

Dear members,

Today, I am proud to announce a major victory in our fight to protect nurses and patients from the spread of COVID-19.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of our members, local leaders and staff, we have signed a Memorandum of Agreement and issued a Joint Statement with Shared Health on a number of important issues involving PPE use and other important health and safety controls. Highlights of the agreement are as follows:

- Nurses treating suspected or confirmed COVID-19 patients will be provided with appropriate PPE, including access to a fit-tested N-95 mask upon request.
- The unsafe one-mask-per-shift policy is being rescinded by Shared Health. All nurses will be provided with a minimum of 2 surgical/procedure masks per 8-hour shift (or 3 per 12-hour shift) going forward, with a goal of increasing this allowance to a minimum of 4 masks (or more) as circumstances permit.
- Nurses will now be able to use their own professional and clinical judgement to determine whether a higher level of PPE is necessary to safely treat patients by employing Point-of-Care Risk Assessments (see the Joint Statement for specific details).
- Pregnant or immunocompromised nurses who require accommodations based on the professional advice of their primary care providers will have their rights restored. 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).
- MNU representatives will sit on a joint PPE committee that will employ the Precautionary Principle in making recommendations on PPE use, monitoring PPE supply levels and procurement efforts, engaging in contingency planning, reviewing new evidence on the transmission of COVID-19 and emerging technology, discussing engineering and administrative controls, and monitoring COVID-19 exposure and cases among nurses.

For more details, we encourage nurses to read the following:

- MOA
- Joint Statement

- Media Release

It's important to note that where the PPE committee is unable to reach consensus, MNU will have the ability to refer the matter to arbitration. In other words, we have a new, strong avenue to hold the employer to account on health and safety issues related to COVID-19.

With these gains, nurses and patients will be better protected at work. These gains should translate into similar health and safety protections for all health care workers in Manitoba.

This progress would never have been made without the commitment of nurses to push this issue. I want to thank the nurses who signed their names to grievances and helped drive our cause forward.

I also want to thank the thousands of nurses who sent letters to our elected leaders demanding better health and safety standards. Everyone who took action helped amplify this issue in the eyes of government and the public.

MNU will closely monitor the implementation of these policy changes, and will continue to advocate on this issue. If you notice your employer is not adopting these new policies at work, please contact your Labour Relations Officer and local/worksites president.

Thank you for your continued support during these extraordinary times.

In solidarity,

Darlene Jackson
President
Manitoba Nurses Union