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## **BASIC INFORMATION**

### **What is COVID-19? How it is spread? What are the symptoms?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory infections like bronchitis, pneumonia or severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). These viruses are spread mainly from person to person through close contact, for example, in a household, workplace or health care centre. The COVID-19 strain is characterized by symptoms including a runny nose, sore throat, shortness of breath, cough, and fever.

### **Who should be conducting Active Screening at my workplace?**

The Union's position is that Active Screening is to be conducted by trained staff members, which may include non-bargaining unit staff in cases of emergency. Employees who are conducting Active Screening must be provided with appropriate PPE.

### **What signage should be posted in my workplace?**

Signage should be posted at each entrance to the facility notifying that Active Screening protocols are in place. The Employer should also ensure that isolation rooms/units are clearly identified.

### **Can I refuse to be screened when entering my workplace?**

The Union's position is that limiting the transmission of COVID-19 is a public health priority. As such, we are not advising that members refuse to be screened. If a member refuses to be screened by their Employer, we anticipate that they will be denied entry and will not be eligible for leave with pay. The Union will not be grieving these cases.

### **I work in multiple healthcare facilities; what, if any, are my obligations?**

The Ministry of Health is asking that all health care workers who work in multiple care settings identify themselves to their managers and develop an individualized plan to manage their employment across these settings. Please note, that in some high-risk situations, it may become necessary to coordinate work at only one institution.

### **I don't qualify for OHIP, can I still be tested for COVID-19?**

Ontario is waiving the three-month waiting period for Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP) coverage. Additionally, the province will cover the cost of COVID-19 services for uninsured people who do not meet the criteria for OHIP coverage.

### **What information can my Employer request from me?**

Your Employer can make reasonable requests regarding travel, exposures, symptoms and work at other health care facilities and/or community programs. Given that we are currently in a pandemic, Employers and Employees should make every effort to limit transmission and exposure to other members, staff, patients, clients, or residents.

### **What else is my Union doing to help protect me?**

The Union is continuing to work with both Federal and Provincial governments, as well as their associated Health Agencies and we are a key stakeholder in many working groups and committees aimed at COVID-19 preparedness and planning. We recognize and appreciate the work of all of our healthcare members and are committed to providing strong advocacy and support during this difficult period. We will continue to communicate the importance of adequate staffing and PPE to all levels of government and your Employer. Further, we are working with your Employer(s) to ensure that the health and safety of our members are a top priority and to mitigate any potential financial impact.

## **TRAVEL**

### **What happens if I visit a country that has been identified as an Impacted Area by the Public Health Agency of Canada?**

Currently, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) has identified travel to the following places are being higher risk: China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, France, Germany, Spain. For people who have travelled to China, Iran, or Italy in the last 14 days are being requested to self-isolate for a total of 14 days. If you have traveled to any of the other countries, the PHAC recommends monitoring your health and seeking appropriate treatment should symptoms begin.

### **As a healthcare worker, am I exempt from the requirement to self-isolate after travel?**

No. The Minister of Health and the CMOH have recently issued clarification that any employee who has traveled outside of Canada within the last fourteen (14) days, should self-isolate for a period of fourteen (14) days starting from their arrival in Ontario, regardless of if you are symptomatic or not.

If in an emergency situation there is a critical need to recall asymptomatic staff from self-isolation, these workers will be required to self-monitor and undergo regular screening. They will be required to don PPE for the fourteen (14) days as well as take their temperature twice daily to monitor for fever. If symptoms develop, they are to immediately self-isolate and self-identify to the Employer.

### **Do I have to self-disclose any recent travel to my Employer?**

Yes, it is the Union's recommendation that notify your Employer of your travel history. Further, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health is now advising Ontarians against all non-essential travel outside of Canada.

### **What are recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID19?**

Public Health Ontario recommends the following:

- practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands often with soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds or thoroughly with alcohol-based hand sanitizer,
- avoid touching your face, including your eyes, nose and mouth,
- ensure you cough into a tissue (and immediately dispose of it) or the elbow of your sleeve,
- minimize public contact/practice social distancing,
- stay home if you are exhibiting symptoms,
- stay updated on developing protocols and practices.

### **Can my Employer cancel my vacation during this pandemic?**

Yes, given that the WHO has declared a global pandemic, operational requirements will supersede pre-approved vacation.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **Do I have to self-disclose any signs of illness to my Employer?**

Yes, you are required to disclose if you are experiencing any of the symptoms noted above including but not limited to: fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Given that we work with vulnerable patients/clients/residents, it is in the best interest of public health to stay home if you are symptomatic.

