

APRIL 2021

RETIRED WORKERS' CHAPTER

NEWSLETTER



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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I sincerely hope that you and your families are all doing well and have remained safe during the ongoing pandemic.

We understand that most of you had to stay home and endure our Canadian winter this year. Some of you, I believe, were able to get away to the warmer locations for this winter. Hopefully, with the COVID-19 vaccines now available, we will be able to return to a more normal life and travel will be an option for those who wish to spend time away next winter.

Our RWC Executive have been able to maintain our role to further the interests of PWU retirees and our meetings have been virtual. Once again, due to COVID-19, our annual membership meetings are on hold for this year. Perhaps we will be able to schedule some meetings in the fall if circumstances permit. As an alternative, we are considering the possibility of conducting some virtual meetings and/or events.

In regard to COVID-19, we have included a few COVID-19 articles in this edition. The intent is to provide you with some information to assist you in making decisions going forward during the pandemic.

I hope that you find our newsletter interesting and helpful. As always, your comments are welcome.

Please send comments via email to rwc@pwu.ca.

Enjoy the warmer weather.

Be safe.

Peter Kelly

"Hopefully, with the COVID-19 vaccines now available, we will be able to return to a more normal life and travel will be an option for those who wish to spend time away next winter."



Peter Kelly
President

PWU Retired Workers' Chapter

Stay safe and enjoy the upcoming nice weather.

PWU RWC MEMBERS MAY BE ENTITLED TO FILE WSIB CLAIMS FOR OCCUPATIONAL DISEASES AND/OR HEARING LOSS DUE TO EXPOSURES IN THE WORKPLACE

RWC members may have been exposed to certain hazards during their employment which has resulted in disease. If they are now suffering from a disease such as Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) from exposure to dangerous substances such as exposure to coal dust or fly ash. They may be entitled to file a WSIB claim for occupational disease.

Included below are some points that will be required if a claim to WSIB is being considered. RWC members have 6 months from the time they receive their diagnosis, to file a WSIB claim for occupational diseases.

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

An occupational disease is a health problem caused by exposure to a workplace health hazard, for example:

- Cancer
- Asthma
- Asbestosis and silicosis
- Inhalation of substances and fumes
- Noise-induced hearing loss

MAKING A CLAIM FOR OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

If you think you've become ill because of something you were asked to do, or were exposed to, at work, you can submit a claim for WSIB benefits.

You can submit a claim through your:

- Employer
- Doctor
- Union
- A representative of your choice or,
- You can file your own claim.

To file a claim, you will need your current address, date of birth, Social Insurance Number (SIN), the name of your employer and their address, and the symptoms or illness you are claiming for. You will then need to fill out and submit a [Workers' Report of Injury/Disease](#) form.

OCCUPATIONAL NOISE-INDUCED HEARING LOSS

Many RWC members may have hearing loss possibly as a result of noise exposure in the workplace. If a WSIB claim is filed and allowed they can have entitlement to the cost and repair of hearing aids. If they are over age 60 when the testing is completed, they will be classed as having hearing loss from OLD age and WSIB will deduct a percentage of the hearing loss as a result of age.

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EXPOSURE CRITERIA

- There is a clear and adequate history of five or more years of exposure to hazardous noise, 90 decibels.

GUIDELINES

- The WSIB requires a minimum loss of 25 decibels in both ears as a result of occupational noise exposure in order to qualify for noise-induced hearing loss entitlement.

PERMANENT DISABILITY

- Entitlement to health care and/or permanent disability benefits will be considered: When the average hearing loss of the four speech frequency levels (500, 1,000, 2,000, and 3,000 Hertz) in the ANSI or ISO audiometer standards is at least 35 decibels in the worst ear **and** at least 25 decibels in the better ear.

