

**PSAC NCR Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee Meeting**

**May 20, 2020 – Skype**

**Present**

Chair: Roddie Dafoe

Vice-chair: Jean Lalonde

Secretary: Chantal Baril

PSAC Rep: Marc Béland

REVP: Alex Silas

Pat St-George

Cheryl Laviolette

Diane Girouard

Gary Bosloy

Edith Knopp

Virgil Chin

Skype meeting: 1-844-259-7596

ID: 548112740

**Call to order**

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm by Roddie Dafoe to give a chance to participants to call in.

**Approval of agenda**

There is no agenda for this meeting.

Special COVID-19

Roddie:

I want to congratulate Alex in his new role as REVP. Did they assign you at least a desk?

Alex:

I do, an old one, but at least it is not a side table.

Roddie:

I will leave the floor open.

Marc:

Can I open?

Roddie:

Yes, concerning the Performance Improvement Plan and the employee reintegration to work, is there any news from PSAC and TBS?

Marc:

A bit, and Treasury Board is currently working on a plan. They have met with the bargaining agents for input but forgot to cc. Chris Aylward. No return to work date yet.

Alex:

I have a bit of news on this, yes, they did not cc Chris, and they sent it to us, to provide input and respond within 24 hours. There is a meeting tomorrow – May 21 with Chris, Treasury Board and the bargaining agents for a real consultation meeting.

Roddie:

I know that Global Affairs is going to organize their plan mainly based on TB and the bargaining agents. Currently they have held back-to-back meetings with the Health and Safety Committee, but we did not know, until the last two meetings. I know the department will just run with it.

We had a situation before going into the mud. What recourse does the member have if they are unable to return to work? Do we tell the member to use their right to refuse?

Marc:

We have to be cautious before that. Example is Border services **our bargaining agents did suggest for the employees to use the right** to refuse, and that led to the change to the code in 2014. Basically, due to process complaints were ignored as the government stepped in, to tell people to return to work.

There is always the process to appeal but

I am not sure it will be successful. We can be accused of illegal strike. We have to be really careful on how to handle this. Do not forget that the right to refuse under the Act is an individual right. Not every workplace is the same. If the member has a personal reason, they should use that right.

Edith:

**In that scenario it works, but I have a** case where three people are coming in to do the mail. Currently, we are paying their parking to come to work, **and they clean** before and after to ensure that the area is clean.

Marc:

It is the current issue, that no everyone is using their personal vehicle, and that there is risk using the public transit. Treasury Board will have the information more accurately.

Jean:

Does PSAC have any documentation on what was done during the SARS incident in Toronto?

Marc:

Yes, we did.

Jean:

Maybe we can use some of the information, it applies to Toronto but can it be used for the region?

Marc:

I will look into it.

Roddie:

What guidelines the provinces will use? Currently we are far from Phase II at least for a couple of months, and I don't see the government is ready for this until a couple of months.

Marc:

Not sure, but Treasury Board and Public Health Agency Canada they usually tend to follow what is the provinces. I do not see the government returning to work until September/ October. Not everyone will go back to work, and the 2.0 will return with dividers and the 6 feet/2 metres will be respected.

Also, there might be a rotation of a shift working 2 to 3 days a week and the other shift telework. We are not going back at the end of May or June.

Alex:

Well said Marc, there is so much scrambling currently and too much unknown.

Edith:

I hear from Kim that nobody will be sharing desk and each day the cleaning crew will be cleaning overnight. For every 3 desk there will be one empty.

Marc:

That is definitely true, we are going back to the old ways. I will be in touch with Kim.

Judith:

At Public Service and Procurement Canada (PSPC), we heard that the employee will be responsible for cleaning their own desk and might not go back to their assigned desk.

Marc:

It is concerning that PSPC **does not follow** what they should. All of the departments and agencies should follow what Treasury Board and the bargaining agents will come up with.

Roddie:

There should be the 1<sup>st</sup> thing on the agenda for May 21 meeting between Treasury Board and the bargaining agents and for them to use common sense, instead of the 7 or 9 revised version that will follow what the World Health Agency (WHO) recommend.

Cheryl:

At Resources Canada, we have different working conditions, since we work in laboratories. I don't think they intend to follow what the other department will do.

