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To: Employers of SEIU Local 2 (non-healthcare) bargaining units  
From: Tom Galivan, Secretary Treasurer, SEIU Local 2  
Date: April 7, 2020  
Re: **PPE and non-medical masks**

Yesterday, Canada's Chief Public Health Officer Theresa Tam stated that the use of non-medical masks by individuals while in public is an additional measure that can be used by people with no symptoms to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This represents a change in the government's position.

As you are aware, Occupational Health and Safety legislation in all Canadian jurisdictions requires employer to take all reasonably practical steps to ensure the health and safety of workers. Requiring all persons to wear masks in the workplace is an additional measure than can be taken collectively to limit the spread of COVID-19 and promote worker safety.

Considering the government's announcement, it is the position of SEIU Local 2 that Employers, who are still operating and requiring employees to physically be present at the workplace, are required to undertake the following measures:

1. Require all employees to wear non-medical masks at the workplace.
2. Provide all employees with non-medical masks for use during work. Where an employer has difficulty obtaining these masks (due to supply issues) that employer should make reasonable efforts to supply comparable alternatives until supplies can be obtained.
3. Provide employees with proper instruction on the safe use and disposal of non-medical masks.
4. The use of non-medical masks is NOT a replacement for other measures such as handwashing and physical distancing in the workplace. Therefore, Employers should continue these practices.

Further, where employers fail to take the above measures it is the position of SEIU Local 2 that employees have the right to refuse to perform unsafe work.

We appreciate that these changes may create significant operational challenges for some employers, but we believe they are essential to maintaining worker safety.

Respectfully,

Tom Galivan, Secretary Treasurer  
SEIU Local 2

