



# BULLETIN

TRANSPORTATION DISTRICT 140  
DISTRICT DES TRANSPORTS 140

*International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers  
Association internationale des machinistes et des travailleurs et travailleuses de l'aérospatiale*

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## TO ALL IAMAW MEMBERS EMPLOYED BY G4S - PRE-BOARD SCREENING PERSONNEL LOCAL LODGE 16 - PACIFIC REGION Protecting Our Airport Screening Officers

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Dear Members,

Our members employed by G4S Secure Solutions (Canada) Ltd. have been voicing to the Union their significant concerns with protection against COVID-19 in the workplace, as front-line employees dealing with this pandemic.

We believe that these concerns and worries are completely justifiable given the current context. The main questions that keep coming up is “what rights do we have?” and “what is being done to protect us in our workplace?”

Under the Canada Labour Code the employer G4S is required to ensure the health and safety at work of every person employed by the employer. This is a legal requirement. In addition, every employee of G4S has the following rights;

**Right to Know** - Employers must make employees aware of known or foreseeable health or safety hazards and must provide each employee with the information, instruction, training and supervision necessary to ensure their health and safety at work is fully protected. This would apply to the threat of COVID-19.

**Right to Participate** - Employees have a right to participate by reporting safety concerns or issues to their Joint Occupational Health & Safety Committee. They also have a right to participate and be involved in decisions related to safety including a decision of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). This would apply to the threat of COVID-19.

Any employee who has reasonable grounds to believe that the workplace is not safe can make a complaint to their supervisor. If a complaint is not resolved to an employee's satisfaction, it will go the Joint Health and Safety Committee to be investigated and complaints can be appealed further if the members of the Committee do not agree on the resolution.

**Right to Refuse Dangerous Work** - Employees have a right to refuse work where they have “reasonable cause” to believe that conditions exist that can “reasonably be expected to be an imminent or serious threat to the life or health of a person.” Work refusals trigger an investigation by the Ministry of Labour.

The law prohibits employers from carrying out reprisals against employees who exercise their health and safety rights, and discipline cannot be imposed for a work refusal, unless it is found to

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be frivolous or made in bad faith. If you are worried about your health and considering filing a complaint or exercising the right to refuse dangerous work, please seek the help of a Health & Safety Committee member or contact your Union Servicing Representative.

Your Union participates as a member of the National Health & Safety Policy Committee (NHSPC) required under Section 134 of the Canada Labour Code. From the commencement of the declaration of the pandemic the NHSPC have been working towards a reasonable solution to protect our Screening Officers.

The worker representatives of the NHSPC developed a COVID-19 risk assessment and Exposure Control Plan (ECP) with the intention of protecting our Screening Officer members and prevention of the spread of the coronavirus.

Many of the recommendations were quickly adopted by the NPHSC and implemented in each airport. Examples included, increased deep cleaning, frequent hand washing protocols, sneeze/cough etiquette, controlled physical distancing requirements etc.

There were at least three areas of concerns where we believed that Screening Officers could not maintain a safe distance (2 metre) while performing work activities. The three activities were checking boarding passes at the Door/divesting Position, wand of passengers and non passengers, and physical searches of passengers and non-passengers.

The Employer was of the position that where safe distancing could not be maintained the Screening Officer would simply instruct the passenger or non-passenger to turn their head away from the Screening Officer and not sneeze or cough in their direction.

The worker representatives of the NHSPC were appalled by even the suggestion that this strategy was in the least stretch of the imagination an effective control to prevent transmission of the coronavirus.

On April 2, 2020 the worker representatives of the NHSPC reacted by filing an Internal Complaint under Section 127.1 of the Canada Labour Code that allowed eventually for a Health and Safety Officer (HSO) from Employment and Social Development Canada to become involved.

On April 6, 2020 the HSO issued a Direction to the Employer confirming that they were guilty for a contravention of the Canada Labour Code and directed the following;

*The employer failed to evaluate the effectiveness of the hazard prevention program and if necessary, revise it, whenever new hazard information becomes available to the employer. Specifically, review the preventive measures to protect against the possibility of transmission of COVID-19 via inhalation of particles while conducting Physical Search of Person (PSOP) in close proximity to the person being screened, taking into consideration advice and guidelines of Public Health Agency of Canada as the National expertise on the matter.*

The worker representatives of the NHSPC maintained that G4S must provide face shields to any Screening Officer that breaches the 2 metre safe distancing, or require every passenger or non-passenger being searched or wanded to wear a mask to prevent shedding of the virus and exposing our Screening Officers.

G4S then argued that it appeared that Transport Canada is at the verge of declaring an edict with supporting regulation that all passengers and non-passengers must wear a face mask while in an airport (which would include screening activities) to prevent the shedding of the coronavirus.

The worker representatives of the NHSPC continued with the position that even if Transport Canada does issue the edict of universal mask wearing (a big IF in our minds) we needed at least

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an interim plan to protect the Screening Officers while we waited for the edict and then scrambled to provide enough masks for all passengers and non-passengers coming into all BC airports.

