave

Child/Elder/Spousal Care – Pressing Necessity/Family Leave

If you do not have enough Sick/PN/Family Leave to cover your absence you will be allowed to access other entitlements to cover you. Please complete the attached Pressing Necessity Form for all PN/Family Leave as well if you need to access VL or AT for your absence.

If you have no entitlements left, you will need to complete the General Leave of Absence Form. Completion and processing of this form will generate a Record of Employment so you can apply for Employment Insurance (EI).

Prince Albert Correctional is:

-A few staff that had returned from out of country vacation are currently self-isolating at a cost to themselves or E.I. I don't have the exact number at this time.

-No confirmed inmate cases or any inmates that have undergone the test process for covid.

-Pandemic committee was created and are working diligently on issues, concerns, ideas, questions, solutions and outcomes.

-Union and director signed off on an agreed to streamlining of process to address staffing levels.

-New inmate admittance must arrive with covid questionnaire complete as well as wearing a protective mask. Failure with the above mentioned items results in no access to the building. Nurses as well have a questionnaire and interview process to complete prior to inmate being given the ok to remove the mask.

-All programs are cancelled. Activities coordinator has purchased extra games and such to keep inmates occupied.

-Exploring the idea of creating an admitting & isolation unit which at this moment is difficult for numerous reasons such as high count, gang problems and incompatibilities.

- Each unit has hired extra cleaners for their respective units, the center hired an extra bsw crew to assist in cleaning.
- PPE access is restrictive at present time and the facility seems to be rationing supplies until more supplies is able to delivered.
- Lots of concern and questions about staff being quarantined and what this would look like to which the province as no answers for.
- What the right to refuse process would be in this case, pending on the situation.
- All public visits have been cancelled, lawyers and probation are encouraged to do phone interviews with clients. Facility is still open for public to use kiosk to drop off money for inmate phones and canteen which is mind boggling.
- Court exits are to be limited and seem to be at this point, more video court is being utilized, out of center escorts are on emergency basis only, all inmate appointments cancelled.
- Reintegration leaves being explored daily.
- Currently no units on quarantine.
- Seeing as most of the country is being paid in full bout time sask party stepped up.
- Contractors have been cancelled.
- Deliveries to the stores area still happening ie) office supplies and food delivery.



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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