

Joleen Kaminski

From: CLRInfo
Sent: July 31, 2020 10:47 AM
To: Ken McCormack
Cc: Paul Strangway; Joleen Kaminski
Subject: COVID 19 Update: July 31
Attachments: Letter re Bill 23 - Call to Action-20200720.pdf; MHB_Letter_Bill_23_July 20_FINAL (003).pdf

CLR Members,

Provincial Update

Hard Hat Regulation

Through WorkSafe BC (WSBC), the provincial government is reviewing the regulation that requires hard hats be worn on construction job sites. This review is in response to members of the Sikh community who lobbied the Minister of Labour saying that being forced to wear hard hats infringes on their religious freedoms. Of course we are sensitive to religious expression by any community, but removing the need for hard hats on job sites is irresponsible and puts the health and safety of workers at risk, not to mention the liabilities that would result to employers should an accident occur.

The Council of Construction Associations (COCA) is asking for all employers to submit their own letter pushing back on proposed changes to the WSBC hard hat regulation (HSR Part 8). CLR has already sent our letter but we ask that you consider doing your own. A letter template and details on how to submit it before the deadline is included on this link: <http://cocabc.ca/re-safety-issue-proposed-changes-to-wsbc-hard-hat-regulation-hsr-part-8-action-required/>

Please note that the ***deadline to submissions is TODAY, July 31st at 4:30pm***. Your participation is needed and appreciated.

Bill 23 and COVID Presumption

On July 20th, the CLR submitted a letter to the Minister of Labour (Harry Bains) expressing our serious concerns with Bill 23, Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2020, which was tabled in the legislature on July 14. Our letter supports a far more detailed response submitted by the community of associations we are working with on this issue. As members of the Council of Construction Associations (COCA), CLR's opposition is noted in the main letter as well. See both letters to the Minister attached to this email.

There are a number of issues included in the Bill that are concerning but one of the most important features is that if it passes and is enacted it will reportedly "fast track" implementation of a WorkSafeBC COVID-19 presumption determination. The gist of this is that a worker who claims to have contracted COVID at work can get the benefits of the system well in advance of any determination of the validity of the claim. WSBC's own experts say there is no scientific or medical evidence at this point to support this government initiative. There is also a question of why this is being "fast tracked" given the national sick pay program that is expected in response to the Prime Minister's insistence that all Canadians should have sick days. This sick pay program will be funded through the \$19 billion federal funding support announced some weeks ago of which BC is getting roughly \$2 billion. Of course CLR members are in a different position given that we operate with collective agreements. Still, the Bill is dangerous and considering all the changes proposed, will result in more costs to employers. We can not determine when a decision will be reached, but it is expected any time between 10 days from now and the end of October.

Federal Update

Economy Restart, Testing & PPE

All levels of government are working in close collaboration to keep Canadians safe as we gradually restart our economy. Yesterday, the federal Minister of Health provided more details on the funding provided by the federal government to support health priorities and address Canadians' immediate needs. The Government of Canada will provide \$4.28 billion to further expand testing and contact tracing capacity, and the associated data management and information sharing systems. This funding will ensure a national capacity to conduct 200,000 tests per day to help manage COVID-19 outbreaks over the coming year. Canada will also provide \$7.5 billion towards personal protective equipment. Part of this funding will be used to help ensure availability of testing components like reagents, swabs, point-of-care kits, and promote innovation in developing new testing components and equipment. It will also help support contact tracing, including by making federal human resources available to provinces and territories, and help modernize data management and infrastructure to accelerate reporting on cases and access to these data by public health officials. Here is the link for more information: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/news/2020/07/the-government-of-canada-is-investing-to-safely-restart-the-economy-while-protecting-the-health-of-canadians.html>

COVID Tracking App

As announced some weeks ago, the COVID Alert App is now available and while voluntary, the federal government is asking all Canadians to download the free app. The app tracks any outbreaks of the virus and notifies anyone with the app who may have been in contact with someone who tested positive. More information can be found here: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/news/news-releases/2020/07/31/new-mobile-app-help-notify-canadians-potential-covid-19-exposure-now>

Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB)

The federal government has announced that they will smoothly transition those on CERB onto Employment Insurance. More details will be provided before the end of August, but the bottom line is that the government plans to ensure EI is improved and made into a more "CERB like" program to ensure everyone has optimal access to it. The Prime Minister (PM) says that the goal is to ensure that "No one will be left behind".

Second Wave - COVID

In the face of current spikes in reported cases of COVID across the country, our provincial and federal governments continue to stress the need for all Canadians to demonstrate the highest possible diligence in ensuring they adhere to all appropriate protocols for health and safety. The question of what levels a second wave may reach in Canada are starting to become more clear. In fact, it is expected that the fall months will show a significant rise in cases of COVID and could very likely result in more stringent requirements for the wearing of masks and possibly other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Worst case, we may even have to go back into a quarantine situation once again. The degree to which the virus impacts each of us, our families and our businesses continues to be very much in our hands.

As usual, I continue to ask all of our members to do what they can now to limit the impacts of COVID. There is a recognized "fatigue" for all things related to COVID that seems to be taking over. We can not let that fatigue impact the diligence that remains necessary, perhaps more so now than ever.

I also want to say thank you to our members on behalf of myself, our board and staff for your patience and continued support, especially through these challenging times. The emails and calls of support I am getting from some of you as well as your responses to various requests for assistance (surveys, political letters, etc.) has been fantastic and very much appreciated.

Have a great but safe long weekend.

Sincerely,

Ken McCormack | President & CEO

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