



South Country Co-op Limited

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March 28, 2020

Thomas Hesse, President
UFCW
#100, 46 Hopewell Way N.E.
Calgary, AB. T3J 5H7

RE: Response to COVID-19

In response to your letter dated March, 2020 regarding the current COVID-19 pandemic, South Country Co-op wants to ensure that we identify and communicate how we have reacted to the current COVID-19 pandemic. In responding to this current situation, we have maintained a focus on ensuring that the health and safety of all employees is paramount during this time. For we feel it is crucial to ensure our employees' health and safety is maintained, as they play a critical and important role in providing services to our communities at this time.

South Country Co-op needed to and currently continues to, address this crisis in the best interest of our employees and business, therefore we have implemented policy and provided numerous resources to our employees, in order to ensure that they are safe during this COVID-19 situation and the unique challenges that it brings.

It is extremely important that we ensure that our employees are treated with a high level of dignity and respect therefore, we continue to maintain our current policy of zero tolerance for harassment within the locations. Prior to this situation all locations had posters visible to all members and employees. These posters allowed employees and customers to have a solid understanding and access to our harassment policy. We have ensured that proper posters still remain visible to our customer which outline the expected conduct within the terms of our policy. This will ensure that our employees do not endure any mistreatment and our standards remain in place to ensure that they are treated with respect, dignity and are comfortable within their work environment.

We have also provided resources to our employees to ensure that they are able to express and contact their employer in the event that they need to adjust their schedules due to child care needs, illness, and all other unique circumstances that may arise. To date we have informed and provided our employees with means of communication to maintain that they have resources they can utilize during this time. Such resources include; EI leaves, EFAP programming, and contact information for Human Resources so they can discuss and arrange their needs within a defined and confidential manner during this time. We are working hard to work with each individual employee on a one to one basis as personal needs and requests arise.

During this time, we have waived the need for sick note requirements for employees, which was put in place to reduce the strain on the health care system, as well as providing a quicker response to accommodate the needs of the employee and maintain their safety.

In respect to maintaining a high level of safety for our employees, we understand that this situation puts many employees at risk therefore, we have been providing employees with all necessary personal protective equipment such as; sanitizer's, should they need hand sanitizers, wipes, disinfectant sprays,



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masks, gloves, etc. We also enforce distancing rules and protocol for both employees and customers. Plexi-glass shields in some locations have been installed. We will install the remainder of the shields for they provide insulation, along with increased sanitation measures, which in turn reduces the amount of individuals within an area at one given time (such as lunch rooms, offices, and till areas) We have also implemented reduced checkout stands wherever possible, to also reduce risk.

We have incorporated using tape in all locations. Tape is used as identified markings on the floors to enforce social distancing. Signage (attached), and additional security has also been implemented at the grocery locations.

New protocols have been put into place for increased sanitization tasks and measures to be done in all areas of the locations to reduce risk to employees and customers. Health and safety meetings continue to be done at the beginning of each shift, with employees being provided employee update newsletters with the most up to date information in regards to new government measures, new internal measures and additional information such as EFAP programming available.

Within the corporate office, we have added additional measures to ensure the health and safety of our employees. We have closed the office to the public and have made necessary arrangements for drop off boxes for our members to use when dropping off payment and other necessary information. We have put sanitation measures in place limiting number of employees within a specific area to comply with social distancing guidelines, and have added sanitation measures to have all necessary equipment (printers, fax machines, telephones, coffee and vending machines etc.) wiped after each use, as they are multiple user machines.

Our grocery stores have implemented specific hours of operation for shopping for elderly and immune-compromised customers. These hours of operations are from 8am-9am each day and provide the opportunity to keep these customers, who are at a higher risk, safe during this time.

In response to this situation, as you are aware a letter of understanding has been put into place within both the Taber and Medicine Hat collective bargaining agreements. We have put in place a \$2/hr increase for all worked hours for all employees within these collective bargaining agreements. We recognize the critical role that our employees play during this time, and therefore have put this in place from March 8, 2020 up to May 30, 2020, with the ability to give one weeks' notice to terminate or continue this wage supplement, dependent on the pandemic and economic impacts on the business as we continue to move forward in these unchartered waters.

It is important to note that even though we recognize the critical role that our employees play, we must also take into account the financial impact that this will cause to the overall operations of the business. Therefore, even though we have experienced an increase in sales in some areas during this time, we need to be cognizant that this situation has led to an increase in overall expenses and that we could potentially see a negative trend downward in the future, as we are currently seeing a decrease in petroleum volumes at our Gas Bar locations. This is a result of customers limiting and reducing all travel at this time. We feel that the current wage supplement is fair and is in the best interest of the employees and business, as we potentially could see a decrease in operations that could have a potential negative economic impact on our employees. Therefore, at this time it is important to maintain operational expenses within reason to help in reducing any monetary impacts, should they occur, to our employees in the future.

In regards to South Country Co-op requesting the union consider certain problematic articles within the



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collective bargaining agreement, I feel that through recent decisions both the union and employer have agreed to work together through this unprecedeted time to ensure that the health and of our employees remains priority. In recent conversations last week, there were several articles discussed, in regards to some concessions, and this has been followed up with an email to Ricardo for review as per our discussion via phone. The several articles discussed have been agreed upon and will be in effect until May 1, 2020 and must be agreed to renew by the Union on the 1st of every month afterwards. South Country Co-op and the Union have also agreed to end this agreement at any time within a 1 weeks' notice.

In regards to hiring new members, these employees have been hired to ensure that we can maintain a position of being able to provide a safe working environment for all employees. This is done by ensuring we have the proper amount of staffing available for all shifts to meet the business needs, and additional requirements within operations at this time. Additional requirements include, the ability to maintain sanitation requirements due to COVID-19, along with, in the event, employees are absent from work due to illness, leave, etc., that we have proper coverage within departments and locations. The possibility of hiring temporary employees was discussed through email on March 16, 2020 to inform the union that we would be seeking recruitment for temporary hires. These temporary hires will be offered hours where current employees within a department or location are not available.

Currently at this time South Country Co-op does not have any plans to close operations. In the event that we would consider the closure of any of our locations we will promptly communicate with you in advance to discuss these closures.

South Country Co-op currently is monitoring the number of customers within our locations, and this will allow us the ability to make decisions in the future with regards to whether certain locations need to have customer limits in effect at any given time.

The development of a communicable disease policy was also put into place, along with the development of a contingency plan in the event that one of our locations is declared a site of possible of infection. As the COVID-19 situation evolves we continue to review and adjust all measures to ensure that we are maintaining a very high level of health and safety to our employees.

In addition, South Country Co-op is considering additional policies and measures to further assure the health and safety of employees.

If you have any additional questions or want to discuss any portion of this letter, please feel free to contact me.

Regards,

Sherilynn BeBeau
Human Resources Manager
South Country Co-op

cc. Paul Haynes, CEO