

August 12, 2020

Emailed

Honourable John Horgan
Premier of British Columbia
122 – 2806 Jacklin Road
Victoria, BC V9B 5A4

Dear Premier Horgan,

In recent weeks, we have seen a rise of COVID-19 cases in British Columbia. Frontline workers in grocery stores — our members — are directly impacted by the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and are very concerned about their health and safety, as are we.

Across North America we have seen many retail employers start to make mask wearing mandatory for staff; however, the directive needs to go further and more steps must be taken to help protect workers in our stores and the public.

Wearing a mask is a simple measure to minimize the risk and spread of COVID-19; however this safety measure must be implemented in addition to other protocols, including: installing plexiglass barriers where maintaining a distance of 2 meters is not possible, monitoring crowding in stores, providing sanitation stations, adding markers to encourage physical distancing and limiting the number of people shopping together.

Our members have put themselves at risk on the frontline from day one. They need your support to urge employers to require all customers to wear masks while shopping and reinstate all safety measures. The pandemic is not over and we cannot let grocery employers lower their guard on this public health crisis.

By now, many municipalities across Canada have made mask wearing mandatory in public indoor spaces—for everyone involved. Last week, Metro Vancouver public transit authorities announced customers will be required to wear masks or face coverings on public transit starting August 24. Making mask-wearing mandatory for shoppers in stores is a responsible decision, one that has public support. A recent poll showed that 75% of B.C. residents support a mandatory mask policy in public places.

In addition to the health and safety protocols listed above, we are also asking for your support encouraging employers to act on our previous asks:

- Paid sick days for any worker who does not currently qualify – no worker should have to choose between being paid, or coming to work sick and potentially spreading the virus
- Pandemic Pay – front line workers in your stores continue to provide the public with the supplies, medication, and support they need through COVID-19. We also see

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that grocery sales continue to remain steady, and significantly increased over what they were in 2019.

- Zero Tolerance of Abuse on Workers – an absolutely ZERO tolerance policy of abuse of ANY kind against any employee.

We believe the provincial government has a very important role to play urging employers and the public to take these steps immediately. Our members are proud of their role in helping the community through this pandemic and deserve to know every precaution is being taken to keep them and their families safe. The critical role they play in keeping the supply of goods and medication accessible for all British Columbians cannot be under estimated.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kim Novak', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kim Novak
President, UFCW 1518