



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

July 8, 2020

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

Honourable Carole James
Minister of Finance
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Dear Minister James,

Re LDB Workers Deserve Pandemic Pay

For nearly four months, essential workers in the Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) have risked their own health and safety to support British Columbians during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite being deemed essential by your government since the start of the pandemic – for which the 16-week timeframe ends this week - and meeting the criteria for the B.C. pandemic pay program, they have not been recognized for their contributions nor compensated for the increased risks to their mental, physical and emotional health, increased personal costs, increased workload or loss of potential income opportunities.

On March 26, 2020, Blain Lawson wrote in a letter to LDB customers and industry partners that, based on the Province's definition of essential services and its extraordinary powers to maintain essential goods and services, "the BC Liquor Distribution Branch (LDB) and each of its lines of business remain an essential service to the province."

By extension, we understood this to mean that LDB workers were essential workers. Moreover, LDB workers have warranted this designation throughout the pandemic:

- LDB workers have continued to work despite slow implementation of safety measures and increased workloads due to sanitizing and hygiene requirements and record sales amidst reduced operating hours – all while at times enduring verbal or physical abuse.
- LDB workers serve members of the public struggling with mental health and addiction concerns, and those not able to follow public health orders like physical distancing and wearing masks.
- While they are helping generate record profits, LDB workers are experiencing increased stress and financial pressure managing their workloads and then carrying out additional errands and safety measures at home to prevent their families from getting sick.
- Because of the reduced operating hours, some have also lost out on potential shift differential pay they previously counted on to cover their bills.



Despite the above evidence for their inclusion in the pandemic pay premium program, LDB workers remain excluded. You have stated publicly, "I would encourage all businesses who've seen an increase in revenue to ensure that their workers are being properly compensated at this difficult time." The LDB has undoubtedly experienced record sales throughout the pandemic. But, unfortunately, the LDB has not heeded your encouragement.

Despite lacking the recognition or compensation of the pandemic pay program, LDB workers have continued to work throughout this stressful, hazardous time. It is unclear whether they will be able to continue in this way if circumstances change again.

As Minister of Finance, the BCGEU is reaching out to you to for an answer: Will LDB workers receive the overdue recognition and compensation they deserve through the pandemic pay program?

In solidarity,

Stephanie Smith
President

Kusam Doal
Vice President, Retail Stores and Warehouse