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JOE Di MASO

March 24, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I am writing in response to the unprecedented circumstances we find ourselves in as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. There is no doubt that COVID-19 is wreaking havoc on our health, safety and financial security. In the face of this threat, we are committed to doing everything that is reasonably possible to protect to your interests.

As you are likely aware, the Government of Ontario issued an order yesterday directing all non-essential businesses in Ontario to shut down. In doing so, the Government of Ontario declared the vast majority of construction projects, including all ICI and EPSCA projects to be "essential" and, as a result, are not impacted by the shutdown order.

Although construction sites may remain open, that does not mean that construction projects are necessarily safe. Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, most employees have the right to refuse unsafe work. This was confirmed by Premier Doug Ford yesterday when he clearly reinforced the right of construction employees to refuse unsafe work:

"A message to every construction worker in this Province, [if] you don't feel safe, [if] you don't feel that you have the proper equipment or the Company is not keeping you safe, leave the site, leave the site and don't come back..."

Prime Minister Trudeau and Mayor John Tory have similarly affirmed the right of workers to refuse unsafe work in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

The health and safety of you and your family comes first. Rest assured, the Union will do everything possible to protect your interests if and when you exercise your right to refuse unsafe work. Remember, before engaging in a work refusal and leaving site, you should first get yourself to a safe location, raise the issue with your supervisor, contact your Union representative and, if necessary, contact the Ministry of Labour to initiate a workplace investigation.

To reiterate, the Union does not have the legal right to shutdown projects as doing so may constitute an illegal strike. That said, the Union continues to work on your behalf in conjunction with the Central Ontario Building Trades to ensure all appropriate and reasonable measures are in place to protect the health and safety of the membership.

As always, please contact your Union Representative if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Brooker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Robert Brooker
Business Manager
United Association, Local 46

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