

PSAC NCR Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee Meeting

April 15, 2020 – Skype * special meeting*

Present:

Président: Roddie Dafoe
Vice-Chair: Jean Lalonde
Secretary: Chantal Baril

Pat St-George
Chantal Fortin
Diane Girouard
Yagusha Bodnar
Gary Bosloy
Lynn Sturgeon
Joanne Robinson
Dinu Serbanescu

PSAC Rep: Marc Béland

Skype meeting: 1-844-259-7596

ID: 972403710

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 5:05 pm to give a chance to participants to call in.

Roll call

A roll call was called upon at 5:15 pm by Roddie Dafoe.

Approval of agenda

No agenda for this meeting.

Special COVID-19

Agenda item

COVID-19

Roddie D:
Due to COVID-19 TBS and PSAC has released a joint message on the pandemic.

Marc:

We do not know when the pandemic will end. TBS has announced that they will come out next week with some instructions and direction on mental health.

A couple of courses will also be offered on the Workers Health and Safety Center's (WHSC) website on mental health and ergonomics.

Roddie D:

If is nice, but it will be helpful if PSAC and all the collective's components get together.

Marc:

TBS always had no enforcement and Chris Aylward calls them frequently regarding the issues to address with them during the pandemic.

Jean: I know there is a meeting between UNE and TBS. Will Chris be attending?

Marc: Yes

(Before we continue a new participant has joined in.)

Roddie:

Is an essential/ critical employee to bump the line? Can they work from home? If we use the union definition of an essential employee. Can we put some guidance to protect them from harm? Currently, my department has put it up until last week to come up with a plan.

Marc:

The definition of an essential employee and critical is not specified currently on the hours or location during a pandemic. We might bring it up to Chris Aylward for him to add, as he is currently dealing with the strike-related issues. Currently, there is so many ongoing issues and they are in a disorganized or confused state, as the situation is changing every day. But if you have any issues, please contact the component or PSAC directly.

Roddie:

Things move at a certain speed. It took a little while but some of the work is done. We have employees coming once a week. There are some issues and complaints but still not a lot of directions.

Marc:

We had some complaints also due to the working hours due to the VPN accessibility and whom they should call.

Roddie:

I am the first one that they call regarding the hours, regarding at what time they should start and how much in a week with enough time as possible.

Pat:

We recommend focusing with your employer to report on the HPP. This should already be in place with the identification of job hazard, job safety analysis on disinfectant. There is more information on the PHAC website and more information on COVID-19. There is some information on masks. But if we provide masks, we also need a qualified person to fit. The only thing that a mask does, it protects from the spit. Will there be a push from PSAC – for the government to provide further instructions on face covering and physical distancing?

Johanne:

Clarification PHAC stands for Public Health Agency Canada

Jean Lalonde:

What about the people working in a 2.0 workplace environment and how is the 2m rule will be enforced?

Marc:

In the Canada Labour Code, regardless the employer must follow up the regulations from PHAC. Hazard protection analysis should be put in place especially for those that work with the public. As they are at greater risk and it is different for them to respect the 2 metres and there are no regulations. They could refuse to work, and the employer needs and has the right to consult with Workplace Health and Safety Committee (WHSC) and the Policy Health and Safety Committee on how to address the danger.

Diane:

Fact: That is right. It does not matter. If the health of the member is at risk, it is an automatic 699 and they should reach the member with the network.

Secondly, managers need to be aware if the health condition is critical or not and should grant approval of the 699.

Since early December, with the release of information of the propagation of the virus, a large number of responses in respect of physical distancing as being applied, as well the employer has met with the cleaning crew to properly disinfect all area, in order to reduce the propagation of COVID-19.

If a member was told to go back, the area had to be cleaned prior to the employee arrival and if not able to clean inside, to relocate them respecting the physical distancing.

Marc:

That is rather good.

Diane:

Since the announcement, we worked non-stop 24/7 to have the talk. We just started and anybody has the right to demand. Not all Health Canada was as strict as buildings are now mostly empty, but Tunney has the same cleaning arrangements.

Lynn:

Has Public Health issued a guideline on office operations during the pandemic?

Marc:

No, but Treasury Board has. Each department and agency follow what is on PHAC website if not sure and convey it to members as well if they are not sure.

Pat:

2 points

First, lots of employees did go on PHAC website but it gives minimal information and there is a lot of gossip.

Second, all the COVID-19 information posted by the employer on the intranet should also be posted on the internet as it is public information.

As for the employees working in Quebec it is pretty good but what about job analysis? There was also another issue.

Marc:

Hazard prevention

Dinu:

But it needs the employer to work with us and they have been advised and still do not implement it.

Marc:

Send me an email

Yagusha:

Health Protection Policy (HPP) at Transport Canada is being written as we speak, and the draft will be delivered this week to workplace health committee. Can the local have the right to put comments on the HPP?

Marc:

Yes, each local should change the HPP for their location. I am in contact with Jeff.

Pat:

Just to add to this: the National Health Safety Policy Committee (NHSPC) will draft a job safety for the different positions and do a hazard analysis.

Dinu:

What if the local job analysis is not been transparent?

Pat:

Either way, the employer is responsible.

Johanne:

Is my job to follow up if this has been done?

Marc:

Not your job, but all the employees, your local health and safety committee and your health and safety advisor can request it. But the employer has no obligation to take that advice.

Pat:

Silly question: Since the pandemic, is the employer in contact with regular local health and safety committee meeting?

Johanne:

No, they are not – there is information on the info site.

Dinu:

Only monthly over the phone. Currently the employer is not looking since the situation is changing day per day. More concern with the workers themselves.

