

March 17, 2020

Email LBR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

AMENDED LETTER

Honorable Harry Bains
Minister of Labour
Room 342, Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Honorable Minister Bains,

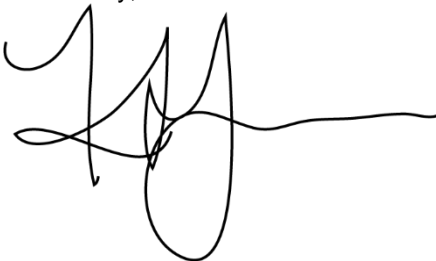
Right now there are tens of thousands of pharmacy and grocery store staff who are currently on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis. The work of these individuals ensures the public has access to food, prescriptions, and medical supplies. These workers are required, and the public needs them to show up to work every day when the rest of the province is asked to stay at home to preserve their safety. Statistically, these union and non-union workers alike are at a significant risk of exposure to this contagion as a result of the work they do simply because they interact with more people than many other non-medical professions.

UFCW 1518 is calling for these actions to help grocery and pharmacy store workers:

1. UFCW 1518 is pushing the government to designate all grocery and pharmacy workers as eligible for presumptive workers compensation coverage when they find themselves having to file a claim as a result of illness due to exposure to this contagion. Workers in these jobs that are diagnosed with COVID-19 must receive workers compensation without having to prove their conditions were caused at work.
2. Appropriate limits to the numbers of shoppers that can be present in a retail location so as to allow social distancing. At the current restriction levels, the number of shoppers frequently exceeds the measures set out by the province, and this is dramatically increasing the risks to workers and the public.
3. Require all retailers to supply masks, sanitizers, and paper towels to staff on duty before selling any of these products, and ensuring that all workers are informed of the process and procedures they need to undertake to eliminate risk to their well-being.
4. Extend Employment Insurance benefits to at least 75% of insurable income and reduce barriers to access EI. Many retail workers do not usually work enough hours to qualify for medical EI, and the reduction of hours to qualify is a necessary step to support many workers.
5. Immediately open discussions to provide solutions for workers' emergency childcare needs, including paid family leave.

Grocery and pharmacy workers 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, and it cannot be underestimated the critical role they play in keeping the supply of goods and medicines readily accessible to the public at large.

Yours truly,



Kim Novak, President UFCW 1518