

Appropriate Accommodation Protocols Also Restored

Manitoba's nurses have achieved a major victory by agreeing to a joint statement and Memorandum of Agreement with Shared Health regarding Personal Protective Equipment use and other important health and safety controls, MNU President Darlene Jackson announced today.

"For months, nurses have been voicing concern about inadequate PPE in light of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Jackson. "Every nurse has a right to a safe workplace, and this agreement is a big step in the right direction following months of advocacy by nurses on this critical health and safety issue."

MNU has been urging the Pallister government and Shared Health to follow the lead of several other provinces by reaching agreements with nurses and health care workers for the purpose of determining appropriate PPE use and supply monitoring policies. Following months of government refusals to collaborate, MNU took legal action towards an arbitrated settlement.

Prior to the scheduled arbitration hearing, Shared Health conceded on the key concerns MNU raised and agreed to the following (see below for links to the MOA and joint statement):

PPE ACCESS

Employer agrees to make an N95 respirator available to all nurses that are providing care to confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases with a N95 respirator, upon their request.

Implement the use of Point-of-Care Risk Assessments to allow nurses to determine the appropriate level of protection required in other situations. Amend current PPE guidelines to eliminate unsafe 1-mask-per-shift policy, implement a two-mask-per-shift policy, and move toward a minimum of four surgical masks per shift (and more if supply and circumstances warrant it as determined by the PPE Committee).

PPE COMMITTEE

Establish a PPE committee with representatives from MNU and Shared Health to review a number of important issues, including appropriate and effective utilization of PPE; assess engineering and administrative health and safety controls; monitor PPE supply levels and procurement efforts; and review scientific evidence and technology related to COVID-19.

PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

The settlement adheres to the precautionary principle as advocated for by

the Manitoba Nurses Union ([click here](#) for a full description of the precautionary principle).

ACCOMMODATIONS

Rescinds guideline entitled “Guidance for Staff and Primary Care Providers Related to Health Care Workers with Underlying Medical Conditions and Potential Risk Factors for Severe COVID-19” and other memos severely limiting workplace accommodations available for pregnant or immunocompromised health care workers.

Primary care providers will no longer have restrictions placed on the accommodations they recommend for their patients. Previously, nurses and other health care workers who required medical accommodations were being unfairly denied by their employer and Occupational and Environmental Safety & Health (OESH).

Restores privacy protections limiting the need for nurses who require accommodation to produce additional medical information.

The MOA and joint statement are tied to the resolution of nine grievances filed against Shared Health at Health Sciences Centre. Although the agreement technically applies to nurses, the win should pave the way for similar gains for other health care workers.

“This settlement was reached because our position was indisputably grounded in fact, and was focused on protecting the health and safety of nurses and patients,” added Jackson. “We are hopeful this agreement will convince the Pallister government and Shared Health officials to take a more collaborative approach to policy making on PPE and other issues affecting our members, patients and health care system.”

MNU represents over 12,000 nurses of all designations from across Manitoba.