



your voice at work

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Dental:
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Dental (meats):
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Safeway PT Benefits:
1.866.544.9686

Superstore PT Benefits:
1.866.342.3513

Pension:
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United Food and Commercial Workers Canada Union, Local No. 401

April 27, 2020

VIA EMAIL: hrrdir@nccoop.ca

Tiffany Pecush, CPHR | HR Director
North Central Co-operative Association Ltd.
318 North Park Drive,
Stony Plain, AB, T7Z 0J5

Dear Ms. Pecush:

RE: Response to our Letter of March 24, 2020

We wrote to you on March 24, 2020, in our letter we had a number of concerns and questions relating to policies, procedures, measures, critical supports and the contingency plans for your operations with respect to the unique challenges of COVID-19. We have not yet received a comprehensive response from you on all these items.

As this situation continues to evolve, we understand that things can be very busy, however it is crucial that employers provide the utmost support for their employees during this time of great risk. Employees need to know if they will be supported by their Company and to what level during this time. We have requested and will continue to ask for you to be sensitive and kind to all your employees and implement a number of financial supports and benefits to assist them in a time of need and until the COVID-19 risks abate.

In bringing food to the for Albertans, our members provide a key and important service that must be respected, valued and protected, this has never been more vital than now with the nature of COVID-19.

Across the country governments, the media and the general public are finally realizing the important role that grocery workers play in community and food security. These workers should be paid commensurate with their finally recognized, enhanced social status. We are aware of the introduction of enhanced premium pay you have implemented which our understanding is continually being reviewed for continuance. While \$2.25 an hour is a start, we asked for pay to be raised to the highest possible rate in any classification and an additional \$5 an hour. Many of your workers could make more during this time by applying for the CERB and staying safe at home with a much lower risk of contracting this insidious virus. Please pay close attention to this request.

Our understanding is you currently are not paying for additional Health Benefit coverage during this time at no cost to the members. Health care has never been so important to everyone. We had asked if you would waive all qualifying

measures for employees in accessing their health benefits and cover the cost of their health care should they have to take a Leave of Absence. A Health Benefit package could mean the difference between someone suffering through a long illness or recovering quickly and/or having to choose between medications to assist in quality of life or putting food on the table, paying their rent or mortgage. Further, we understand that many members have been placed on a layoff if they have chosen to not feel comfortable working during this time as opposed to a leave of absence. **What provisions are in place to extend benefits and recall rights during this layoff, as it is not business driven layoff and often outside of seniority provisions in its issuance?**

Unfortunately, some employees may, in fact, contract this virus or be exposed to those who have. It has recently occurred at different retail grocery stores in Alberta. **What is your action plan in the event of a COVID-19 positive case in your store?** We have asked for information on your preparedness plan on this issue, temporary closing, notifications, deep cleaning are among the items we are asking for further details on should this situation occur. **Will you provide compensation and financial supports should an employee becomes sick, tests positive for COVID-19, are symptomatic or should they be required/forced to self-isolate? Or will you force them onto a government assistance program where their income is precarious and uncertain? Will you provide support to those employees to assist them in navigating EI or the CERB? If an employee must miss work to care for their children will you offer them support or will they be also placed on government assistance?**

With the advent of social distancing rules and the anxiety that new social construct places on workers in high traffic areas like grocery stores, liquor stores and gas bars, we are aware of a few measures that you have put in place. We are still requesting comprehensive communications on your plan or programs in place to limit customer congestion in your places of business. We notice that workers get extremely anxious when there are too many customers are around simply placing social distance tape and plexiglass in front of the tills is not enough. Customers don't realize the stress they place on our members especially when you open all tills during busy times. **Will you encourage people to shop singly per household and discourage couples or families from shopping together in addition to continuing your reduced business hours? What is your maximum number of shoppers per location?** If you have an action plan or policies to enforce social distance shopping in your stores please forward all of these details to our attention at the earliest possible moment.

During these difficult times, given that many people will be asked to work from home and abide by social distancing rules we had also asked that grievance and arbitration time limits be waived during this time. Please advise us if this is acceptable.

These are unprecedented times and call for an unprecedented response with an eye to being careful, considerate and above all humane in your dealings with the people who work for you. We ask that you turn your immediate attention to providing comprehensive responses to both our letters. We look forward to your responses by May 1, 2020. Please be informed that, due the urgency and increasing risks related to COVID-19, any unaddressed issues thereafter will be reviewed and subject to the grievance processes as per the Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Sincerely,



Thomas Hesse
President



Richelle Stewart
Secretary-Treasurer