



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

March 31, 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 31, 2020  
1:00 pm Eastern Time**

**PARTICIPANTS**

**SGEU**

**Cory Hendriks  
Barry Nowoselsky  
Lori Bossaer  
Kim Picot  
Jon Urton  
Glen Billingsley  
Kelly Hardy**

**MGEU**

**Charlotte McWilliams  
Chris Drosdoski**

**OPSEU**

**Chris Jackel  
Michelle McLean  
Janet Laverty  
Pete Verdon  
Tom Gibson  
Sandra Harper  
Joscelyn Ross  
Jonathan Guider  
Chad Oldfield  
Pete Harding**

**PEI UPSE**

**Chris Oatway**

**NSGEU**

**Rick Wiseman  
Benny Singler**

**NUPGE**

**Bert Blundon, Secretary-Treasurer  
Len Bush, Managing Director  
Nadia Ibrahim, Research Officer**

## 1. Introductions

Len Bush, NUPGE Managing Director, welcomed participants to the meeting and asked them to please send participant names and emails to Deb Sonogo. He also pointed participants' attention to the documents that were shared via the meeting [webpage](#).

## 2. Updates from Components

Bush asked participants for any specific questions or topics they wanted to discuss on this call. What follows is a summary of any information provided in response to these specific questions, as well as, general updates from Components.

### **From SGEU: When people are in quarantine or self-isolation, are they being paid their regular salary or having to use their sick leave?**

- NSGEU: Anyone who is in quarantine or self-isolation is transferred to 14-day paid leave of absence. This is not coming out of any existing bank. (Note that in NSGEU's own investigation with members, this has not always been the case in practice.)
- PEI UPSE: When people are self-isolating, they are put on 14-day administrative leave. Nothing is coming out of their sick bank.
- OPSEU: While in quarantine/self-isolation due to travel, employees are getting paid (including casuals). Still unsure about anything beyond the 14-day period. If a full-time employee is sick, they would be paid using their sick credits. It is not clearly defined for part-time or casual employees. They don't have immediate entitlement to sick time, but earn it based on time worked (i.e. some casuals may have time banked and others may not). The Ministry has said that no one will be disadvantaged, but the union has seen nothing in writing.
- MGEU: Everything comes out of existing banks.
- SGEU: Everything comes out of sick credits.

### **From NSGEU: When there have been confirmed or suspected cases, what was the messaging? How equipped were your lines of communication to withstand this situation? (See below for background)**

- NSGEU: Initially there were strong lines of communication and daily check-ins at all levels. Since confirmed or suspected cases have arisen, the government/employer is not responding to calls.
- OPSEU: Once a case is confirmed, the employer has an obligation under the collective agreement to provide the union with written confirmation of the diagnosis through an information-share.

- SGEU: When there are cases, communication is happening on a facility level. The union is finding out about the cases via staff, not the ministry directly.

**From NUPGE: Have there been efforts to reduce inmate counts in the provinces?**

- NSGEU: Burnside jail has reduced numbers by 50%. Facilities had been proactive up until this point in releasing large numbers of inmates.
- PEI UPSE: The province has drastically reduced numbers in jails - approximately 50%.
- OPSEU: The province has reduced inmate counts by 27%.
- MGEU: Starting to release those near the end of sentences who are deemed not a threat to public safety, and cancelling intermittent sentences. Youth counts are down significantly into the 30s at both facilities.
- SGEU: Counts are being reduced (e.g. Pine Grove down 50 offenders, Prince Albert down 60 offenders) and facilities are reducing intakes.

**From OPSEU: Any strategies for dealing with possible cross-contamination of worksites due to staff working in more than one facility?**

- NSGEU: Not an issue in Nova Scotia, but could become one if reassignment happens.
- PEI UPSE: Not an issue at this point.
- OPSEU: Transfer payment facility has been pushing employer on this, but not hearing anything back.
- MGEU: Nothing in place yet regarding redeployment, and little crossover of staff, but will be following up.
- SGEU: Hasn't been an issue yet, but something to bring to pandemic teams to look at.

Discussion about redeployment more broadly:

- Saskatchewan government is looking at a whole redeployment strategy where any government employee can be reassigned, even across bargaining unit lines. The focus will likely be health care facilities, but then corrections if needed.

- Manitoba: memorandum of agreement on redeployment in health care, but there are a number of regional health authorities that are separate employers, whereas in corrections they are all civil service employees, so it's not clear if something similar would be required.
- Nova Scotia: Good Neighbour Protocol has been enacted. The union negotiated it with a former government outlining how labour relations should exist in such situations.
- New Brunswick: Labour Mobility Agreement

**What are the concerns facing inmates, and has there been any tension in facilities as a result?**

- MGEU: As visitation and programs were being cancelled, the employer began looking at integrating new things like handheld video gaming and additional phone access in an effort to mitigate possible pushback from inmates (and delay possible lockdown).

