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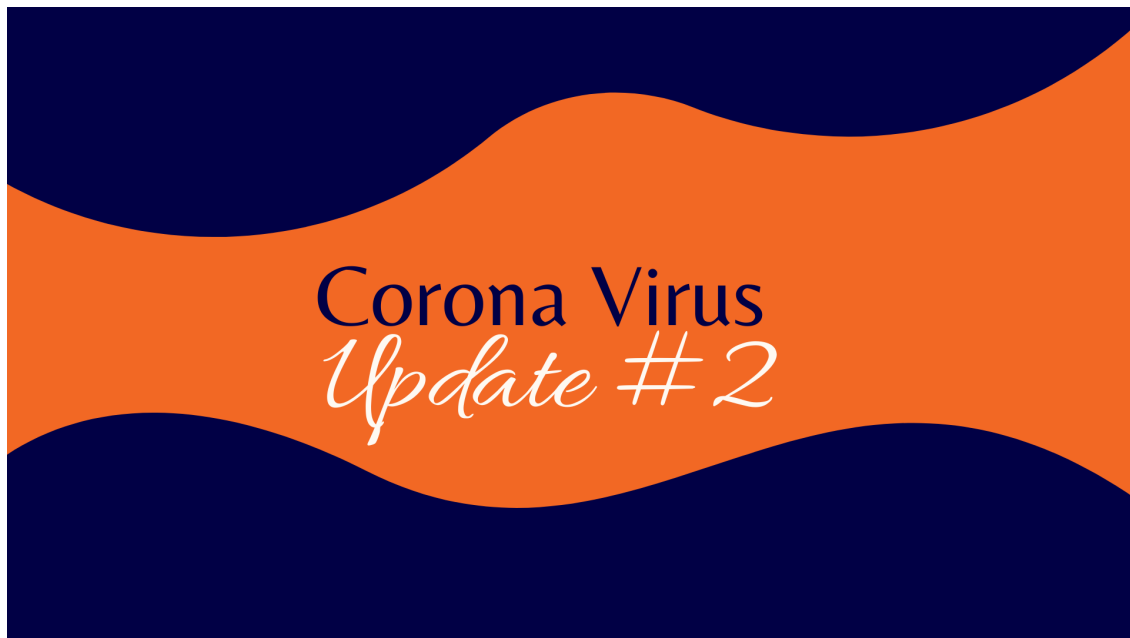
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Weekly Newsletter

NEWS & EVENTS | Sunday, March 15, 2020 | 3:30 pm



Dear USW Local 1998 members,

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be checking your U of T email (and following UofT on Twitter) to keep up on what's happening. The FAQs on the U of T website are being updated frequently. The University is in close contact with the union and keeping us up to date as things develop. **We are working hard to give our members accurate information, answer your questions and advocate for their rights with the employer. We are feeding members' concerns back to management so they know what your issues are.** Like U of T, USW is basing its decisions on the latest recommendations from Toronto and Ontario Public Health, not what may be happening in other parts of the world. That is what is relevant in our situation.

Here are answers to some of the main questions we're getting from members. Please see the U of T FAQ as well for more info:

<https://www.utoronto.ca/message-from-the-university-regarding-the-coronavirus?>

Why did the University cancel classes and not close offices?

As of Sunday afternoon, Toronto Public Health is recommending cancellation of all large gatherings. That's why the university has cancelled classes, closed athletic facilities and limited libraries. At this time, Public Health is not calling for businesses to shut down operations, nor is it recommending that people don't take transit. This could change, but for now, that is the recommendation.

Can I telecommute?

U of T has expanded telecommuting options and managers have been instructed to be as flexible as possible with requests. If you have a job that could be done remotely and you're getting push back from your manager, please contact the union and we'll intervene.

What if I can't do my job remotely, but I don't have childcare?

If you have a job that could be done remotely and you're getting push back from your manager or are being denied vacation, please contact the union and we'll intervene. However, if telecommuting really is not possible for your job, you have the following options:

- Use personal / flex days in accordance with your collective agreement
- Access overtime banks
- Request to use vacation days **Any limits on using yet-to-be-accrued vacation are waived at this time.**

What if my job is deemed essential?

Even if the University closes, there will be some staff who are deemed essential and will need to continue to work. This includes residences, animal labs for sure and may include IT / online classes support and other operations. **We will be working closely with the university to ensure best practices are carried out for the health and safety of people who must continue to come into work.**

Staff-appointed probationary – will I get paid if I'm sick / self-isolating?

Yes, the university announced on Thursday, March 12 that probationary employees will be paid for lost shifts if they are sick or self-isolating.

Casuals – will I get paid if I'm sick / self-isolating?

Yes, the university announced on Thursday, March 12 that casuals will be paid for lost shifts if they are sick or self-isolating.

Casuals – will I get paid if my shifts are cancelled?

This has been a big concern for casuals and we have some good news – on Saturday, March 14 the university announced continuity of pay for staff in the case of event cancellations, etc. We don't have details yet on how this will roll out, but casuals, please keep a record of cancelled shifts so we can help you follow up later.

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.

The union office and union activities

Our employers are open, our members are at work and **our union office will**

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closing the physical office, we will still be accessible to our members via email and phone.

We'll have an update on upcoming conferences and events coming out this week. It's pretty safe to assume that they're all cancelled at least into April.

This is a very difficult time and many people have a lot of anxiety. We urge you to get support if you need it. For U of T staff-appointed members, you can use the University's [Employee & Family Assistance Program](#). The Division of HR & Equity has compiled [a list of other resources available to the community on their website](#); this list will be updated frequently. For members of all other units, you can get assistance from the USW Lifeline Foundation 416-977-6888 / sclarke@labourcommunityservices.ca

We will work closely with our employers, do our best to answer your questions and advocate for our members throughout this outbreak. Please keep contacting us with questions and concerns.

Sincerely,

Colleen Burke
President, Local 1998



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