

EPL UPDATE #2

April 7, 2020

Dear EPL Colleagues and CSU 52 Members,

It's been a week since we learned that there would be a mass temporary layoff at EPL. This week has been a difficult week, filled with uncertainty and a range of emotions that include anger, frustration, confusion, and yet in the face of this all, there remains optimism and compassion.

Despite the news of being temporarily laid off, amidst the many challenges that we are facing during this time, I find it heartening that our EPL members are trying to help each other every day by answering each other's questions, creating information charts, sharing inspiring and creative ideas of things to do, music to listen to, and generally providing group support amongst us all. Thank you to all of you for being there.

I would also like to thank the EPL Human Resources (HR) department for trying to answer all of the questions that have been posed to them, by myself, and our members. I know that they have been working hard to provide us with as much information as they can. This has not been an easy time for them, either.

Many of you have asked questions about the SUB plan; who qualifies for it, will it negate your ability to receive CERB, will it be calculated on base weekly hours or will it include additional hours that might be worked either in a temporary position or by picking up shifts. There are still no definitive answers to all questions. When I reviewed documentation that was provided by the City of Edmonton, it appears that the SUB plan will apply as a top up over CERB or over EI and will be based on average weekly earnings. This is still in question though, as it has yet to be determined if the SUB plan will constitute "employment income" or not. EPL's HR group is diligently looking into this on our behalf. The SUB plan is actually the City of Edmonton's plan, not EPL's plan, but we are fortunate enough to be able to link into it.

Related to the SUB plan questions, there have also been many questions as to what Employment Insurance (EI) payments will be based on. It is my understanding that Service Canada will determine what your "best" earnings are when determining your level of EI support. I understand that the Employer needs to report all earnings, not just base earnings, on your record of employment (ROE). If this is the case, then the bright side is that if you have worked additional hours, your Insurable Earnings could be higher than they would have been at your base weekly hour position.

I've also had many of you ask me about whether or not this temporary layoff will lead to permanent layoffs or an elimination of staff. I don't believe that EPL has any intention of laying us off permanently. My understanding is that when it is time to reopen our service points, EPL will need our trained and well-skilled work force to be back at work.

The Union does not see this LOU as an opportunity for EPL to permanently lay off staff. If for some unforeseen reason it were to come to a point that permanent layoffs were required (e.g. continued restrictions on public gatherings or EPL's funding significantly changes), there is a clause in LOU #11 which states: *"In the event permanent lay-offs are needed, layoff provisions of Article 12 of the Collective Agreement shall apply."* In other words, our Collective Agreement has always had a process to handle permanent layoffs, which includes notice periods.

Some concerns have been expressed about how EPL chooses to staff its operations and the subsequent issues that arise for members who work less than full time hours or who are not eligible for benefits as a result of working in a part-time or

temporary position. I want you to know that CSU 52 has, and continues to, advocate for benefited positions, and for work-life balance for members. We are very aware of the struggles that exist, and the challenges that arise from not being in a permanent benefited position that provides adequate work hours for you to provide for yourselves and your families. We will continue to have these discussions at bargaining and Union/Management meetings. The Union often has opportunities for our members to participate in shaping their employment at EPL. This includes positions on the bargaining team, the Labour Management Consultation Committee, the Health and Safety Committee, and as Health and Safety Liaisons. When openings come up, we encourage our members to get involved. We will also host CSU 52 EPL Unit Meetings for you, our members. Please watch for notice of the next (virtual) Unit Meeting, details forthcoming shortly.

I know that we all want to look to the future, a time when we can return to work, and to the life we are more accustomed to living. When that time comes there will be many more discussions between EPL and CSU 52 as to how we will bring our branches back to life, including the recall process for staff members. LOU #11 provides the framework for the process. As we approach that time, we will come to agreement of how this will look in finer detail. Our goal is to work with EPL to provide a reasonable, responsible return to work process for members.

Although I am in the ranks of the 489 EPL staff whom have been temporarily laid off, I continue to be your Union Representative, and will continue to be here to represent you, answer your questions and do what I can to assist you. If you have not yet signed up for e-news from the Union I encourage you to do so online at <https://csu52.org/>

This is a difficult, uncertain and trying time for us all. I encourage you to stay connected with your EPL colleagues, join up with them at [#staytogetherepl](#) on Facebook, or through text and email, and please continue to monitor your EPL email and Staffweb for important information. As difficult as these times are, we are still a very fortunate group of people to live where we do, and have the supports that we do. Remember to give thanks for all those who continue to work to keep us safe, and please continue to keep in the forefront that your health, and the health of those whom you love and need to support is of the utmost importance at this time.

Sincerely,

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