If you have any questions or require assistance with filing a claim the PWU via their WSIB Department will assist RWC members. Contact:

Karen Pitsadiotis

Staff Officer PWU WSIB/RTW/LTD Department
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416-728-9991 cell
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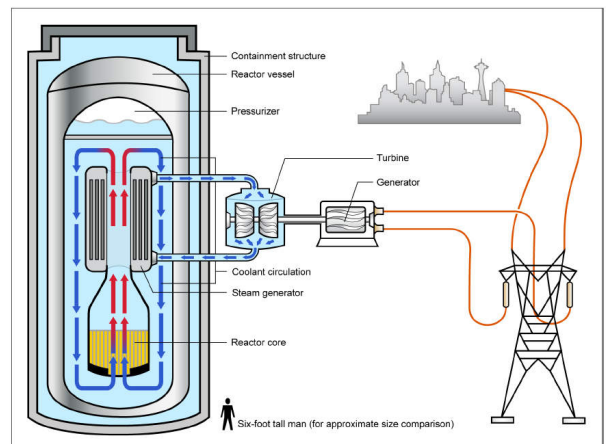
SMALL MODULAR REACTORS (SMRS)

Over the last number of years, the media has paid quite a bit of attention to Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).

What are they? Simply put, like any nuclear reactor used in the production of electricity, they heat water and turn it into steam to turn a turbine generator set to produce electricity.

SMR electrical generation output will vary in size from 1 megawatt (MW) to 300 MW. This significant range will permit SMRs to be used to supply an electrical grid, such as the Ontario grid, or they can be used at remote sites. As the name implies, they are modular in design and therefore can be produced in factory settings and shipped to a site for modular construction.

There are currently several companies worldwide working on prototype designs for these units. In Canada, they will have to be approved and licensed by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission (CNSC).



Source: GAO, based on Department of Energy documentation. | GAO-15-652

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The technology is not new. The United States navy has a fleet of ships and submarines powered by SMRs. These units produce steam that turns a turbine to drive the vessel. In addition, they will have a sub-unit to develop electricity. Such vessels have been referred to as the Nuclear Navy.

Climate change and other environmental issues have created the need for non-fossil fuel electrical generation. Many jurisdictions are retiring existing coal, gas, & oil power plants due to age and the push for clean energy supplies. Current nuclear power plants consist of large units producing between 500 MW and 1500 MW. These units are too large for many electrical grids. SMRs, having lower outputs and being non-greenhouse gas emitters, will help meet these needs.

SMRs can also be utilized for power production at remote sites such as in the mining sector, military bases, remote communities etc. For example, Hydro One in Ontario must supply power to the remote Indigenous communities in Northern Ontario. Currently, this power is often produced by diesel-powered generators. Moving forward these communities would be able to utilize SMRs to replace diesel generation.

In Canada, the Federal Government and several Provincial Governments are on board with SMR development. Various utilities are working with vendors on the design and development of these reactors. Prototype work will be developed at the Ontario Power Generation Darlington Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) location, the Canadian Nuclear Labs' Chalk River Ontario Site, and at the New Brunswick Power Point Lepreau plant near Saint John.

It is anticipated the first SMRs will not be producing electricity in Canada until 2028. Media coverage on SMRs will increase as progress is made in the developmental stages.

LOOKING LIKE SPRING, VACCINES, AND FINDING SUCCESS

March has shown us a little bit of what is to come. Places like London, ON hit twenty-two degrees C (22) in early March, but of course we know that spring has many false starts in Canada and even more so in the Great Lakes Basin. Many in the Retired Workers' Chapter (RWC) have endured an unwelcome change this past winter. The ability for many to travel south for the winter months was unceremoniously pulled out from underneath us by the global pandemic. Not that the inability to travel is the worst thing that the pandemic has saddled us with. Despite our best efforts, COVID-19 has left a trail of heartbreak and this heartbreak is not quite done yet. With a very good record of containing COVID-19 infections in the utility sector of the economy, we can continue to be proud of the resounding success that Power Workers' Union (PWU) members have had in making this happen.

