

EPL UPDATE #4

May 27, 2020

Dear EPL Colleagues and CSU 52 Members,

I hope you are all doing well, despite the challenges that we face individually, and collectively at this time.

As of May 02, 2020, the Addendum to LOU #11 expired; all staff in Group 2 are formally laid off and have the ability to apply for the “allowance” that is permitted to be received in conjunction with CERB. This affects approximately 200 EPL staff members, including unionized members, out-of-scope and management staff. Despite best efforts on many fronts, there has not been any success to date to sway the Federal Government on their decision to not permit the application of the SUB Plan in conjunction with CERB. Efforts are still being made to change this position, and you can help by advocating to your Member of Parliament and to the Federal Minister of Finance. In her May 15 2020 Staffweb update/post, our CEO Pilar Martinez, provided template letters that we can use to help in this advocacy effort.

As we seem to settle into new routines outside of our work at EPL we do continue to wonder what’s next, and when we get to go back to work.

Some of our EPL Pages will be doing a short-term return to work to help with the project that will see our branches float materials to Milner to stock up their shelves and make room in branches for when materials start to return locally. The project work has been carefully thought out, and EPL has shared these plans with CSU 52. The necessary health safety considerations will be in place, which will include social distancing while working, and the availability of PPE for staff. Once involved staff have completed their assigned work they will once again return to temporarily laid off status.

The bigger picture of when EPL reopens is on all of our minds. We all wonder how it will happen, where it will happen, and when it will happen. This week EPL is sharing a draft of the planned approach to do this, and the Virtual Town Hall meetings will be an opportunity to go into this in more detail and ask questions that you may have. CSU 52 has discussed this planned relaunch with EPL Management, and we feel confident that the health and safety of our members are the number one consideration at this time.

Despite the fact that the Province has said that libraries can re-open in Phase 2 of the Province’s reopening strategy, EPL has adopted a more conservative approach to reopening. EPL’s relaunch will be a phased approach as well, with a gradual return to services, and it will be continuously evaluated as it moves forward. If things aren’t going as planned, it may require tweaks and changes, which may include flexing back and forth between phases. The rate of return to services may also be dependent on patron uptake.

Staffing considerations are still being undertaken by EPL. The return of staff will be dependent on the job processes of each phase, and the locations that start the relaunch. During this time, while the terms of LOU #11 remain in force, bumping rights are suspended.

Several CSU 52 members have asked us to advocate on behalf of parents who have children attending school and/or still without daycare options, family caregivers and those living with (or who are) immuno-compromised people. We have raised this with EPL Management, and have been advised that there may be some flexibility in the early phases of return

to work, but as we reach the final phases of return there will be less flexibility. If a member has specific concerns with respect to their recall, I encourage you to discuss it with Management first to hopefully find resolution before contacting the Union.

There has been some question about how this pandemic may change our work. In discussions with EPL Management I think the underlying principle will be “how are our patrons going to want to interact with us?” This of course, is in addition to the health and safety measures that need to be in place. It is likely that we should be considering not “what” we do, but “how” do we do it on a go forward basis. This will likely present some changes to how we focus service delivery, but our underlying roles at EPL should remain consistent with what we did prior to COVID-19.

EPL is taking into consideration all the necessary changes that will be required for social distancing, health and safety measures. These will be similar to what we are now seeing in grocery stores and other venues such as signage, floor markings, sneeze guards, etc. EPL will be following a hierarchy of controls framework to reduce transmission hazards. This includes physical distancing, engineering controls, administrative controls, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

I wanted to include here some information I came across from the City of Edmonton with respect to taxation and LAPP contributions. This is a direct excerpt from an April 27, 2020 CoE document, directed to its laid off members.

Q: IS CERB tax-free? Is the City’s ‘top-up’ tax-free?

A: Unlike most standard paycheques, CERB payments do not have income tax deducted before they are sent out. Questions and Answers on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit states.” These benefits are taxable. You will need to report any payments received on next year’s tax filing. An information slip will be made available for the 2020 tax year in My Account under Tax Information Slips (T4 and more).”

The City’s ‘top up’ is also subject to Income Tax & CPP.

Q. How does this temporary layoff period impact my pension contributions?

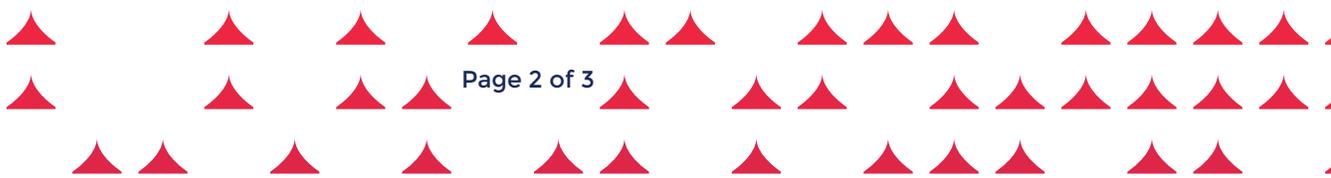
A: A temporary layoff will result in a suspension of active participation in Local Authorities Pension Plan (LAPP) for permanent employees. Therefore, deductions for LAPP will not occur during the temporary layoff period. LAPP deductions will recommence immediately after return to work. NOTE: EPL has advised that they are still seeking to confirm whether temporarily laid off members are able to voluntarily purchase the whole or portion of the layoff period as a Prior Service Purchase.

CSU 52 has recently upgraded their software package to allow us to hold virtual meetings on a large scale. We are currently working through the learning process of how to best use these tools to hold meetings with our members. It is my hope to have a virtual CSU 52 Unit meeting for our EPL members in the near future. I’ll let you know when I’ve got a date and time for the meeting. In the meantime, if you have specific questions you can reach me at the contact info below.

Even as our situation changes and we begin to see our lives reopen to a more normalized state these are still difficult times, including socially and emotionally. Please do your best to remain positive and give thanks to all those who continue to work to keep us safe. As always, I wish you, your families and loved ones good health, physically and mentally.

Sincerely,

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