



**UNITED ASSOCIATION**  
of Journeymen & Apprentices of the  
**PLUMBING & PIPEFITTING**  
Industry of the United States and Canada  
Local Union 170 – Affiliated with AFL-CIO-CFL

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April 10, 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

First and foremost, I want to recognize and thank our membership – the Brothers and Sisters of Local 170. These past few weeks have been incredibly stressful and difficult, but you have risen to the challenge; continuing to provide our essential work while taking the necessary precautions to protect your safety and that of your co-workers.

For those members who are not working this weekend, I hope you enjoy a well-deserved break, but I urge you to keep following social distancing measures. I realize that we would like to return to our normal routine and go out and get together with family and friends, but we are not past this pandemic yet. Let's do our part and stay home. Check out this video by the BC Building Trades.  
<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Em7d1ZCPg9Z5ha-mKjdh1d4WfaBteSOB>

A few developments since our last update:

### **BC Building Trades President**

I am proud to report that I was elected president of the BC Building Trades at our convention last month. The BC Building Trades represents 35,000 workers across 25 different craft unions. I look forward to working with the BCBT Board and staff and forwarding the interests of our membership and those of our building trades sisters and brothers.

### **CERB & SUB**

We have been getting many questions about the SUB Plan benefit for those members who are in receipt of the Canada Employment Response Benefit (CERB). CERB was quickly deployed by the federal government to assist people through the COVID-19 crisis. Currently, we are **not legally able** to issue SUB payments to members who are in receipt of CERB. The legislation only allows us to issue SUB payments for those in receipt of EI. We have asked our actuaries to look into this situation and have sent a letter to our Delta MP Carla Qualtrough requesting that they amend legislation to allow SUB benefits to be paid to those in receipt of CERB. We will provide further information when available.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1WGBuGNzjuJZZ8ltgYimxnyBFmILotER>

### **Laid Off – Sign In**

We are closely monitoring the effect of COVID-19 on our members. In the month of March, our records show a 5% decrease in employed members from the previous month. It is unclear how much of this is COVID related versus the completion of some larger projects (for example Parkland). We are also unsure whether or not members are signing back onto the Board, particularly if they have been given a temporary layoff with the intention of going back to their current employer. If you have been laid off for any reason or time period, you need to sign back onto the board as soon as you are made aware, as it will help us plan ahead. We will allow any members who have been laid off because of the pandemic to be recalled by the employer, if they wish.

## **UA Dues Relief**

The UA announced on Thursday, dues relief for members affected by COVID-19. Starting April 1, 2020, Local 170 will cover the monthly dues (for April 2020) of non retired members who have worked less than 40 hours (UA work) in the previous month (March 2020). The UA has waived any percapita owing for members whose dues are covered by Local 170. Also, members have been given a reprieve from having to pay re-instatement fees (\$50) for being in suspension (a member becomes suspended when they owe more than three months dues). These measures will start April 1 and will continue on a month to month basis at the discretion and direction of the General President.

We are in the process of working with IT and staff to put these measures into effect. We will not have data on March hours until the beginning of May as the collective agreement states that employer moneys and hour reports are due by the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the following month that they are worked in. We also need to determine which eligible members have paid their dues ahead and apply the appropriate credits. We will provide further details in the upcoming days.

## **Service and Maintenance Negotiations**

Given the uncertainty in the industry due to the COVID-19 outbreak, we have proposed to CLR to defer Service and Maintenance Agreement negotiations until the summer. As a stop gap, we have proposed a wage increase for our Service and Maintenance members for May 1, 2020 equivalent to the scheduled increase for those members working under the Standard Commercial agreement. We have yet to hear back but will keep you posted.

## **Labour Relations Code Amendment**

Some good news from the Labour Relations Board, unrelated to COVID-19. The Labour Relations Code has been amended to allow Union certification cards to remain valid for a period of 6 months, instead of 90 days. This is a big step forward in allowing us to successfully organize the non-union. The previous 90 day time frame was very short and restricted our ability to fully communicate the benefits of membership to prospective members. This was one of the recommendations that we lobbied for when the Labour Code came under review in 2018 and we are pleased to have it enacted into law.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1PzEpyT0Lj3abBEitUJXcrvpJrOT-glJs>

## **Direct Deposit now available for SUB Payments**

We are now able to process SUB payments by Direct Deposit. Starting next week, members who apply for SUB benefits will be asked to provide their direct deposit information to process SUB payments directly to their bank accounts. This will provide members with a quicker turnaround for payments, avoiding any postal delays or lost cheques. Please visit our website for more information on the SUB benefit and how to apply.

<https://ualocal170.com/supplemental-unemployment-benefit-plan/>

## **Temporary Rental Supplement Program - Application Portal now Open**

The provincial government is providing support for renters affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The application portal was launched yesterday and can be accessed at this link:

<https://bctrs.bchousing.org/>

Finally I want to remind members of assistance that is available if you are feeling stressed or anxious during these uncertain times. It's important that we pay attention to our mental wellness and take the time to care for ourselves. UA members are able to access confidential help at no cost through our [UA Member Assistance Program](#) and through our [Construction Industry Rehabilitation Program](#). Please reach out if you need, and if you know someone who may be struggling, let them know that help is available.

I will repeat again that if there is any member who is feeling isolated or needing assistance, please contact our Member Assistance Line at 778-658-0819. We have had several members volunteer to help out if members need help with errands (grocery, meds) or other assistance. We need to keep physically apart, but this shouldn't stop us from connecting with each other in different ways.

On behalf of all the Officers and Staff of Local 170, I want to wish you a happy, safe and secure Easter Weekend. Our offices are closed Good Friday and Easter Monday, but we will be back on Tuesday, April 14, 2020.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A.D. Al Phillips', with a stylized flourish at the end.

A.D. Al Phillips, RSE  
Business Manager & Financial Secretary

*MoveUp*