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PLEASE  POST

COVID – 19 UPDATE 26

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Due to the rapidly changing circumstances surrounding COVID-19 and its impact on workers, program support criteria are subject to change. Be sure to visit www.unifor.org/covid19 to download updated versions of the fact sheets available to our members and their families.

<https://www.unifor.org/en/blog/pandemic-rages-its-time-fix-ei-good>

As pandemic rages, it's time to fix EI for good



Researcher's Brief

Angelo DiCaro

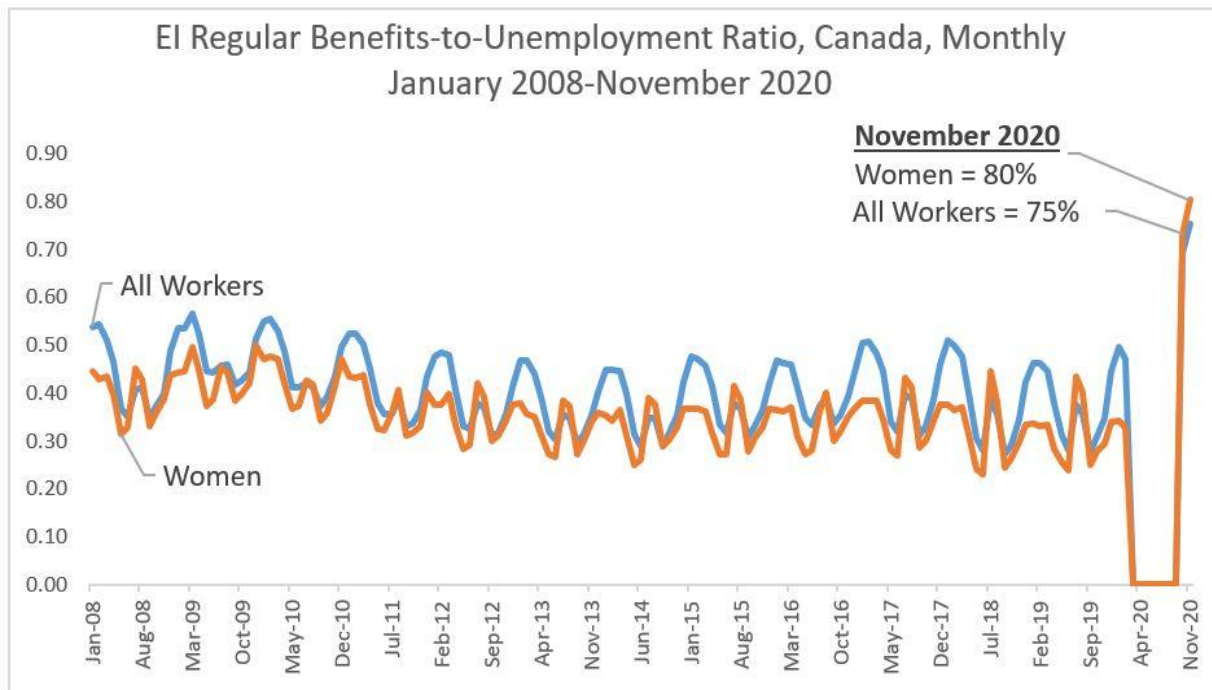


Thu, 02/18/2021

This past year, workers experienced unemployment on a scale never before seen in Canada. At its first wave peak in June 2020, some 2.7 million workers in this country had no job. The magnitude of these losses effectively paralyzed the Employment Insurance system, requiring alternative means of income support via the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). Since then, Carla Qualtrough, the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion, announced a [temporary overhaul](#) of EI qualifying rules, benefit payouts, and other measures to support eligible workers when CERB claims expire.

Unifor [applauded](#) the changes that took effect in September. Under new rules, there are no waiting periods, fewer qualifying work-hours and a new minimum benefit floor, among other changes including a new [recovery benefit](#) for those ineligible for EI. Unifor documented these and other changes in its fact sheet 'What happens after the CERB?' available [online](#).

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Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 276-0020 and 282-0001

As expected, these temporary changes boosted EI accessibility in Canada. Two month's worth of data now prove the point. In fact, last November, the share of unemployed workers receiving EI regular benefits (referred to as the 'Benefits-to-Unemployment' ratio, or B/U ratio) was 75 % (see table). That means, Employment Insurance benefits covered a full three-quarters of unemployed workers in Canada – a remarkable statistic, considering monthly coverage was just 40 %, on average, in pre-COVID times (for a great background on various EI measures, read [Ricardo Tranjan's](#) work for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives).

There is an important equity dimension to these temporary EI changes too.

