



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

November 8, 2020

Via email: vivian.eliopoulos@vch.ca

Vivian Eliopoulos
President and CEO
Vancouver Coastal Health
601 West Broadway, 11th floor
Vancouver, BC
V5Z 4C2

Dear Ms Eliopoulos,

I am writing out of concern for the health impacts on BCGEU members due to the increased spread of COVID-19 in the Vancouver Coastal Health region. We have members that work directly for the Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and members who work for employers which have funding and contracts with VCH. We are writing to ask that direct action be taken by the the health authority to ensure protection from Covid-19 for our members that work in the health sector over which VCH has influence.

As you are certainly aware, the last month has seen a dramatic increase in cases. Of most concern, daily new-case records have been set four times in the past week and almost 25 per cent of active cases have been concentrated in the Vancouver Coastal region. In many of these new cases, epidemiology has pointed to offices – including lunchrooms and other communal spaces – as a growing location for individuals acquiring the virus.

In light of this new data and yesterday's statements from the Provincial Health Officer, I do not doubt that VCH is re-evaluating safety protocols for workplaces, including those for which the health authority has contracts with. While we appreciate that many of those working within health care would be considered essential services during this time, there are some who may be able to work from home, at least partially if not completely. Therefore, as the process of re-evaluating safety protocols develops, on behalf of BCGEU members across the Vancouver Coastal Health region, I urge you to consider the following:

- The implementation of a broad policy across the Vancouver Coastal Health region, for direct employees and for employees of employers that have contracts with VCH, that, excepting where it is not possible for essential health services, workers not be required

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to report to their worksite and be allowed to work from home. In order to protect worker and public health, offices that don't need to be open should be closed.

- The requirement of mask wearing in all common areas of all worksites under the Vancouver Coastal Authority's authority. Preferably with the requirement of a minimum of three-layer mask as recommended by Health Canada in updates this week.

Our union has appreciated the shared communication and cooperation with VCH as we have together adapted to the latest science and public health recommendations over the past nine months. In the spirit of that cooperation, I have attached a briefing note from our union's Occupational Health and Safety department with recommendations on updating and strengthening workplace safety in light of the latest science on how the SARS-CoV-2 virus spreads.

As always, our union is ready to meet with representatives from the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority as workplace safety protocols are re-examined, and we sincerely urge the agency to the implement the above policies as part of any forthcoming plan.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Smith
President

AD/sg
MoveUP

cc: Michael McMillan, HEABC President & CEO