

April 2020

Sisters and Brothers,

Many events and activities that would otherwise be the normal work of the union have been suspended or postponed because of the global pandemic. However, we are hoping that we can all continue to prepare for the Day of Mourning in our respective communities, whether we are able to gather in ceremony or not.

It is appropriate on April 28th to reflect on the fact that too many workers are killed or seriously injured on the job, and many more have suffered and died from industrial disease, caused by on-the-job exposures, whether in mining, manufacturing, and other industrial settings. To that list of work environments, we must also now add health care, security, transportation/delivery services, retail and banking.

Our compensation system has never been fair to many workers, including former rubber workers whose claims for benefits because of industrial disease have been denied. It is a fight we are continuing to wage on their behalf. Justice and dignity for working people and their families have always been our guiding principles. The Day of Mourning is a day of re-committing to those values as we mourn those who have been lost because employers fail to prevent fatalities, injury and illness.

Now, in the face of Covid-19, thousands of workers, including our members, are continuing to work to provide the goods and services that Canadians need. While so many directives we have received from government and health professionals rely on personal responsibility for such things as hand-washing and distancing, we must ensure that employers do not fail to be both accountable for prevention and responsible for our health and safety. That is not a new message, but it is more than critical in 2020.

Employer responsibility also extends to ensuring that workers are economically protected when their health is at stake. Some employers are claiming that our members who self-isolate due to Covid-19 will not receive negotiated sick benefits and must instead file for Employment Insurance. This cannot be tolerated.

We encourage you to observe the Day of Mourning in whatever way you are able or is allowed by rules that are changing around gatherings and isolation.

This letter is coming to you several weeks before April 28th and, as we now know, situations can change rapidly. If there is a cancellation of Day of Mourning ceremonies in your community, please observe the day in the best way you can.

And together, we will fight for the living every day.

In health, safety and solidarity,



Ken Neumann
National Director



Stephen Hunt
Director, District 3



Dominic Lemieux
Director, District 5



Marty Warren
Director, District 6

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