



Health ministry confirms wage-levelling to continue after December 31

In a briefing with HEU, Ministry of Health officials confirmed that wage levelling for seniors' care workers will continue after December 31, 2022.

This is an important commitment as the emergency order under which wage levelling was originally authorized is due to expire at that time.

In addition, it is anticipated that the Provincial Health Officer order that restricted multi-site workers in long-term care and assisted living to a single site (Single Site Order) will be lifted by December 31.

As a result of the changes, multi-site workers will be able to return to their "pre-COVID" jobs from which they are on leave, if they so choose.

The union has also confirmed that wage increases recently negotiated as part of the Facilities collective agreement will apply to HEU workplaces subject to "levelling up" and that these increases will be retroactive to April 1, 2022 where applicable.

The union is also pressing government for a more permanent solution to inconsistent labour conditions across seniors' care by implementing its campaign commitment to provide standardized benefits and working conditions across the sector, in addition to wage levelling.

Background

In the spring of 2020, in an effort to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in long-term care, assisted living and provincial mental health facilities, B.C.'s Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry issued a temporary public health order restricting workers in these sectors from working at more than one job site.

Employees with more than one job (*multi-site employees*) were assigned to work at one location only.

HEU and our union partners in the sector, worked with health employers and government to establish the *Single Site Transition Framework (SSTF)* which sets out the terms and conditions under which multi-site employees work, while the Single Site Order is in effect.

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In that agreement, we also secured wage levelling for members who work in independent collective agreements, which moved all impacted workers to the higher hourly rates in public sector agreements like the Facilities, Community and Nurses agreements.

The SSTF also ensures that multi-site employees restricted to working at one site would be placed on a COVID-related unpaid leave of absence until the single site order is lifted.

In addition, multi-site employees could be scheduled to work up to 1.3 of an FTE.

The *COVID Related Measures Act* which includes the SSTF will expire on December 31.

What does this mean?

While casual employees have been able to work at more than one site since last year, all multi-site employees can return to their pre-COVID leave jobs, if they choose, once the SSO is repealed.

HEU and other unions are working with employers and government to develop an orderly transition plan, as well as a labour adjustment agreement, to reduce workplace disruption related to the end of the single site order.

What will change with the end of the Single Site Order and the SSTF?

Members will no longer be restricted as to where they can work once the Single Site Order is repealed.

In addition, when the SSTF ends, multi-site employees will no longer be scheduled to work more than a single full-time job (1.0 FTE).

Once multi-site employees return to their previous FTE (1.0 FTE or less), employers can only ask employees to work more than a 1.0 FTE, if they pay them the overtime rates.

What will not change with the end of the Single Site Order and SSTF?

Wage levelling will continue for employees at worksites that were covered by the SSO after December 31. That includes direct employees and those working for subcontractors.

What will happen next?

Over the coming weeks multi-site employees should be contacted by their employer(s) to review employment options.

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Members with more than one job in long-term care or assisted living facilities covered by the Single Site Order can anticipate that employer(s) will ask some or all of the following questions:

- Will you continue to work in the position you currently hold at the site you have been working at?
- Are you still on a COVID-related unpaid leave of absence from other sites?
- If yes, where?
- What position(s) do you hold at sites where you are on a COVID-related unpaid leave?
- Do you intend to return to your job(s) at your pre-COVID leave site(s)?
- If you have a casual job at a pre-COVID leave site and have not been accessing casual work, do you plan to start picking up shifts?

The SSTF contains provisions that protect your rights to employment and seniority and health and welfare benefits at your pre-COVID site.

If multi-site employees do not hear from their employer(s) in the next few weeks, they should contact them.

How will I know what to do?

A more comprehensive timeline of the important steps leading to the end of the SSO and SSTF will be developed over the next few weeks. This will include more information on the labour adjustment agreement currently being worked out to minimize workplace disruption resulting from the end of single site staffing in this sector.

In the meantime, members should ensure that HEU has your current contact information by going to www.heu.org where you can hit the **UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION** on the bottom of the home page.

Continue to monitor the HEU website and speak to your HEU Representative if you have questions.

(Note: This newsletter was revised October 26 to reflect new information about wage levelling and the recently ratified Facilities collective agreement.)