



B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union
A Component of NUPGE (CLC)

March 4, 2021

Email: lori.guiton@worksafebc.com

Lori Guiton
Director, Policy, Regulation & Research Division
WorkSafeBC
6951 Westminster Hwy
Richmond, BC V7C 1C6

Dear Ms. Guiton,

Re March 2021 public hearing on proposed changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation

The BCGEU represents over 80,000 workers in various sectors and occupations in more than 550 bargaining units throughout British Columbia. Thousands of BCGEU members are affected by the proposed changes. As such, the BCGEU is pleased to provide the following response to the proposed amendments to the OHS regulation.

Proposed Amendments to Parts 1,5,22 and 23 - Flammable and combustible liquids

BCGEU members regularly come into contact with flammable and combustible liquids at work. In the regulatory amendment package, the Board's explanatory notes say that the purpose of the amendments is to enhance worker safety by aligning the definition of "flammable liquid" with the BC Fire Code, ensuring that grounding and bonding of ignition sources apply to all liquids and gases that pose a risk of fire or explosion, ending the requirement to submit written safe work procedures for the use of flammable liquids for manual cleaning, and ensuring that the terms flammable liquid and combustible liquid are used consistently in the regulation.

The BCGEU is in support of the changes to the definition of flammable liquid to ensure consistency and to align with the BC Fire Code. However, along with the BC Federation of Labour, we urge the Board to also include definitions for flash point and vapour pressure, so that explanations for these terms are included in the regulation and easily accessible to both workers and employers.

We support the amendments to sections 5.27(1) and 5.27(3) to include the phrase "a combustible liquid normally used as fuel." These changes provide additional clarity and ensure that combustible liquids normally used as fuel are covered by the requirements regardless of how they are being used at the



workplace. The BCGEU also supports the amendments to 5.28 to broaden the requirements of grounding and bonding to include combustible liquids normally used as fuel and flammable gas.

The proposed amendment to section 5.32 removes the existing requirement to submit written safe work procedures to the Board where a flammable liquid is to be used as a manual cleaning solvent. The BC Federation of Labour's submissions on this matter outline the Federation's serious concerns about the removal of direct oversight by the Board.

The BCGEU agrees with the Federation that the removal of this requirement signals that the Board is unwilling to actively track and oversee the use of flammable liquids for manual cleaning in BC workplaces, a hazardous activity that deserves attention from the Board to prevent potentially catastrophic injuries to workers. Unfortunately, we think it also signals to employers that this is not an issue they need to focus on. Given that using flammable liquids for manual cleaning is very hazardous work that we believe is actually fairly common in BC workplaces, we urge the Board to instead retain the requirement to submit safe work procedures for this activity to the Board, and clarify by requiring procedures to be submitted prior to work of this nature being conducted.

Proposed Amendments to Part 6 – Hazardous Drugs

Tens of thousands of BCGEU members work in the healthcare sector, including in long-term care facilities and providing home support services where they may be exposed to cytotoxic drugs. As such, the union has a significant interest in the proposed amendments to Part 6: Substance Specific Requirements – sections 6.43 to 6.58.01.

In our October 25, 2019 letter to the Board, we indicated our full support for the recommendations in the BC Federation of Labour's submission on the proposed changes to these sections of the regulation. In reviewing the Board's latest proposed amendments, we were heartened to see that some of the suggested improvements have been incorporated into the draft proposal, and the BCGEU supports these changes.

However, we urge the board to take this opportunity to further strengthen the language in the regulation, particularly with respect to clarity of language and tracking the possible long-term effects of exposure to hazardous drugs. We have reviewed the Federation's subsequent submission on hazardous drugs (March 2021) and support its recommendations.

The Federation proposes changes to the definitions in 6.42(b) that makes the language both clearer and consistent with language from the CDC. The addition of PPE, the clarification around laundering, and an additional internal reference to the definition of precautionary period all serve to make the language more accessible. We support these recommendations from the Federation.

BCGEU is also very concerned about the long-term health effects that chronic exposure to hazardous drugs may have. As such, we are supportive of the Federation's recommendations to compel employers to have an exposure control and health monitoring plan in section 6.46, and to extend the retention of exposure records from 10 to 30 years in section 6.58.

Proposed Amendments to Part 7, Ionizing radiation – Dose limits for lens of the eye

The BCGEU represents laboratory workers who perform analytical spectroscopy with instruments that use ionizing radiation as a basis for analysis and identification. The BCGEU also represents thousands of



healthcare workers, who may also be exposed to ionizing radiation in the course of their work. CAREX Canada notes that after nurses, aides and orderlies are the largest exposed occupational groups in healthcare. Workers in these occupations make up a large proportion of our members in healthcare. As such, minimizing workplace exposure is relevant and important to the BCGEU.

We fully support the changes to the proposed regulation to lower the exposure level to ionizing radiation. We echo the BC Federation of Labour's June 2020 submission on this matter in that we see this improvement as necessary to keep up with the current knowledge of long term impacts of ionizing radiation exposure, and to align the OHSR with international standards. The BCGEU also supports the Federation's call for the Board to establish a process to regularly review parts of the OHSR where other standards are referenced in order to ensure that updates are made in a timely manner.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed amendments to the OHS regulation, and we urge the Board to adopt our recommended changes.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Smith
President

MS/bb
MoveUP
March 2021 OHSR Consultation on Cytotoxic Drugs – Ionizing Radiation – Flammable liquids

CC: Sheila Moir, Director of Occupational Health and Safety, BC Federation of Labour