

March 13, 2020.

Update on the COVID-19 Virus & the Victoria University Unit of USW Local 1998

The Union is communicating with the Vic Human Resources Department and senior managers about the constantly developing COVID-19 situation and its effect on the Vic community in general and USW members in particular. Yesterday we learned that, in order to decrease opportunities for COVID-19 to infect the Vic community, starting on Monday, March 16 Ned's will be temporarily closed. Instead of their usual duties, the Ned's staff will work at creating extra "Grab & Go" meals for students with the goal of having fewer people concentrated in the dining hall at mealtimes. We were also told that the University is working towards making more opportunities available for staff to work from home. They are looking at providing remote access infrastructure to departments where it does not already exist.

In our conversation today with Human Resources and the President's Office, it was confirmed that the University would not be requiring employees in COVID-19 related quarantine or self-isolation to provide medical documentation. When the Union asked if this policy extended to sick leave absences related to other medical conditions, the University said that they would get back to us with a response.

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. Management has indicated that Vic staff are expected to continue to report to work during that time. The Union expressed to the University the concern that workers commuting to work by public transit are put at risk of contracting COVID-19 and that the closure of the University would eliminate that risk. The University stated that they are working closely with the University of Toronto administration and in keeping with direction provided by public health services to respond appropriately to the changing circumstances of the pandemic.

If the University closes temporarily, it is the Union's position that the provisions of collective agreement Article 32 (Emergency Closure) will be in effect. The article provides for members who are not in jobs deemed essential and who are directed to not report to work to be paid their full wages for the duration of the closure. Members in essential jobs who work during the closure are to be given compensating paid time off work at a time agreed on with their manager. The Union has notified the University that it expects the provisions of Article 32 to be implemented if there is a closure. Below is the full wording of Article 32. If there is a closure, union representatives will continue to be available by email and telephone.

The Union will continue to provide updates when new information is available.

John
USW
Victoria University Unit President

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ARTICLE 32 – EMERGENCY CLOSURE

From time to time, the President of Victoria University may close or cancel some or all of the operations and /or services of the University as a result of circumstances beyond the University's control, such as snowfalls and power failures. Closing or canceling some or all of the operations or services of the

University does not mean that staff duties are cancelled as well. Essential services to members of and visitors to the University must be maintained. Without limiting the possibilities, some examples of essential services are snow removal, food services, security, maintenance of building systems, residence operations, cleaning services, communication services and emergency response capabilities.

In the event that the President does declare that certain operations or services of the University are closed or cancelled, employees are expected to work their normal shifts, unless a) they are released from their duties by their supervisor; b) they provide satisfactory evidence to their supervisor that they are unable to stay at the workplace, or c) conditions are such that they are unable to travel to the University in order to work. Employees who do work when the University is closed will be paid their regular wages for the hours worked and will be given compensating time off with pay at a time to be mutually agreed between the employee and their supervisor.

Those employees who provide satisfactory evidence that they cannot stay for work or cannot travel to the University in order to work will receive their regular straight time wages for the regular hours lost.

The University will attempt to offer overnight accommodation and meals on campus to staff who are unable to travel home and return for work to cover a regularly scheduled shift the next day.