Women, for instance, benefited the most. According to the data, 80 % of unemployed women accessed regular benefits in November, more than doubling the average monthly access rate (36%) since 2008.

The significant loosening of entrance requirements (i.e. providing benefits to workers after attaining 120 insurable work hours instead of what is normally as high as 700) makes EI more accessible to those in precarious jobs struggling with erratic and undefined work schedules – jobs that overrepresent women and workers of colour.

By increasing the numbers of qualifying workers, the EI system is now doing what it's supposed to – providing income security, and financial stability, to as many unemployed workers as possible.

When the Prime Minister issued a round of supplementary [mandate letters](#) to Ministers in January, he directed Minister Qualtrough to craft an EI modernization plan to improve access, including for those in precarious jobs. These emergency measures are a litmus test for broader reform.

It is unimaginable to think how the existing EI system could have carried workers through this pandemic, not when it effectively disqualifies more than half of unemployed workers ([and nearly three-quarters of low-wage workers](#)) from receiving even a nickel in income support.

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The CERB was not only a lifeline to crisis-stricken workers it was also a wake-up call to EI system architects. Decades of [destabilizing reforms](#) to EI took Canada down the wrong path. As the data show, temporary measures offer a path toward permanent course-correction on policy.

With the pandemic still raging, there's no better time to fix EI, once and for all.



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THE COVID-19 BRIEF

CORONAVIRUS UPDATE

Your resource for cutting through the fear and misinformation. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday, check your email for trusted CTV News reporting and analysis to help differentiate between fact and fiction.

Follow [the latest updates](#) and read [full coverage](#)

Outbreak by the numbers (as of 10:00 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021):

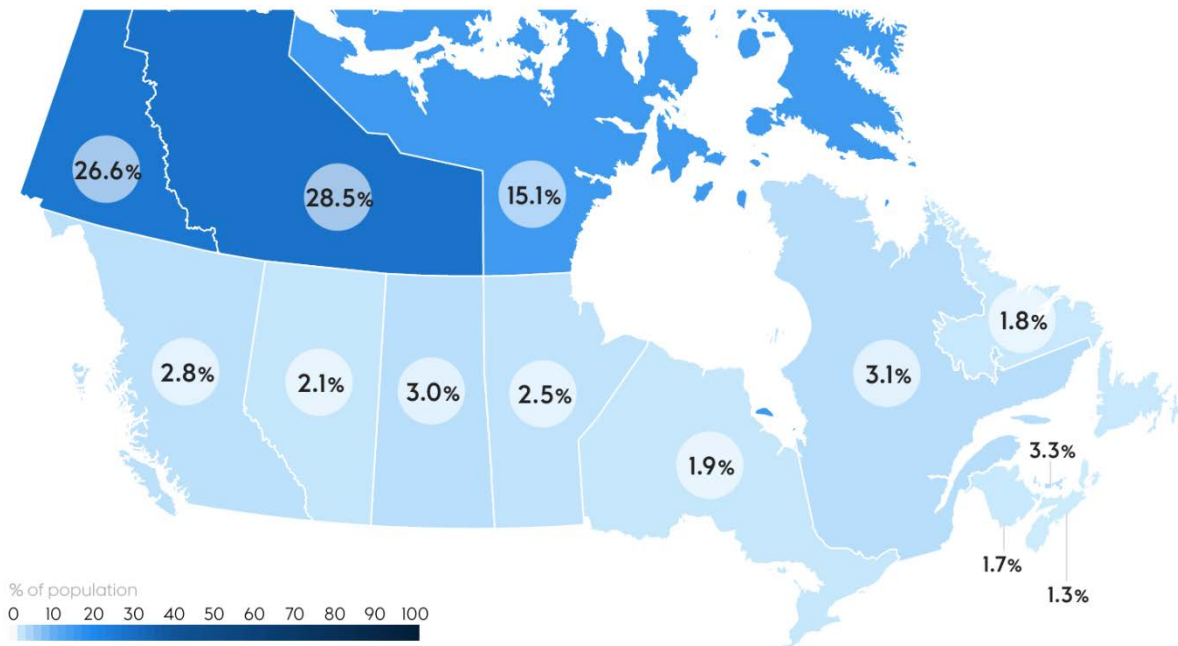
- **Canada:** 810,797 cases | 39,066 active | 20,909 deceased
- **Globally:** 107,011,739 cases | 59,852,711 recovered | 2,343,666 deceased

Vaccinations by the numbers (as of 10:00 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2021):