Alex:

Yes, there are rumors like that. Treasury Board will set the tone, although it will be a case-by-case basis, as mentioned the job conditions and requirement are different.

Silver lining is that the workplace overcrowding will be no more an issue as they have to respect the social distancing and restrictions.

Individuals can use their right to refuse, as Marc mentioned if we do a group right to refuse it could backfire on us. But if a member fears for their own safety, they can use the right to refuse.

Gary:

Currently we have 200 people working and they have been told to return to work by mid-June. Finance is back but there is still an issue of overcrowding. Health and Safety is aware but there is not a lot of stuff they can do.

Marc:

This is not the impression we got from Treasury Board and the bargaining agents have told us, but I will follow up the food chain.

Roddie:

You can do health and safety floor inspection.

Gary:

We had **new members and** one of them did end up going to the committee meeting but no inspection has been done since the COVID-19 lockdown.

Marc:

I strongly recommend that you do one.

Roddie:

The message coming from Global Affairs is that they believe in health and safety and **that their tag line with the building committee is "Running hand in hand, running the same"**. I work at 125. Me and another are the two critical employees that do the inspection at 125. We identify what works and what doesn't for the employees before coming back to work.

Judith:

I read somewhere that COVID-19 can be spread via air distribution, is it true?

Marc:

It has not yet been proven nor confirmed. So we cannot gauge if the virus can be spread into ventilation. The air conditioner is warm air from the room is sucked in through a grille at the base of the machine. The air flows over some chiller pipes through which a coolant fluid is circulating the air, then flows over a heating element (similar to the one in a fan heater). ...A fan at the top blasts the air back through another grille into the room. But since it is not proven yet, we don't know. But we can look into it later on.

Virgil:

Question on mental health and safety. I have a member who suffers from a depression that started three months prior to the COVID-19 situation. She was told that she cannot use the 699 leave. She had a meeting with her management regarding her salary as she is short 200 hours. When she called the pay centre, they told her that her pay has been cut off. This member is

owed some money from Phoenix. She learned this prior, so it is not just a threat before her meeting, but can they really do that?

Marc:

This is a component issue. By extension it is a health and safety issue, but also it is more what is on the collective agreement of the member. She should definitely contact her component to help.

Judith:

What is happening with **Pair Canada**. It is a project that was initiated 5 years ago to combine all the labs across the government. Was the Union involved?

Diane:

At Health Canada, all reorganisation like office 3.0 there will be no change, and all requests for changes will come through the Union.

Judith:

I have a member that has neck issues due to working bent over at home. She usually goes to a chiropractor but they are closed. She was told that she needs to use sick leave not the 699 leave. As far as we know, in this case, **the employer even has reached to legal and that the answer that they gave the member**, instead of going through the labour relation program and with the local union representative.

Marc:

I would suggest that the employee file a worker's claim in the province she works with.

Judith:

I will pass along the information

Roddie:

Is there anything to add.

Chantal:

Due to some unforeseen personal problem at home, I was unable to send the last April meeting meetings. After tonight meeting, I will send to the committee member tonight and last month meeting in 2 separate emails.

Jean:

I would appreciate a bit of a follow-up on if there was any progress on the revision of the Canada Labour Code Part II.

Marc:

There is nothing so far, as everything has been put on hold.

Alex:

A couple of updates and hot topics we are currently dealing with.

For 699 leave: All members in Quebec that are PSAC members should still be able to use the special leave regardless of choosing to stay at home to look after their kids. Even though the schools are open. We filed a policy claim last Friday, May 15 on the ground of human rights violation.

For the agencies: they should maintain the status quo as well, for the 699 leave. If they deemed that the member does not qualify, we still need to encourage the member to file a complaint to add, but individually.

For contract: We are in the early planning phase to organize a call in mid-June for pressure on fair accommodation across Treasury Board. So be on the lookout.

Roddie:

If no one else has anything to add. It is nice to speak with everyone, although I do not see your face.

Thank you for listening in. Stay safe and use common sense.

It is important that if you have someone in your local that feels uncomfortable that they do have rights and the union is there to support them.

Marc is also always there to help.

Good evening!

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:42 pm.