

# UA LOCAL 46 TORONTO

936 WARDEN AVENUE  
TORONTO, ONTARIO  
M1L 4C9  
E-MAIL  
office@ualocal46.org

295 EDGEHILL DR.  
BOX 613,  
BARRIE, ONTARIO  
L4M 4V1

TORONTO OFFICE (416) 759-6791  
BARRIE OFFICE (705) 722-3006  
TOLL FREE 1-866-915-2799  
TRAINING DEPT. (416) 759-9351  
TORONTO FAX (416) 759-7346  
BARRIE FAX (705) 722-0754



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ROODNEY CLARKE

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JOE Di MASO

March 23, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

These are extraordinary times. The rapid spread of COVID-19 throughout the world and its impact on the health and financial security of everyone cannot be understated. We understand that these issues are serious and that they are negatively impacting you. We are committed to advancing your interests and to providing you with timely information whenever possible. To that end, we wish to directly report to you on a few matters.

1. Local 46's office has been closed to the general public and to members in an effort to keep staff safe and to ensure that they remain available to assist the membership during these difficult times. This is in accordance with recommendations and best practices issued by the City of Toronto including social distancing and, where possible, avoiding large gatherings. Complete and updated information regarding the City of Toronto's response to COVID-19 can be found at <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19/>. We encourage all members to carefully review this information and, where possible, adhere to the City's recommendations. Business Agents remain available to assist you with any issues that you may experience and staff are working to carry out the day-to-day operations of Local 46 and to assist our members through these difficult times.
2. On March 20, 2020, Local 46 and the other members of the Central Ontario Building & Construction Trades Council sent correspondence to Minister Monte McNaughton and Premier Doug Ford urging the government to issue a temporary two-week suspension of construction operations to address unsafe working conditions caused by COVID-1. These include the lack of sanitary washrooms and cleanup facilities (including proper water, soap and sanitizing products) and the need to establish new workplace policies, including staggered breaks/lunch and social distancing practices to minimize the risk of contracting COVID-19 at work. Rest assured Local 46 will continue to advocate on behalf of the membership's health and safety until our concerns are heard and addressed.
3. In accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, employers are required to take all reasonable measures to ensure that the workplace is safe and does not endanger the health of workers. In the present context, we firmly believe that this requires all employers to immediately and concretely address the threat of COVID-19 and its potential for transmission at work. Employers that expect employees to continue to work in these times must have stringent policies and protocols in place to reduce the threat of transmission at work. Also, under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, most employees have the right to refuse unsafe work when its reasonable to believe that a workplace hazard exists that may

endanger one's health and safety. To be clear, Local 46 does not have the right to refuse work or shutdown job sites and any attempt to do so may constitute an illegal work stoppage. We encourage the membership get familiar with these important legal rights. A comprehensive guide to the right to refuse work is contained on the Government of Ontario's website (<https://www.ontario.ca/document/guide-occupational-health-and-safety-act/part-v-right-refuse-or-stop-work-where-health-and-safety-danger>).

4. For those members who have been quarantined, are sick or are required to care for someone as a result of COVID-19, the Government of Ontario has introduced job protection leave. In these circumstances, an employee is entitled to a leave of absence without pay and an employer may not discipline or issue a reprisal against you for taking such a leave of absence. Further, the Federal Government has introduced two new financial benefits - the Emergency Support Benefit and the Emergency Care Benefit - for individuals who do not qualify for EI benefits. Additional information concerning these benefits is contained on Local 46's website.

As always, should the need arise please contact Local 46 via email or phone and we will do our best to provide assistance, guidance and help in these difficult times. Despite all the uncertainty, one thing that is evident is that we will get through this together and we will look after each other in doing so.

Sincerely,



Robert Brooker  
Business Manager  
United Association, Local 46

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