



BACKGROUND

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic continues to pose significant challenges and risks to society.

As expected, there has been an increase in transmissions since the move to Phase 3 of the BC Restart Plan, which is a cause of concern. In the past month, we have seen significant increases to the numbers of cases, with new cases currently averaging over 100 per day. The rate of hospitalizations has also increased significantly.

The Province will remain in Phase 3 if transmission rates remain low or decline. If cases continue to rise, we may return to a revised Phase 2. Reaching Phase 4 is conditional on at least one of: wide vaccination; community immunity; broad successful treatments. There is no expectation that we will be in Phase 4 in the foreseeable future.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The BCGEU is committed to protecting the health and safety of our staff, our members and the citizens of British Columbia throughout the pandemic. To that end, the activities of the BCGEU must be guided by the following principles:

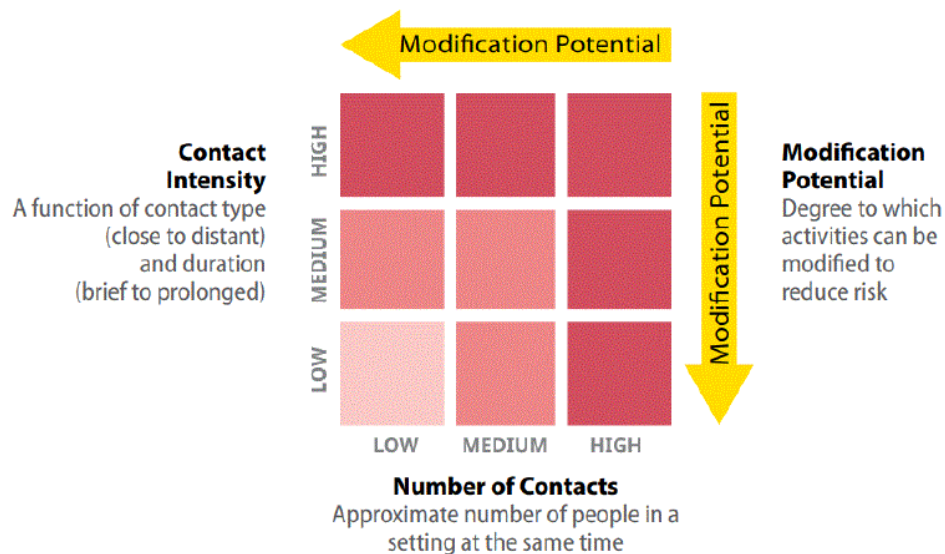
- All union activities carried out by elected officers must directly support the provincial health officer's formal and informal guidance and intentionally contribute to flattening the curve for COVID-19.
- We will hold ourselves to the same high standards for protection of workers that we apply to employers.
- Any union business that can be conducted remotely should be conducted remotely until such time as there is a vaccine or effective treatment widely available for COVID-19.
- In-person meetings held in BCGEU offices cannot exceed 10 people (including any staff) and must be planned and executed in full compliance with all enhanced safety protocols in place for the relevant office. The BCGEU protocols are available on both the BCGEU website and Member Portal.

ASSESSING THE RISK

The risk of person-to-person transmission increases by two key variables:

1. The **number of contacts** (people) you are near; and
2. The **contact intensity**
 - a. the type of contact - close or distant, and
 - b. the length of contact - brief or prolonged

These are factors that we can rate as low, medium, and high risks.



PROTECTIVE MEASURES

- WorkSafe BC's recommended first level of protection is to limit the number of people in the workplace where possible by implementing work from home arrangements and virtual meetings. Therefore, **meetings should be conducted virtually whenever possible.**
- Elected officers and members attending any BCGEU office, for any reason, must book an appointment at the office they wish to attend. As meeting space is limited in each office, and new occupancy levels restrict how many people can be in any one space, it is recommended that you book your appointment as far in advance as possible to ensure you are able to secure an appropriate room and your preferred date(s). The requirement to book space includes booking the local officers' office if you wish to work in that space. Staff will make all efforts to accommodate your request. However, due to the various restrictions, your choice of date/time may not be available, and we ask that you be flexible in your planning.
- Offices may not be able to accommodate late bookings due to room and cleaning restrictions. **Same day bookings will not be permitted.**

- All members attending at a BCGEU office will be required to sign and return a declaration form that acknowledges that you understand and will comply with all of the BCGEU's safety protocols. These forms must be completed and returned PRIOR to attending the office (and at least 24 hours in advance of your appointment).
- Failure to comply with any of the BCGEU safety protocols may result in a member being asked to leave the premises and/or having access to the premises being restricted.
- If scheduling an in-person meeting (for example, a local executive or cross component meeting), the meeting must also be made available virtually (through Teams or Zoom) to allow members with health, family or other circumstances to fully participate.
- There will be limited access to amenities in all BCGEU offices. Coffee and tea service has been discontinued and is not available. Water is available, but members must bring their own water bottle or cup. Catering and/or any buffet-style meal (including pizza, Chinese food, etc.) will not be permitted unless the caterer can provide individually packaged meals. There will be no access to any dishes, cutlery, cups, glasses, etc.
- Members attending the offices will be asked to arrive at the time of their meeting /appointment (not early) and leave immediately after the meeting/appointment is over. Please do not stay longer than necessary in the office space.
- Members may not bring anyone else to the meeting/appointment with them and are asked to limit bringing in any unnecessary personal belongings.

MONITORING, EVALUATING, AND UPDATING PLANS

As the Provincial Health Office and WorkSafe BC protocols evolve with the ongoing pandemic, the BCGEU will be regularly reviewing and evaluating our plans and their effectiveness and making changes as needed. Access to the offices and the protocols for accessing them are subject to change at any time as the circumstances of the pandemic change and orders and recommendations from the Public Health Office are issued.

CONCLUSION

Our work, representing our members across almost every occupation, is particularly critical at this time. It's imperative that elected officers not be put at any risk where risk can be avoided.

Although meeting in-person is far preferable to meeting virtually, such meetings, during this time, could be disenfranchising members who may not be able to safely participate due to their circumstances or by making them feel like they have to assume a greater risk to be able to fully participate.

When considering whether to hold an in-person meeting, it is important to consider all of the risks we are asking staff, members and elected officers to undertake due to distance, travel or personal circumstances. We know that this isn't going to last forever. We all look forward to the day when we can meet, in person, as often as we like.