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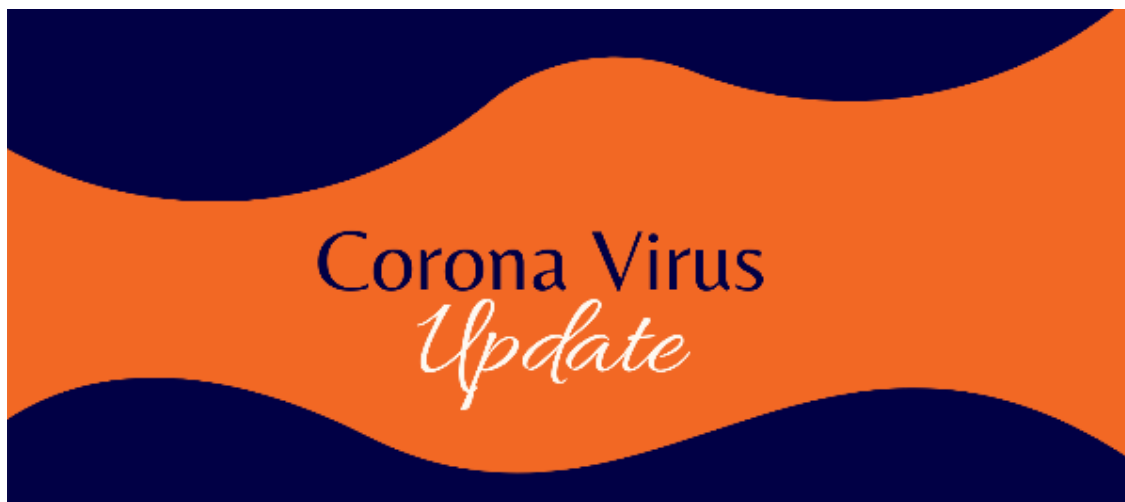
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## Weekly Newsletter

NEWS & EVENTS | March 13, 2020



Dear USW Local 1998 members,

### **Information for all Local 1998 Units**

The union has been communicating and working closely with our employers (U

keeping them informed as the situation develops.

We urge members to keep abreast of the recommendations and latest developments from Toronto Public Health <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/> and Public Health Ontario <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/>. Stay home if you are sick and follow your employer's and Public Health's recommendations on self-isolating. Immunocompromised members with concerns about coming into work should consult with Health and Wellbeing (at U of T) or Human Resources (at Vic, SMC and UTS).

The University has recently announced the cancellation of in-person undergraduate and research-stream masters and doctoral classes and that they will be moving to alternate teaching arrangements. The cancellation of classes takes affect on Monday, March 16 and will be in effect until the end of classes on April 3. It is our understanding that staff are expected to continue to report to work during that time. If the Universities and/or UTS close, **the union's position is that our members should still be paid** as per past practice with snow days and with the closure several years ago for the G20 and, at Vic, based on the language of collective agreement Article 32 (Emergency Closure). We do not yet know the employers' position on this point.

### Text Messaging Information

We recommend that you sign up for our text messaging service, which allows us to get out quick, short messages to staff. Through Mobile Commons, a notification subscription service, USW members can gain access to updates in text format. The Local will keep cell numbers confidential and only use them for status updates on COVID-19 content. Members will need to opt in in order to receive bargaining updates. Using your cell phone or mobile device **text 1998 to 32323** and follow the instructions. Note: There is no cost to subscribe to the service, but subscribers are responsible for any messaging fees from their service provider.

### Information for U of T Staff-appointed and Casual Units

U of T has communicated that no employee is required to have a doctor's note or medical certificate for cold or flu-related absences, or for self-isolation. Absences for other reasons should continue to be documented through normal

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## [coronavirus](#)

The University is developing a Telecommuting Guideline for COVID-19 for those in self-isolation or those who are immunocompromised.

The University is developing a temporary sick leave policy that will provide paid time off for casual or probationary employees who have tested positive for COVID-19. We are communicating closely with Labour Relations on this policy as this will not cover people who are self-isolating as a precaution, but who have not tested positive. It is not in the University's interest to have potentially ill people coming into to work because they have no paid sick days. We'll be updating our casual members on this as soon as we have more information.

### **The union office and union activities**

Our employers are open, our members are at work and **our union office will remain open unless circumstances change**. If do we end up closing the physical office, we will still be accessible to our members via email and phone.

**We are doing a review of upcoming events and will decide what to cancel on a case-by-case basis depending on the event.** We are cancelling the bargaining focus groups next week, but we will hold the Vic elections this weekend and Tuesday. We have had a lot of upcoming conferences and events announced in our newsletters. We'll be checking to see which external events are being cancelled and keep members informed.

This is a very distressing time for all of us. We will work closely with our employers, do our best to answer your questions and advocate for our members throughout this outbreak.

Sincerely,

USW Local 1998



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