### **What do I do if I am concerned that I may have been exposed to, or am experiencing symptoms of COVID-19?**

Please contact Telehealth Ontario, your primary care physician or your local public health unit. Please ensure that you notify your Employer immediately. Please do not call 911 unless it is an emergency.

## Can I refuse work that I feel may be unsafe?

As per the OHSA, members can refuse unsafe work. You will be required to qualify what specifically you deem to be unsafe. You must remain in the area and wait for a Certified Worker Co-Chair to attend the area and to speak with the Management Co-Chair. If an agreement cannot be reached, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) will be called to investigate and make a determination. Please note, the threshold for work refusal is high given the expected occupational hazards within a healthcare setting.

## Tips for Working Safe

Before providing care or interacting with your patient or patient environment, perform your point of care risk assessment (PCRA) to determine your risk of exposure. Some things to consider...

- Is there a hazard present?  
*Is the patient/resident/client potentially infected? Are any surfaces potentially contaminated?*
- What is the health status of the patient/resident/client?  
*Does the patient present with any symptoms?*
- What task am I doing?  
*Checking vitals, giving medications, transferring, delivering a meal tray, etc.*
- Where am I doing it?  
*Hospital/resident's room, client's home, triage bay, etc.*
- What action do I take?

## Hand hygiene, PPE



Always remember your 4 Moments for Hand Hygiene:

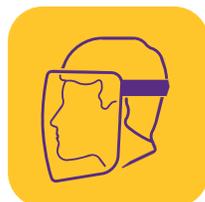
- 1. BEFORE** initial contact with each patient/resident/client or items in their environment
- 2. BEFORE** aseptic procedure
- 3. AFTER** care involving risk of exposure to, or contact with, bodily fluids
- 4. AFTER** contact with each patient/resident/client or their environment

## What is the appropriate level of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when caring for a patient who is suspected or confirmed COVID-19?

SEIU Healthcare along with the CLC, CFNU, CUPE, Unifor and NUPGE have been [petitioning government officials](#) and the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) to err on the side of caution when it comes to personal protective equipment (PPE) and isolation protocols as there is scientific evidence that COVID-19 could be subject to airborne transmission. To that end, it is our recommendation that the following PPE be donned when administering care to COVID-19 patients:



A fit-tested N95 respirator, or better



Eye protection (goggles or face mask)



Gloves



Isolation gown



Negative pressure room, if available.

It is recommended that you also review your workplace Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) policies and procedures and any related COVID-19 Pandemic policies. Please note that the majority of Employers are taking the position that N95 respirators are only required when performing an aerosol-generating medical procedure (AGMP) on suspected or confirmed patients. This would include, but is not limited to, procedures such as: endotracheal intubation, CPR, open airway suctioning, bronchoscopy, sputum induction, non-invasive positive pressure ventilation for acute respiratory failure (CPAP, BiPAP), high flow oxygen therapy, etc. It is further recommended that any such procedures be completed in a negative pressure, airborne infection isolation room (AIIR).

*Please ensure at the end of your shift that you are changing out of your work uniform/clothing before going back into the community.*

### **What PPE am I required to wear when doing Active Screening?**

In compliance with Public Health Ontario's (PHO) recommendations, if Screeners can maintain spatial distance of at least two (2) metres or be separated by a physical barrier then PPE is not required. If space does not allow for this or a barrier is not available, then the following PPE should be donned:

- A surgical/procedural mask;
- An isolation gown;
- Gloves;
- Eye protection (goggles or face masks)

### **My Long-Term Care Facility is still allowing visitors once they pass the screening questions, is this okay?**

As of March 13th ([hyperlink to CMOH memo](#)), Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) has recommended that LTC facilities limit visitation to only essential visitors until further notice. The Ministry identified essential visitors as those who have a resident who is dying or very ill or are a parent/guardian of an ill child or youth in a live-in treatment setting. The Ministry recommends that no other visitors be permitted to enter these facilities and they should instead be asked to keep in touch with loved ones by phone or other available technologies.

### **My workplace is still holding daily staff huddles and I feel unsafe, what do I do?**

The CMOH has recommended that everyone in Ontario should be practicing social distancing of two (2) metres to reduce exposure. Employers should be facilitating arrangements to ensure that this is practiced for the safety of workers. Further, where possible, Employers have been asked to facilitate work arrangements that enable employees to work from home or to work virtually.

