

MANITOBA REGIONAL OFFICE

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SENT VIA EMAIL: minhsal@leg.gov.mb.ca

April 5, 2020

Honourable Cameron Friesen
Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living
Room 302 Legislative Building

Dear Minister Friesen:

**RE: PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT AND SUPPORTS TO MANITOBA
HOME CARE WORKERS**

As you are aware, the Canadian Union of Public Employees represents home care workers in Shared Health, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority, Southern Health-Santé Sud, and in the Northern Regional Health Authority. These workers are operating on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic, taking care of Manitoba's elderly and most vulnerable Manitobans. On April 1, 2020, a directive regarding universal personal protective equipment was issued for all facility-based health-care workers. This same level of PPE protection was not extended to home care, despite the insistence of home care workers and their union.

On April 4th, we received a new PPE directive from Shared Health that recognizes the need for enhanced PPE for home care workers and others working in the community. While we have some concerns and questions regarding the new guidelines that we will take up with the appropriate employers, we are glad to see that the concerns we have been raising with home care employers are beginning to be acted upon.

However, many home care workers continue to be unable to access the PPE that they were required to use under the April 4th guidelines, which has put these workers and the community at risk. At times this was due to shortages, at other times due to inability to access centres where the PPE are kept. The lack of PPE has put home care workers at risk and has hindered the ability of home care workers to help to "flatten the curve" of the COVID-19 pandemic. We urge you to take all necessary actions to ensure that all home care workers, at all times, have timely access to PPE when they need it.

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MARK HANCOCK

National President/Président national

CHARLES FLEURY

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

DENIS BOLDUK, PAUL FAORO, FRED HAHN, JUDY HENLEY, SHERRY HILLIER

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

Second, the decision to exclude home care workers from the April 1st directive, and to now require them to potentially wait until April 13th to receive PPE under the new guidelines, is simply unacceptable. We urge you to put the April 4th directives in force immediately. Another nine days without proper PPE is unacceptable for home care workers and their clients.

The treatment of home care workers by the health care system throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been yet another indignity that home care workers must endure by a health care system which has continually treated them as second class. As you know, home care workers do not have access to the same level of sick pay and benefits afforded to all other health care workers, and home care workers are suffering due to that inequity everyday. Lack of access to PPE must not be yet another burden that home care workers are asked to bear.

As the Minister of Health, we would ask that you direct the authorities to immediately ensure home care workers are provided with PPE as outlined in the April 4th directive, and that the health authorities take actions to ensure that home care workers have access, at all times, to the PPE they need to keep themselves and their communities safe. Further, we would urge you to extend fully paid sick leave to home care workers for the duration of the pandemic, for the sake of both home care workers and their clients.

Sincerely,

Debbie Boissonneault, President of CUPE 204

Representing health care workers in Shared Health, Winnipeg Regional Health Authority

Darrin Cook, President of CUPE 4270

Representing health care workers in Southern Health-Santé Sud

Christine Lussier, President of CUPE 8600

Representing health care workers in the Northern Regional Health Authority