

VIA E-MAIL & REGULAR MAIL

April 27, 2020

Hon. Harry Bains,
Minister of Labour
Via email LBR.Minister@gov.bc.ca

Ms. Anne Naser, President & CEO
WorkSafeBC
PO Box 5350 Stn Terminal
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 5L5

Dear Minister Bains and Ms. Naser,

On behalf of the United Steelworkers, I'm writing you to convey our union's serious concerns about the protection of worker health and safety during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We've seen in recent days outbreaks of COVID-19 at United Poultry in Vancouver and Superior Poultry in Coquitlam. In both of these incidents, workers have come forward with concerns about the lack of action by management to ensure public health orders were being adhered to. In addition, we've heard stories from other workers in a number of different industries about concerns being ignored by management, pressure to work when ill, lack of personal protective equipment and no steps being taken to comply with public health directives.

The United Steelworkers is responding to COVID-19 concerns by ensuring that the health and safety of workers is first and foremost. We are training our health and safety activists and local union members to ensure they are proficient in the use of a worker's Right To Refuse Unsafe Work.

The USW's work in the past was critical to the creation of the Right To Refuse Unsafe Work and we are encouraging every Steelworker to understand the right and use it if required. There are many workers who we now call essential that are stepping up to ensure our province can continue to function. They're essential, but not sacrificial.

Now is the time for robust inspection and action by government to ensure that those we are depending on are able to work in an environment that keeps them and everyone else healthy and safe.

At your earliest convenience, I'm requesting to meet with you to discuss what steps WorkSafeBC and the province are taking to ensure that workplaces are safe during COVID-19 and that workers are apprised of their Right To Refuse Unsafe Work.

Please contact my Secretary, Dorothy Lampshire, at 604-683-1117 or dlampshire@usw.ca to confirm meeting details.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Hunt".

Stephen Hunt
Director

SH/BW/dl

copy: Laird Cronk, President B.C. Federation of Labour