### **Is my Employer required to train me on the appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment?**

Yes, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, your Employer is required to ensure that all members are properly trained on the use of PPE. This includes but is not limited to, properly sizing, fitting, testing, donning and doffing.

## **SELF-ISOLATION AND QUARANTINE PERIOD**

### **What happens if my Employer requires that I self-isolate?**

If your Employer sends you home from work and states that you are to enter into a self-isolation protocol as a part of a preventive health policy related to COVID-19, it is the position of the Union and public health agencies that you must comply with their direction.

## **Will I be paid by my Employer during self-isolation and/or the government mandated Quarantine Period?**

It is the position of the Union that your Employer is responsible to pay you for your regularly scheduled shifts. Further, such payments will not draw from any banked/earned hours or credits, including vacation or sick pay.

## **What if my Employer refuses to pay me during my period of self-isolation and/or the government mandated Quarantine Period?**

If your Employer refuses to pay or insists on drawing from your banked credits, including your vacation or sick time, please contact a steward to file a grievance on your behalf.

## **Will my absence count against the Attendance Management Program?**

The Union's position is that any illness related to COVID-19, including periods of self-isolation and government mandated quarantine shall be deemed non-culpable and will be excluded from any Attendance Management Program. We will be addressing this matter directly with your Employer.

## **EMPLOYEE INSURANCE AND BENEFITS**

### **What do I do if I do not have sick time?**

SEIU is working diligently to negotiate paid leave with your Employer for absences related to self-isolation, quarantine or infection of COVID-19. If your Employer is refusing to pay you and you do not have access to sick pay, please apply for EI Sick Benefits.

### **Am I entitled to claim EI sick benefits during self-isolation or the government mandated Quarantine Period?**

Yes, the Government of Canada has eliminated the one (1) week waiting period for EI sick benefits. This means that if you are quarantined for two (2) weeks, you will be compensated for the entire two (2) weeks. In order to qualify for EI benefits, you must have worked a minimum of 600 hours in the previous year, or since your last EI claim. The current EI payment is 55% of your earnings, to a weekly maximum of \$573. The Government has also waived the requirement to provide a medical note where you have been required by law or a public-health official to enter the Quarantine Period.

### **How do I apply for the new Emergency Care Benefit and/or Emergency Support Benefit?**

These benefits will be available through the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). The Government has not yet announced the process for application, please stay tuned and continue to check back for updates.

### **What is EI Sickness Benefits?**

EI Sickness Benefits provides for up to fifteen (15) weeks of income replacement if you are unable to work because of illness, injury or quarantine. This Benefit amount is 55% of your earnings, to a weekly maximum of \$573.

### **How do I qualify for EI Sickness Benefits?**

In order to qualify for EI sickness benefits, you must have a minimum of 600 insurable hours of work in the 52 weeks before the start of your claim, or since the start of your last claim, whichever is shorter.

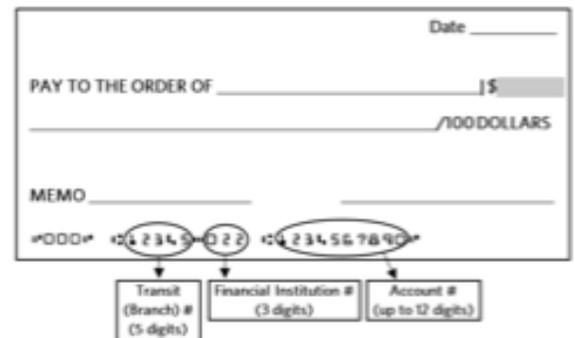
### **How do I apply for EI?**

If you are claiming EI Sickness Benefits because you have been required to self-isolate or be quarantined, you can apply online at <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/ei-sickness/apply.html>. You will not be required to provide a medical certificate for this purpose. Alternately, you can apply in person at a Service

Canada location (click here to find a location near you <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/tbsc-fsco/sc-hme.jsp?lang=eng>) or call the Member Resource Centre at 1-877-672-7348 and we will have a dedicated specialist assist you with this process.