- **Globally:** 134,653,288 doses administered | 1.73% of population
- **Canada:** 920,458 first doses | 203,771 second doses | 2.42% of population
- **British Columbia:** 142,783 first doses | 12,802 second doses | 2.77%
- **Alberta:** 91,635 first doses | 32,690 second doses | 2.07%
- **Saskatchewan:** 35,446 first doses | 9,075 second doses | 3.06%
- **Manitoba:** 33,827 first doses | 15,546 second doses | 2.45%

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- **Ontario:** 283,104 first doses | 115,529 second doses | 1.92%
- **Quebec:** 262,594 first doses | 0 second doses | 3.06%
- **New Brunswick:** 13,296 first doses | 5,347 second doses | 1.7%
- **Nova Scotia:** 13,184 first doses | 5,642 second doses | 1.35%
- **Prince Edward Island:** 5,311 first doses | 3,517 second doses | 3.33%
- **Newfoundland and Labrador:** 9,272 first doses | 3,324 second doses | 1.78%
- **Yukon:** 11,234 first doses | 0 second doses | 26.64%
- **Northwest Territories:** 12,833 first doses | 299 second doses | 28.47%
- **Nunavut:** 5,939 first doses | 0 second doses | 15.12%



When will the next vaccine be approved?

Health Canada is in the "final stages" of reviewing the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine candidate, which could become the third approved vaccine in this country.

The candidate, which Britain and others have already approved for use, is a two-dose vaccine. The review process is taking longer because of the way the clinical trials were set up, Health Canada said, and there is still an ongoing trial involving the vaccine in the U.S.

Questions have been raised about the vaccine's efficacy, including in South Africa, where the shot has been shown to be less effective against a variant of the coronavirus found in that country. If approved, Canada could receive up to 500,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine before the end of March, out of a promised 20 million doses, officials said.

In the meantime, Health Canada has given the green light to the process of extracting [six doses](#) from each vial of the Pfizer vaccine.

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Your resource for cutting through fear and misinformation. Now every Tuesday and Friday, check your email for trusted reporting and analysis to help differentiate between fact and fiction.

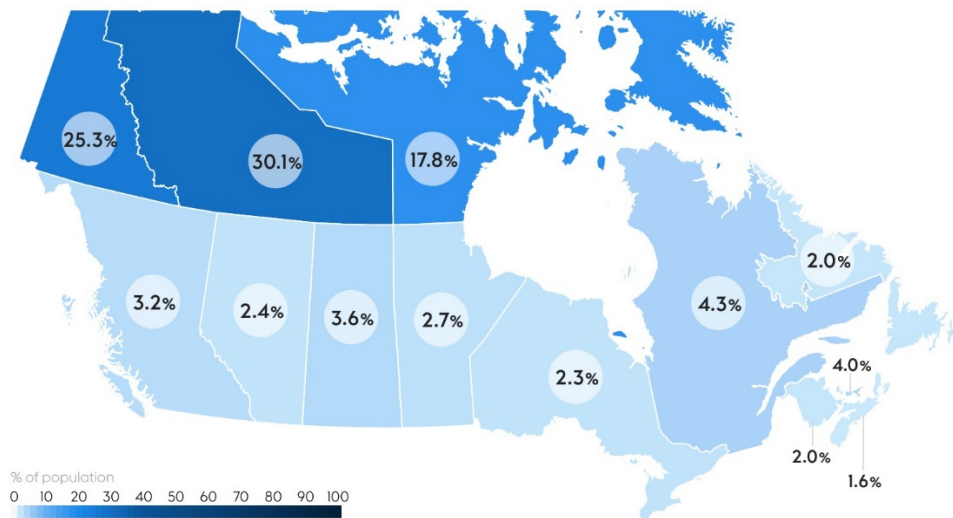
Follow [the latest updates](#) and read [full coverage](#)

The outbreak by the numbers (as of 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021):

- **Canada:** 851,246 cases | 30,793 active | 21,747 deceased
- **Globally:** 111,878,487 cases | 63,129,774 recovered | 2,478,131 deceased

Vaccinations by the numbers (as of 1:00 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 23, 2021)

- **Globally:** 212,146,227 doses administered | 2.72% of population
- **Canada:** 1,131,282 first doses | 451,996 second doses | 2.98%
- **British Columbia:** 163,669 first doses | 55,075 second doses | 3.18%
- **Alberta:** 104,117 first doses | 69,362 second doses | 2.35%
- **Saskatchewan:** 42,374 first doses | 19,356 second doses | 3.6%
- **Manitoba:** 37,130 first doses | 25,235 second doses | 2.69%
- **Ontario:** 338,665 first doses | 247,042 second doses | 2.3%
- **Quebec:** 365,978 first doses | 0 second doses | 4.27%
- **New Brunswick:** 15,281 first doses | 11,036 second doses | 1.96%
- **Nova Scotia:** 15,988 first doses | 11,533 second doses | 1.63%
- **Prince Edward Island:** 6,467 first doses | 5,163 second doses | 4.05%
- **Newfoundland and Labrador:** 10,346 first doses | 6,112 second doses | 1.99%
- **Yukon:** 10,652 first doses | 1,521 second doses | 25.26%
- **Northwest Territories:** 13,578 first doses | 579 second doses | 30.12%
- **Nunavut:** 6,977 first doses | 0 second doses | 17.76%