**General Updates:**

**NSGEU**

- Burnside jail (largest jail in Nova Scotia with a forensic hospital attached) had a confirmed diagnosis on Friday - a casual worker that is a brand new hire. Public health identified the people in the facility who were close contacts and they were sent home to self-isolate. NSGEU was initially told that Friday was the employee's first shift (i.e. that they were not in the workplace Monday-Thursday). The union was then notified by staff that the employee was in the workplace Monday-Thursday and was symptomatic during that time. The union has been trying to get confirmation from the justice ministry, but they are not hearing anything back. Since the forensic hospital is a health unit, it is unclear whether the justice ministry simply didn't know and it was an issue with the health ministry, or whether it was deliberate, but it is still concerning.
  - (Please do not share this information outside the call) \*
- This and other situations have caused a breakdown of trust and of communication. Communication relationship had been fairly positive, but the fear is that it is breaking down.

**PEI UPSE**

- The union has had good lines of communication with the employer and with members.

## OPSEU

### Adult facilities

- 2 more employees have tested positive: 1 in probation and parole, 1 recreation officer in an institution. In the first case, the ministry took the appropriate steps for cleaning and isolating infected staff. In the second case, there was a delay in communication to other staff members. OPSEU was notified by the staff person, but it took public health a few days to notify the facility (and the union wasn't able to tell others until it came from public health), which then conducted their mapping to identify close contacts. There are now 48 employees in self-isolation.
- Once a case is confirmed, the employer has an obligation under the collective agreement to provide the union with written confirmation of the diagnosis through information-share. The date of the clearance is also provided.
- Work refusal today in Ottawa regarding active screening. Staff members wanted everyone to be actively screened. OPSEU is close to having something in place for active screening. The Ministry says it is working on rolling it out.

### Youth facilities

- 1 confirmed case. The union was notified immediately and was satisfied with the procedures that were quickly put in place (e.g. de-contamination, notifying staff).
- Active screening of anyone who enters the facilities is now in place.
- Stage 2 (of 3) of pandemic plans are in place at youth facilities. Stage 3 is in place in one unit (where the confirmed case was).

## MGEU

- No confirmed cases in inmate population or staff, though the provincial testing guidelines still require symptoms. One youth facility has been designated as the holding centre for anyone who tests positive: Agassiz facility
- All admissions are being done centrally to the remand centre in Winnipeg, where people are isolated for 14 days, then transferred to other institutions.
- Purchase of foggers that releases a mist of non-toxic acid to cover everything. Initial reports are that it's effective - covers large areas, no need to wipe everything down.
  - Large ones for big areas, smaller ones that can be used in escort vans.
  - This has been used in Ontario youth facilities.
- Still issues around social distancing in facilities.

- Cancelled all visitation. Repairs and maintenance are the only people allowed in.

## **SGEU**

### Adult facilities:

- Conference call last night with representatives from adult centres.
- Every facility has developed a pandemic plan and separate isolation/quarantine unit.
- All facilities still have access to PPE concerns.
- Saskatoon Correctional Centre: 5 staff have tested positive and are self-isolating. After identifying close contacts at the workplace, 70 people are self-isolating.
- Presumptive cases at Regina and Pine Grove facilities.
- Prince Albert: Some staff self-isolating, but no positive cases. 2 new intakes were tested and so the whole transport has been placed in the medical unit and holding cells for 14 day isolation.
  - Looking at the fogger system, relayed to other centres so the hope is that will be address by pandemic teams.
  - Looking at a boot-washing station.
- Visits have been cancelled, limited programming.
- Mental health facility in North Battleford is having lots of issues. It is a shared facility between health and corrections, so there is tension over jurisdiction.
- SGEU has followed up on mental health of the employees who have tested positive to ensure they are faring okay. Unclear if the employer is doing anything additional.
- Local distillery has delivered shipments of hand sanitizer free of cost to facilities.

### Youth facilities:

- No cases. Centres have been shut nearly to a standstill: no visits or programming.
- Isolation and intake units set up. When new admissions arrive, they go into automatic 14-day quarantine and only if they are asymptomatic for that time do they go into general living unit.
- Screening process for anyone coming in, including staff
- Shortage of PPE



- Good communication with directors and managers, pandemic teams in place

### **3. Next Steps**

- Question about inviting AUPE
- Meeting notes and any information shared will be uploaded to the webpage
- Interest in reconvening for a conference call at the same time next week



## 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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