You will need the following information to complete your application:

- your Record of Employment (ROE) \*please note that most Employers submit this to Service Canada electronically. You can visit your My Service Canada Account (MSCA) to view ROEs that have been issued to you. You are able to complete your application without the ROE, and Service Canada will process it once they receive your ROE from your Employer.
- the names and addresses of your employers in the last 52 weeks
- the dates you were employed with each employer and the reasons you're no longer employed with them
- your detailed explanation of the facts if you quit or were dismissed from any job in the last 52 weeks
- your full mailing address and your home address, if they are different
- your social insurance number (SIN) \*your SIN can be found on your income tax return, on your tax slips (i.e. T4s), on your ROE, on your RRSP contribution statements, or you can request it from your Employer
- your mother's maiden name
- your banking information, including financial institution, branch (transit) number and your account number, to sign up for direct deposit \*see below on how to locate this information



Once you have completed your online application, please contact the COVID-19 Dedicated Employment Insurance Line at 1-833-381-2725 (toll-free) or at 1-800-529-3742 (TTY) to apply to have the one (1) week waiting period waived.

### **What do I do after I have applied?**

Once your application is complete, Service Canada will mail you a benefit statement with a four (4) digit access code. You will need this code and your SIN number to inquire about your application and complete your biweekly reports. You can also check the progress of your application by logging into your MSCA (here <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/my-account.html>) or calling Service Canada's EI line at 1-800-206-7218 (toll-free) or at 1-800-529-3742 (TTY) between Monday to Friday, 08:30-16:30.

### **What do I do if I don't qualify for EI?**

If you do not qualify for EI Sick Benefits, please apply for one of the newly introduced Emergency Care Benefits or Emergency Support Benefits.

## **CHILDCARE AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

### **I do not have childcare due to the school and daycare closures and I need to stay home, will I be paid? Will my job be protected?**

Yes, the Ontario Government has introduced legislation to amend the Employment Standards Act to include a job protected leave, without pay, for employees who need to provide care for a reason related to COVID-19 (including for school or day-care closure). The Emergency Care Benefit is available to workers to provide income support for this situation.

## **I can't make my rent this month because of COVID-19, what do I do?**

We understand that many healthcare workers are forced to work paycheque to paycheque and any disruption to income can be detrimental. The Ministry of the Attorney General has granted an order suspending the enforcement of residential evictions until otherwise ordered by the court. As such, Tribunal Ontario will not issue any new eviction orders until further notice. Sheriff's offices have also been asked to postpone any scheduled enforcement of eviction orders that were set for this week.

## **Is the Government providing any other extensions?**

The Ontario Government will be extending the validity for driver's licenses, licence plate stickers, health cards and other documents in order. Stay tuned for more information on this.

## **Are there other benefits or financial assistance available as from the what was announced in the Economic Response Plan?**

On March 20, Mayor Tory implemented a sixty (60) day grace period in the City of Toronto for property tax, water and solid waste utility bill payments for bills dated as of March 16, 2020. Late payments and penalties for residential and business properties will be waived for this period. For individuals on a three-installment payment plan, the next required payment will be June 1. Property taxes will be adjusted as necessary to reflect these measures. The Mayor is also calling on landlords to provide accommodation and leniency on the timing of rent payments. Stay tuned for any further announcement locally or provincially.

You may also be eligible to apply for Ontario Works. Learn more by clicking here. (<https://www.mcass.gov.on.ca/en/mcass/programs/social/ow/eligibility.aspx>)

## **What happens if I receive a lay-off notice as a result of reductions or client cancellations?**

Your Collective Agreement outlines the process for layoffs. Please connect with a steward, your Union Representative or the Member Resource Centre to discuss your particular case. You may also be eligible to apply for EI or the Emergency Support Benefit.

## **I feel that my work should be considered non-essential, what is the criteria for essential work?**

Under the Public Sector Labour Relations Act (PSLRA), the Employer has the exclusive right to determine the level at which an essential service is to be provided to the public. Additionally, the Employer has the exclusive right to designate positions in the bargaining unit that include duties that are necessary in order for the Employer to provide these essential services. This means that during this time the Employer may redeploy employees to perform other tasks (for example, administrative support staff may be required to perform Active Screening). If you are being reassigned to other duties and have not received the appropriate training, please raise the issue with your manager/supervisor, and connect with your steward immediately. Your Union Rep and the MRC are also available to assist with these issues.

## **Am I entitled to hazard pay?**

Hazard pay is not currently a payment that Employers are required to make, unless your Collective Agreement includes a specific benefit in this regard. We will keep you posted if the Government issues any directives or funding for a benefit such as this.