The employer responded with an offer;

- By Tuesday or Wednesday this week (April 14-15) there will be 10,000 non-medical masks delivered and made available to G4S and all of their airports.
- Screening Officers may wear a mask provided, if they choose.
- Passengers may choose to wear a mask, if they choose.

The quick response from the worker representatives of the NHSPC was that this was not even close to being enough. As confirmed numerous times by Dr. Tam and Dr. Raymond of the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) masks were only effective to prevent the shedding of the coronavirus and not effective at all to protect exposure to the virus. We argued that if there was no regulation to force passengers to comply, very few would.

The worker representatives of the NHSPC recognizing another potential stalemate, quickly developed a series of recommendations and performed an updated risk assessment to highlight the effectiveness of each control.

A letter was sent to the Employer and HSO with the following;

The worker representatives of the NHSPC were unanimous in their position that the controls already in place were not sufficient or effective in controlling exposure of COVID-19 to Screening Officers and therefore additional controls needed to be addressed.

The worker representatives raised the following reasons in the defense of their position;

1. In the United States 329 TSA Agents have been diagnosed with COVID-19, 3 have died.
2. There have already been occurrences of passengers and non-passengers sneezing/coughing and consequently Screening Officers feeling droplets land on their exposed skin.
3. Although, airlines are in possession of a list of the carrier and flight number of passengers that have tested positively for Covid-19, that information is not shared with the employees of G4S. There appears to be no ability, currently, that allows G4S to access positive Covid-19 passenger movement through an airport so that they may in turn identify and notify Screening Officers who may have been in contact with the passenger
4. NPST are being closed down and more traffic (i.e. non-passengers, airline employees and 3rd party vendors) are coming through PBS thus requiring more frequent wandering within the 2 metre distancing requirement.
5. First aid personnel have not received training in issues relating to COVID-19 including what PPE they should be using.
6. Our airport Screening Officers is already facing a problem across the province, namely the increase of abuse and violence from passengers and non-passengers toward them while performing their job. This has been increasing steadily and the employer and the NHSPC have not effectively dealt with the situation yet. The worker side of the NHSPC has reasonable cause to believe that:
  - With the introduction of more stringent rules at the checkpoint and,
  - Likely longer queue lineups and,
  - Then asking for even more passenger and non-passenger co-operation in preventing

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accidental shedding of the virus,

The result will be an increase in passengers and non-passengers abusing and threatening Screening Officers who are tasked with trying to perform their jobs properly in the face of the increased passenger non-passenger frustration and lack of cooperation. This puts the Screening Officers in an uncomfortable position and could possibly lead to improper searches taking place due to threats and consequences. It could also lead to less passenger and non-passenger cooperation with administrative controls in place (see SOB 377) and therefore an increased risk of exposure to COVID-19.

7. After an exhaustive search (including NIOSH, CCOHS etc.) of literature and for recommendations relating to the effective protection against exposure to hazardous substances, can we find even one suggestion that is even closely related to the employer's suggestions (i.e. passenger turning face away, being asked not to sneeze in the direction of the Screening Officer).
8. An updated risk assessment (attached) performed by the Union side of the NHSPC convinces us that the current controls including further proposed recommendations from G4S are not adequate or effective in protecting Screening Officers from the hazardous substance (COVID-19).

Therefore, the worker representatives of the NHSPC recommend the following controls be put in place in order of the hierarchy of controls provided in Part 19.5 of the Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Regulations.

1. **Provide Fever Surveillance Technology**
2. **Provide every person entering an airport a non-medical mask that must be worn properly at all times to prevent shedding of the virus**
3. **Provide Full Body Scanner at every airport**
4. **Plexi-glass Barrier/Acrylic Sneeze Guards**
5. **Provide N95 respirators and goggles**
6. **Provide face shields**

After much debate and discussion and additional involvement of the HSO, G4S then committed to the following;

- Starting Tuesday, April 14, 2020, G4S will begin to procure enough face shields to provide for all of their airports.
- If Transport Canada issues an edict that every passenger and non-passenger will be required to wear a non-medical mask while in an airport with supporting regulation that authorizes enforcement, then G4S would expect an immediate meeting of the NHSPC with the purpose of debating and approving a motion to rescind the recommendation to provide face shields.
- Until Transport Canada issues an edict (as discussed above) G4S will continue to procure and provide face shields as soon as reasonably possible.
- If Transport Canada does not issue the edict (as discussed above) G4S will continue to procure and provide face shields as soon as reasonably possible.

This is the understanding of the commitments made by G4S on Sunday April 12, 2020 and acknowledged by the HSO.

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We are far from finished with this issue. The Unions want to make sure that G4S implements the measures that our members need and deserve to effectively protect their health and their safety. It is incredulous that a multi-billion dollar corporation is so aggressively resistant to even very minimal costs to protect their employees. Be assured that the IAMAW, Teamsters, and USW's are working together to hold the Company to all of its obligations under the Canada Labour Code and ensure the health and safety at work of every Screening Officer employed by G4S Secure Solutions (Canada) Ltd. in the Pacific Region.

Thank you for your continued support of your Union.

In solidarity,



Tania Canniff, General Chairperson  
Transportation District 140  
IAMAW

TC: mdr 

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