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[Here's what's been happening in Canada](#)

Canada's reopening timeline. Canada's chief public health officer says the timing of [when Canada will return to some state of normalcy](#) is not entirely dependent on the country achieving mass vaccination. While vaccinations will play a "key role" in Canada's reopening, Dr. Theresa Tam said the rates of serious outcomes including ICU admissions, hospitalizations and deaths, as well as the capacity for testing, will be equally important in the coming months.

Variants of concern. As case numbers drop in Canada, three variants of concern threaten to undo much of the work done by strict public health guidelines as they are [more transmissible](#) and can impact developed antibodies. These variants go by many names, from the location of their discovery to letters and numbers. We take a closer look at [what you need to know](#) about each variant present in Canada and the threat they pose.

Tracking antibodies in Canada's prison system. The country's [COVID-19 Immunity Task Force \(CITF\)](#) is launching four new studies into how quickly COVID-19 spreads through correctional facilities, after a [worrying surge in cases](#) among prisoners and staff. The aim of the studies will be to test how many prisoners and staff have COVID-19 antibodies to shine a light on [how far into prison populations the virus has penetrated](#).

Mass vaccination in Quebec. Mass vaccination is set to begin in Quebec next week, but a lot of the details are still being worked out. Montreal residents [over the age of 85](#) can start signing up for their vaccine on Thursday and will be given first priority.

Speech pathologists on the front lines. Ventilators have become one of the most important life-saving tools during the COVID-19 pandemic. But after weeks or months on a ventilator, recovering patients can struggle to swallow, eat, drink or even to speak. That's where speech-language pathologists come in, [fulfilling an essential, but little-known role](#) in the frontline response to this pandemic. We speak to those supporting COVID-19 patients in their recovery process.

U.S. surpasses 500,000 deaths. Our neighbours to the south observed a moment of silence Monday to mark the grim milestone of [more than half a million COVID-19 deaths](#). That's more Americans who have died in one year during the pandemic than the First World War, the Second World War and the Vietnam War combined.

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Travellers' frustrations mount as new hotel quarantine rules take effect

A new Canadian health order requiring a [three-day hotel quarantine for air travellers](#) got off to a rocky start this week, with some passengers complaining of long waits to access the hotel-booking system.

Travellers in Canada and abroad complained of disconnected calls after spending hours or even days on hold attempting to make a reservation at one of the government-approved hotels. In some cases, [passengers were forced to cancel their flights altogether](#), unable to secure the mandatory proof of booking.

Markham, Ont., resident Anuja Sharma, who flew to India roughly two weeks ago with her mother and her sister to resolve a legal issue with a family property, said she and her husband spend 14 hours collectively on hold with the booking line without success. Toronto resident Deb Robinson, who travelled to Florida to visit her ailing grandmother at an assisted living facility, was also unable to book her hotel stay, accusing the government of "not holding up their end of the bargain."



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#ABrightSide in dark times

Find uplifting moments during the pandemic with the CTVNews.ca #ABrightSide series.

Here's #ABrightSide for Tuesday:

When Dr. Mohamed Salah Siala began working on the front lines in a Tunisian hospital he never imagined [harnessing his love for music would help in the fight against COVID-19](#).

But when the 25-year-old doctor decided to get out his violin one day and play for patients, he noticed how quickly it boosted the morale of those recovering from COVID-19 who remained isolated and needed a smile.

"My goal is to use music to help treat corona(virus) patients that are in a bad psychological condition, suffering loneliness -- which is their first enemy," Siala told The Associated Press. He now plays for his patients regularly, when he has the time.

Share your tips for stories that provide "a bright side" of a dark time by emailing us at dotcom@ctv.ca. Please include your full name, city, and a phone number or email where we can reach you.

