



ESSENTIAL SERVICE SCENARIOS

1. You work in a position that has been designated as an essential service. You know this because a list of essential service positions has been posted. You do not know what this means, except that in the event of a strike, you will be required to go to work. What will you do to find out more about your situation?

Things to consider:

- Management must provide clear notice and information to essential service workers. If management does not comply, then the member should call the union so they may deal with management directly.
- You need to know if you are a full time essential service designate or alternate to someone else who has been designated, full-time essential, or if your reporting to work is conditional upon certain criteria (i.e.: weather conditions, specific emergency; a significant increase in demand for services, etc.)
 - You need to know what specific duties are to be performed and who to contact when a question/issue comes up during a strike.
 - You need to know where and what time you will be reporting to work, how you will be identified by the picketers, and what protocols are in place between the parties.

2. You work in a position that has been designated as an essential service. 6 of the 10 colleagues in your section, performing essential service duties, have been designated as being in essential service positions. You want to be on the picket line with your union Sisters and Brothers in the event of a strike. You have a colleague that does the same job as you, is not in one of the six designated positions, and who, for health reasons, would rather not picket. What can you do?

Things to consider:

- Depending on what the criteria for selection was and how it was carried out, a request could be made to the Union that a switch be negotiated with the employer. However, under the jurisdiction of the Public Service Labour Relations Act, it is unlikely that this will happen if the essential service agreement has been signed and forwarded to the Public Service Labour Relations Board.
 - If a negotiated change is not possible, your colleague's health problems will have to be accommodated by the union during the strike.
3. You are an essential service employee working in a small section with three other members. All three of you are responsible for the same essential duties. On the second day of a strike, your Supervisor is assigning filing duties to two of your colleagues due to a lack of essential job functions to keep you all busy. Your colleagues have agreed to do this work. What, if anything will you do about this?

Things to consider:

- In a situation where a direct order to do work has been given by a Supervisor/Manager, members must comply with the direct order (unless it is harmful to their health and safety), and grieve later.
 - Members can be encouraged to follow up with an inside Union Representative to be left in his/her hands to follow upon.
 - It is best that someone contact the Component Office or PSAC Headquarters so that the matter can be dealt with nationally, if necessary.
4. You are in an essential service position and felt somewhat relieved that your position was designated as essential. It is the first pay day since the strike has started and you are very aware of your Sisters and Brothers outside on the picket line. You also feel the pressure to make ends meet and your rent for the month is due. At prior strike meetings everyone was informed of the PSAC constitution stating that essential

service workers are required to remit 25% of their net pay to the Hardship Fund (Section 24 — sub section (7)). This is in support of the strike and to support strikers in financial crisis. You feel your own day-to-day financial pressures. What do you do?

Things to consider:

- While you feel the day-to-day financial pressures — the members on the picket line are sacrificing much more to make gains such as wage increases that will support all bargaining unit members.
 - Contributing 25% to the National Hardship fund is an act of solidarity and will only serve to make the strike stronger. A strong strike increases the likelihood of a victory and shorter strike. “sharing the pain to achieve a gain”
 - A strong strike will serve your personal interest as well because you will gain from the benefits of a stronger collective agreement.
 - Money collected in each region will be dispersed in that region. And, perhaps more importantly, decisions on how these funds are distributed will be made by Regional Hardship Committees set up in each Regional Council.
5. You are in an essential service position. It is day 3 of a strike and tensions are running high. You arrive at the picket line to find that the Picket Captain has ordered the building shutdown and picketers will not allow anyone to cross the line. Your Supervisor comes to the door with three security personnel to escort you across the line. Your union Sisters and Brothers are shouting at you to stay outside and your Supervisor is giving you a direct order to go to work as outlined in the essential service agreement signed by both parties. What will you do?

Things to consider:

- Legally, an essential service employee must report to work.

- If the situation cannot be resolved and your Supervisor/Manager remains adamant, you are entitled to ask for, or make use of, an escort to get through the picket line.
- Understand, however, that refusal to cross the picket line if you are an essential service employee, or barring an essential service employee from going to work if you are a picketer, can put you, and the union at risk of an injunction, sanctions and/or fines. In fact, barring access to a building during a strike is also grounds for an injunction or a sanction against picketers.
- Demonstrating support of the strike is necessary and can be done legally. Activities such as wearing buttons of support, walking the picket line outside of working hours and joining a strike committee are all effective ways of supporting your Sisters and Brothers.