



B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union
A Component of NUPGE (CLC)

December 1, 2020

VIA EMAIL: HLTH.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Honourable Adrian Dix
Minister of Health
Room 337 Parliament Buildings
Victoria, B.C. V8V 1X4

Dear Minister Dix,

Re Providing N95 masks and fit-tests for healthcare workers

I am writing to call for immediate action from the Ministry of Health to protect the health and safety of B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union (BCGEU) members, and other working people providing frontline healthcare services throughout the pandemic. Specifically, I am asking that your ministry direct employers to provide N95 masks and fit-tests for all workers in frontline care scenarios, including in the home support sector.

B.C.'s COVID-19 daily cases, 7-day average cases, hospitalizations and deaths are all trending steeply upwards. In response to the virus' surge, public health officials at the provincial and regional levels are asking British Columbians to reduce their contacts and stay home to help break chains of transmission and bend our curve back down. As you know very well, the nature of health care work means healthcare workers can't follow this direction—their jobs require them to be in close contact with colleagues, clients, and others, often for extended periods of time, and frequently engaged in activities that are considered high risk for exposure.

For instance, BCGEU members in the home support sector work in the community, in private residences, and outside the controlled environments of health care facilities. They commonly face extreme risk due to clients, or others present in their client's home, not wearing masks or failing to practice physical distancing.

As you know, N95 masks provide a higher degree of protection than a standard medical mask. That's why, given the circumstances faced by healthcare workers—including those in home support—we believe it's critical they are equipped by their employer with N95 masks and fit-tests.

The reality is that high-grade PPE—like N95 masks—is a healthcare workers' best protection. While the ministry's recent decision to make medical masks mandatory within health facilities was a positive step,



we must do more as cases continue to surge. With infection rates surging, I am calling on your ministry to ensure employers provide necessary protective equipment and fit tests for healthcare workers so that those workers can continue providing the critical frontline services that British Columbians rely on.

As always, our union is available to meet with you to provide any further information.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Smith
President

Cc: Dr. Victoria Lee, President and CEO, FHA
Vivian Eliopoulos, Interim President and CEO & Mary Ackenhusen, CEO, VCHA
Cathy Ulrich, CEO, NHA
Susan Brown, President and CEO, IHA
Kathy MacNeil, President and Chief Executive Officer, VIHA
Benoit Morin, President & Chief Executive Officer, PHSA

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