Marc:

Workplace committee currently it is the most important time to get involved. The employer has to meet with the policy to discuss and call emergency meetings. They usually meet nine times a year on top there is work being cleaned up. Committee should be involved in all these steps.

If the worker has issues at home in my own opinion, they have the right to refuse. I did a webinar on that.

Yagusha:

I think it should be monthly. All of this should cover cleaning staff and IT services.

Currently IT has set up appointment and they are serving about 60 peoples per day.

The point is, not a very satisfactory answer and we do not know if it is a throughout disinfection.

Marc:

We have some guidelines from Health Canada, we are nowhere near, but to some extent we will be ahead of the curve. Cleaning has to be increased; IT has to be responsible to clean after each visit.

Best to prevention is to clean and wash our hand. Health Canada website has a list of approved products that works best to prevent COVID-19. Science is evolving every day and new information is coming out. Currently bleach (5 ml) with 250 ml water. Do not mix bleach with other products it can be hazardous.

Yagusha:

For all the employees that are teleworking, will they have access to their ergonomic products. I know most employers are distancing themselves from answering.

Marc:

We probably will be teleworking and not back until fall. At the base, we have submitted some recommendations and comments previously provided to the PM to add in to the Canada Labour Code.

The fact still remains that the employer is responsible to provide information and guidance to his employees. But currently we are getting some push back. The best advice is to take more break, do some stretching exercises and step away from your computer.

Currently the employer is being respectful, understanding the employee has distractions; kids, house size, other people in the house, dependent, and other factors that can be counterproductive to the regular teleworking arrangement. There is also different types of job to consider (e.g. laboratory technician that cannot work in a home environment).

It is currently all over the map so to speak.

Yagusha:

Thanks, Marc. Also finding that the essential/ critical workers have been neglected as there is no PPE given to them. Any thoughts?

Marc:

PPE should be our last resort. We need to remember at the base is to eliminate the risk, administration, control and disinfect. Social distancing, frequently washing our hands using soap, and only use hand sanitizer if soap is not available.

Gary:

We did not have any meeting with the policy committee and we get people facing this have heard nothing.

Marc:

We should talk.

Pat:

To reinforce Marc's comments, we need to bring up and have a special emergency meeting. Things are moving at a rapid pace, daily. Since the shut down on St-Patrick's Day. I call every 2 weeks with the questions to address some issues.

Diane:

As per the cleaning process, since our work notification at Health Canada, Veteran Affairs has started doing extra cleaning and they have a disinfectant mist machine for those who go back if they have access.

Roddie:

Anything to add...

Jean:

At my last meeting at Global Affairs, in my role as the co-chair with the Health Canada policy, we asked the employer for information and repeatedly they failed to respond. Is there a way for us to contest it, if the employer fails to response, Marc do you have a contact to recommend?

Marc:

If the employer fails to respond within 30 days, you need to file a grievance with the labour program. Currently that's the only recourse we have under the Act.

Pat:

Unless it is in conflict with the code under 127.1 Marc will know more on the process and how to go and to help.

Marc:

Of course.

Diane:

Does anyone know the situation on bed bugs at Terrasses de la Chaudière

Dinu:

I am a member working 70 Crémazie

Diane:

I received 2 emails since.

I have one member from Indigenous Canada with a case for bed bugs. His work is split work between offices at Tunney's Pasture and Terrasses de la Chaudière. Even after reassurance that they steamed the floor, the bed bugs are still there. They are also spraying chemicals before members come back. Should there be an air study? We still have people coming in delivering the mail at 15 and 25 Eddy.

Marc:

The issue with bed bugs is they go dormant for a year. For the Crémazie, they installed bats cage, but currently there is a study on their behaviour.

Dinu:

Crémazie not Transport Canada has the same issues. But they need to wait 24 hours after spraying. If not able to, they need to relocate the member but only if there is health conditions. It is a big fight to have them do this.

Also, Human Resources no longer issue letters for employees no to cross between Gatineau and Ottawa.

Diane:

Can we have an air study done?

Marc:

The air ventilation system is operational. Portage has 3 towers and the system is fairly new. I do not see any problem. You could make the request and if the employer has no issue, ventilation has no problem but that was in February. I have the list with vermin issues. Diane can you send me a list with the floor?

Diane:

Yes, Heritage is currently empty and was fumigated and they had 48 hours before the normal population was allowed.

Pat:

A copy of the list of pesticide list with the specific time should be in the data sheet. As a committee member it is your rights to request it.

Yagusha:

Transport Canada also has bed bugs, we are learning that there is fumigation, trap and steaming. We even had a poster informing the risk of the spread of bed bugs to and from work to residence. Was there more information in the forum was there any further solutions on the elimination of the bed bugs?

Marc:

As mentioned previously the problem with bed bugs is they go dormant for up to 2 years. Traps are good to use.

1-Steaming

2-Trap

3-Fumigation

Crémazie it took 3 times of fumigation.

Pat:

Bed bugs are not a health risk, they do not spread infection. But usually the process Marc mention is effective. Although there is a myth that if you have bed bugs to your residence and/or car, that the cost of fumigation will be borne by the member.

Dinu:

The recommendation is for the employer incentive to pay for the cost of fumigation. Not the greatest thing for the member to apply.

Roddie:

UNE – Andrew Shaver is the best contact to ask.

Marc:

I am sending him an email currently, I am working with Andrew on this and we will follow up with Diane. If you have any questions, feel free to reach out.

Diane:

Which number?

Marc:

My office number

Roddie:

Roll call

Roddie, Chantal Baril, Jean Lalonde, Pat St-Georges, Chantal Fortin, Diane Girouard, Yagusha Bodnar, Gary Bosloy, Lynn Sturgeon, Joanne Robinson, Dinu Serbanescu et Marc Béland

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:22 p.m.