

MANITOBA REGIONAL OFFICE

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

March 19, 2020

The Honourable Brian Pallister
Premier of Manitoba
Room 204 Legislative Building
450 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 0V8

Dear Premier,

RE: MANITOBBANS AND COVID-19

On behalf of the 37,000 working Manitobans represented by CUPE, we are contacting you to provide recommendations on how to protect the health and safety of those on the front lines, fighting against the COVID-19 virus.

At this time, we know that public services and the workers that deliver these services are more important than ever as we face a global pandemic.

CUPE members work in health care, education, crown corporations, social services, municipalities, child care, and more. These workers are critical to keeping our province running.

CUPE is working hard with management and employers across the province to protect our members' rights and to advocate for our members' health and safety – as well as your economic stability and income security during this uncertain time.

We are asking the Province of Manitoba for help.

When workers are protected, our communities and our economy is protected.

As such, CUPE Manitoba is calling on the Government of Manitoba to immediately address the following issues to support public sector workers in the fight to curb the outbreak:

- Workers should not face loss of income due to quarantine or self-isolation measures, and incomes should be maintained for workers affected by temporary closures of schools, universities, child care centres, recreational facilities and all other public services;

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MARK HANCOCK

National President/Président national

CHARLES FLEURY

National Secretary-Treasurer/Secrétaire-trésorier national

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

General Vice-Presidents/Vice-présidences générales

- Workers who have to self-isolate due to illness, travel or compromised immunity should be able to access paid leave without using sick leave banks;
- Legislation to protect the jobs of workers and waive the requirements for sick notes during the pandemic;
- Pass legislation which temporarily prohibits the necessity of sick notes for workers to access short-term disability plans;
- We echo the Manitoba Federation of Labour's call for fourteen (14) days of paid job-protected leave for all workers in the province;
- All front-line workers need access to appropriate personal protective equipment, including N95 respirators;
- With schools and child care centres closing, the government needs to provide substantial financial assistance for parents who cannot afford alternative care, or who need to miss work to care for a child;
- Government must make child-care available to all workers providing essential services;
- Call on the federal government to expand access to Employment Insurance, increase benefit levels, and reduce eligibility requirements, and Manitoba must fill the gaps wherever necessary;
- Instruct crown and municipal utilities, banks, landlords, credit card companies and financial institutions to extend and relax mortgage, rent and bill payment requirements, loan servicing obligations, and other responsibilities facing consumers and households.

Finally, we would ask that the government specifically direct the health authorities to provide full and immediate sick pay for home care workers.

Home care workers are on the front lines of this pandemic – working with Manitoba's most vulnerable individuals. The current serious disincentives which exist for them to take time off due to illness, such as unpaid waiting periods and receiving only two-thirds (2/3) of regular pay when they do qualify, are in our opinion not appropriate at any time, and especially not appropriate during a pandemic. We would ask that government take this request seriously – not just for the welfare of home care workers, but for their clients and all Manitobans.

We hope that these requests will be taken seriously. We thank you for all the work you have been doing to-date to help “flatten the curve” of the COVID-19 virus. It is not an easy job, and we are willing partners in helping to protect our community.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,



LEE McLEOD
CUPE REGIONAL DIRECTOR



ABE ARAYA
CUPE MANITOBA PRESIDENT

LMc:cbc/cope 491

cc: Hon. Cameron Friesen, Minister of Health, Seniors and Active Living
Hon. Scott Fielding, Minister of Finance