



Recognition Pay for Health Care Workers

Your Health Providers Bargaining Committee has been receiving questions regarding an increase in pay during the pandemic. Many other provinces have already implemented Recognition Pay for health care workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the federal and provincial governments have announced a few pandemic-related subsidies for workers, they are not all-inclusive to recognize ALL health care workers.

We wanted to let you know that we, along with the Health Provider Association partners, CUPE and SEIU-West, have raised this issue in discussions and sent an official letter to the Government of Saskatchewan on May 4, 2020, requesting Recognition Pay for ALL Health care workers that are tirelessly working to flatten the curve. We have not received a response to our letter, but we will not stop requesting recognition for our Health Care Heroes.

Currently we are working on a petition for you, your family, friends and communities to sign and send to the Premier, to demand Recognition Pay for health care workers. Please keep an eye out for further information in the coming days.

Some of you may be eligible for the following subsidy programs:

Provincial Wage Supplement for Lower-Income Workers at Essential Care Facilities

- Eligible lower-income workers helping Saskatchewan's most vulnerable citizens through the COVID-19 pandemic can now apply to the Saskatchewan Temporary Wage Supplement Program.
- For more information about or to apply for the wage supplement, visit www.saskatchewan.ca/wage-supplement-program. People with questions about the supplement may also email stwsp@gov.sk.ca or call 1-800-667-6102.
- For each eligible worker, the temporary wage supplement is \$400 for each four-week period, up to 16 weeks, for the period from March 15, 2020 to July 4, 2020. To be eligible, a worker must earn a wage less than \$24.00 per hour at an eligible essential care facility, in the four-week period for which the worker has applied for the supplement.
- An eligible worker must also have total earnings less than \$2,500, including earnings from work outside an eligible essential care facility, in the four-week period for which the worker has applied for the supplement.
- Some of the eligible essential care facilities include:
 - Public and private senior care homes;

- Integrated healthcare facilities; and
 - Home-care workers providing care to seniors in their own homes.
- The wage supplement will be provided to full-time, part-time and casual essential workers, and includes anyone employed by an eligible facility, such as care workers, cooks, housekeepers, janitors and administrative staff, but does not include third-party contract service providers working at those facilities.

Federal Wage Supplement

Under normal Employment Insurance rules, Supplemental Unemployment Benefit (SUB) plans can be used to top-up the amount workers on EI would normally receive. Information has now been posted on SUB plans in the Q&A section for the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) confirming that the rule limiting income from other sources to \$1,000 a month includes income from SUB plans. The information can be found at the bottom of the Q&A section on CERB at the following link:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application/questions.html#employment-insurance>

Saskatchewan Health Care Workers Survey

Recently you will have received emails from SGEU requesting your assistance in taking a three-minute online survey for Saskatchewan health care workers. If you have not yet completed this survey, we ask that you please check your emails and take the survey as soon as possible.

The survey is focussed on PPE and mental health support during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was designed and initiated by Dr. Sean Tucker, an OH&S researcher at the University of Regina, in collaboration with SGEU and the other Saskatchewan health care unions. The goal in gathering this data is to work toward improvements in the health and safety of health care workers during pandemics. The survey is open only to health care workers and your input will remain anonymous. Results of the initial survey will be released in July. Plans are in place to repeat the survey every four months. Your participation is important.

Cohorting

We want to know about any issues that you may be experiencing with cohorting, and whether you incurred a loss of income due to the following:

- you were cohorted to one location and not able to move to another position which you bid on and were awarded
- you were denied relief work in other facilities/areas
- you were unable to amend your application for relief work form
- managers did not backfill leaves

Currently the SHA has agreed to pay Personal Care Home workers who are cohorted to SHA facilities guaranteed hours based on a six-month averaging period. SHA relief workers are only guaranteed hours within the posted and confirmed period. We are demanding the same fair treatment for our members who may be suffering the loss of wages which in turn may reduce their benefits, due to cohorting and the inability to maintain their normal average hours worked.

We ask SGEU Health Providers who are affected by this decision as well as those workers who believe in fair treatment to please send an email to SHA CEO Scott Livingstone at CEO@saskhealthauthority.ca with a copy to us at comm@sgeu.org. The SHA needs to hear your concerns and dissatisfaction with the decision to offer one set of relief workers who work within both the SHA and Personal Care Homes more than what they are offering the workers who only work within the SHA. It's only fair for the SHA to treat all their employees equally.

Continuous Masking/Heat Exhaustion

We recognize the public health order stating continuous masking in patient care areas. We also recognize the difficulty that it may cause with working conditions causing heat exhaustion and difficulty in maintaining hydration. We have brought this concern forward on numerous occasions, demanding additional breaks to allow workers to leave the patient care area to hydrate and breathe without a mask to cool down. We have been advised that this is an individual facility operations concern and members should go to their managers regarding these difficulties. Please address this with your manager and steward if you are having issues with heat exhaustion, continuous masking and hydration difficulties. Please also keep us informed about your situation and whether it is resolved.

Screening/811 and Use of Sick or Vacation Leaves

We continue to insist that according to Article 17.12 of our Collective Bargaining Agreement, if you are sent home after being screened by the OH&S Employee Line or 811, this means you are quarantined as determined by the Medical Health Officer and therefore, this shall not result in loss of pay or reduction of your sick leave credits. If you are sent home after being screened and told to call 811 or the OH&S line, and subsequently ordered to be tested for COVID-19 and remain home to await results --- and your Employer tells you to use sick leave/vacation leave or any other leave other than the COVID-19 Pay, you should seek a steward and file a grievance.

Thank You!

Again, we wish to express our most sincere gratitude and appreciation for all the care and selfless work that SGEU Health Providers do on a daily basis. It becomes evident more and more every day that not all heroes wear capes.

To stay informed about information important to you, please download our [SGEU Health Sector app](#) on your phone, follow us on Facebook [@SGEU Health Providers](#), and check updates on our website www.sgeuhealthproviders.com.

#staysafe

SGEU Health Providers Bargaining Committee

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