



PRESIDENT'S WEEK IN REVIEW MAY 18 - 24, 2020



Last week was shortened by the stat, and brought forward several safety questions, a bit of internal Union business, and (per new normal) more aftermath from BC Ferries illegal layoffs. Last week also marked the start in earnest of “Phase 2” of BC’s restart plan.

The Union Office has continued to hear of a variety of safety concerns from the membership in the wake of COVID-19. In turn, BC Ferries has demonstrated numerous times they are in no immediate rush to act on safety issues raised at the worksite. The primary issues we’ve been hearing about are proximity to customers and crowding issues. These concerns tend to arise two ways. One, workers are asked to work in close proximity to customers and are concerned about the risk of infection. Two, crowding issues are leading to verbal and physical altercations between passengers and passengers and staff.

In both instances, please remember you have the right and responsibility to refuse unsafe work. For example, if you are asked to work around people where working within 2m of another person is unavoidable but the work is not necessary, refuse to do it. If the work is necessary, refuse to do it unless you are given proper engineering controls (e.g. a plexiglass barrier), or if engineering controls are not reasonably achievable, proper PPE – this means (at a minimum) an N-95 respirator, anti-splash goggles or face shield, a tychem suit or surgical gown, and gloves. If the issue is unruly or abusive passengers, get yourself in a safe place and report the unsafe work to your supervisor. Sadly, we have seen too many instances of physical and verbal assault over the past few weeks – please remember that abuse does not have to be part of your job.

When you refuse unsafe work, follow these steps:

<https://www.bcfmwu.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/The-Right-To-Refuse-Unsafe-Work-WorkSafeBC.pdf>

If you’re in doubt about declaring unsafe work, contact your Shop Steward or Local President.

Internally, our Office started development of our Workplace COVID-19 Safety Plan. Once this is complete, we will look to reopen our Union Hall for work, and to welcome back members and guests (circumstances dependent). We hope our Union Executive will be able to consider this plan, and other reopening strategies, at our next Provincial Executive meeting.

In response to BC’s restart plan, our members have borne the brunt of increased traffic. Over the past two weeks, there have routinely been 2-3 sailing waits on Route 30 (DUK to TSA), with passengers waiting over 5 hours for a sailing only to be turned out at the end of the night. For these folks, the reopening of Route 2 (DEP to HSB) cannot come fast enough. For our part, we continue to encourage BC Ferries to bring our members back to work at 100% wages, and in a way that respects order of seniority. We expect to have an update on that soon.

Finally, as part of BC’s restart plan, all workplaces now require a Workplace COVID- 19 Safety Plan. Be sure to inquire about the workplace safety plan at your workplace, and, if it’s under development, ask how you can participate in its development.

Next Week: Correspondence; a Provincial Executive meeting; a WorkSafe matter; and a Local 11/17 meeting.

Thanks for reading, and stay safe, solid, and healthy!

In Solidarity,

BC FERRY & MARINE WORKERS' UNION

Brother Graeme Johnston