Latest on the coronavirus in Canada:

- [Vaccine tracker: How many people have received shots?](#)
- [Variant tracker: What are the strains and where are they?](#)
- [More than 170K Canadians flew home from abroad in December: StatCan](#)
- [Loss of taste and smell due to COVID-19 could last up to five months, new study suggests](#)
- [Canada missed chance to help homegrown vaccines move quickly last spring: developers](#)
- [How quickly do new variants spread? Experts weigh in on risks](#)
- [LIVE UPDATES: What's the latest in Canada and around the world today](#)

The latest from global hot spots

- **United States:** A [new study](#) out of the U.S. has found that the flu vaccine might lessen the impact of COVID-19 on children. The country has logged nearly three million infections among children out of more than 27 million total.
- **United Kingdom:** The U.K. government says everyone over 50 who wants a vaccine will be vaccinated [by May](#). As of Feb. 7, the country had administered a dose to more than 18 per cent of its population.
- **South Africa:** The unapproved Johnson & Johnson vaccine will be given to front-line health workers in South Africa after the country [scrapped plans](#) to give out the AstraZeneca vaccine. South Africa has logged nearly 47,000 COVID-19 deaths.

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Here's #ABrightSide for Wednesday:

A Toronto man has raised more than \$20,000 already this month for a 70-year-old employee at his favourite KFC restaurant. Jason Schweitzer told CTV News Toronto that Emilia has been serving him fried chicken since he was a kid. She started working for the fast-food chain in 1975. He initially started a GoFundMe campaign with a goal of \$2,000, but it ballooned in a matter of days.

Share your tips for stories that provide "a bright side" of a dark time by emailing us at dotcom@ctv.ca. Please include your full name, city, and a phone number or email where we can reach you.

Latest on the coronavirus in Canada:

- [Some ineligible self-employed CERB recipients won't be forced to repay](#)
- [Canadians split in believing Trudeau on vaccinations by September: Nanos](#)
- ['It's devastating' disabled people not prioritized in vaccine rollout: Advocates](#)
- [Third variant detected in Canada, prompting concern from health experts](#)
- [LIVE UPDATES: What's the latest in Canada and around the world today](#)

<http://links.bellmedia-ctv.mkt4301.com/servlet/MailView?ms=MzMwNTAxNzQS1&r=MzExNTI5NTE5OTU5S0&j=MTg4MzUxNTg5NAS2&mt=1&rt=0>

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List of locations: Here's where to get tested for COVID-19 in B.C.

Internet Explorer

<https://bcgov03.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/7f71191c6e0c4e65a644c1da3f53eb68>

Mobile and Desktop

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/3862560c5a41418e9d78f4f81688e9d0>

Unifor's website is constantly being updated as new information is provided. Unifor has many websites to direct you to for assistance.

Resources:

Unifor COVID-19 Information and Resources: <https://www.unifor.org/covid19>

Government of Canada Outbreak Update: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

Government of Canada Income Supports for Workers/Individuals:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/economic-response-plan.html>

Please also check the websites of your respective provinces for any additional provincial supports or resources that may be available to you.

BCCDC website for Health info about COVID-19: www.bccdc.ca

British Columbia Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) website: <http://covid-19.bccdc.ca/>

Health Issues: Dial 811 and follow your Provincial Protocols

Mental Health Issues: Dial 211 or access your EAP benefits:

Other useful websites with information

Federal Government Financial Support Resources:

Government of Canada COVID-19 Financial Assistance for Canadians Outside of Canada: <https://travel.gc.ca/assistance/emergency-info/financial-assistance/covid-19-financial-help>

Government of Canada Economic Plan & How to Apply for Support: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2020/03/canadas-covid-19-economic-response-plan-support-for-canadians-and-businesses.html>

COVID - 19 Employment and Social Development Canada Information Guide: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/corporate/notices/coronavirus.html>

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Canada Revenue Agency COVID-19: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/covid-19-employee-info.html>

Provincial Government Financial Support Resources:

BC Preparedness Response: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support>

Income Assistance: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/income-assistance>

Income Assistance Offices in the Lower Mainland: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/family-social-supports/income-assistance/access-services#lowermainland>

Health & Preparation Resources:

COVID-19: Being prepared: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>

Government of Canada Symptoms & Treatments: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html>

BC COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment

Tool: <https://covid19.thrive.health/?fbclid=IwAR1NzQXV3eUgFa5bSimQ2wiRpXVVMZc1LPbqp5fUNIDFIK1Sc7yjhcc4aB>

Health Link BC & 811: <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/services-and-resources/about-8-1-1>

Other Useful Links:

World Health Organization Myth Busters: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public/myth-busters>

World Health Organization Public Advice: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

Government of Canada, Community-based Measures: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/public-health-measures-mitigate-covid-19.html>

If you have any questions please contact your Local Union Representative.

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Follow phone directory to get to your Local Rep and if not available leave a message you will get a call back.

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