Always seen as a leader in workplace health and safety, the PWU is committed to perpetuating this success and is now urging, as part of this success, that people opt to receive the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is available to them. In fact, a recent PWU bulletin has reinforced this advice. The PWU "Just Mask It" campaign continues with just as much vigor today as it did a few months ago when it started.

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It is clear that public health guidance, vaccines, science and adhering to the advice of officials in public health will give us our life back sooner than anything. Perhaps by this time next year, we will be writing about welcoming our “snowbirds” back home.

A little spring and a little optimism go a long way. Since the earliest days of the pandemic, there was a clear understanding that mental health and psychological safety would be at risk. Not surprising, the PWU has been at the forefront of developing training for mental health and psychological safety for JHSC members. A banner moment for the PWU was when the long-time health and safety training partner of the PWU, the Workers' Health and Safety Centre (WHSC), adopted a jointly developed module for mental health and psychological safety as part of their JHSC certification training. This module has been used since the spring of 2020 and when we can train again in person it will once again be part of the PWU Level 4 H&S Accreditation for JHSC members.

The H&S accreditation training for PWU JHSC members has been around for nearly twenty-five years. Seen as premium training by our union peers, the PWU chose to pursue this Level 1, 2 and 3 of the H&S Accreditation training despite the pandemic. The PWU has now run three successful virtual classes and has a fourth one scheduled for May. Each session has witnessed an increased enrolment.

The news shouts at us each day about COVID-19 variants. Is this a worry? Absolutely it is, but should it dull our optimism or cause us to shy away from celebrating success where we find it? Not for one second. The PWU and PWU Retired Workers' Chapter (RWC) members share an enviable history. We are part of a heritage of leadership, innovation and caring, and despite the daily burden of worries associated with the pandemic, we have a very important role to play. They say an imitation is a form of flattery. Well, we are capable of setting the standard for people to imitate, so let us get to it or keep it up and then let us find that which we can celebrate.

*Written by: David Trumble
Bruce Power & PWU Staff Retiree*



COVID-19 VACCINE – FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The majority of us have been, for the past year-plus, focused on how to protect ourselves from COVID-19. Much more is known about the virus now and medical science is learning more each day. The silver bullet was, and is thought to be, the vaccine that most of us want and will be receiving soon.

The following information is intended to be food for thought and has been obtained from a variety of sources. It is important to remember that being a worldwide concern, there is a large amount of research occurring and new facts are appearing almost daily.

There are several vaccines available around the world. Currently, in Canada, there are a few vaccines that have been approved and are being utilized. They are all produced by different suppliers and have been approved by Health Canada. All the vaccines are considered equal, and the PWU and RWC are continuing to encourage all of our Members to get whichever vaccine is made available to you.



Even after we are vaccinated, we can still potentially be infected with COVID-19 (and be without symptoms). Developing immunity through vaccination means there is a reduced risk of developing the full severity of the illness and its consequences. According to the experts, fully vaccinated people who do become infected with COVID-19 will likely have a mild illness, will not require hospitalization, or die. This immunity helps you fight the virus if exposed. Getting fully vaccinated also protects people around you because if you

are protected from getting infected you are less likely to infect someone else. This is particularly important when it comes to protecting those who are at an increased risk of contracting the illness, such as healthcare providers. It is also vital for protecting those who are more susceptible to contracting the illness, and those that when contracted will be affected more harshly based on things such as their age or predisposed medical conditions.

When we receive our first vaccine, immunity develops over time.. For full protection, you will need the second dose.

In Canada, at the time of writing, we will be receiving our second shot in about four months after our first shot. An obstacle Canada is facing is that they are not produced here, so the procurement to date has been low and intermittent. We hope that this changes and are anticipating a greater influx of vaccines in late spring to early summer.

Our medical experts indicate that our immunity is at about 50% after our first shot, and that it's critical to get that second dose to ensure we have the antibodies to ward off the virus. One is not fully vaccinated until two weeks after their second dose.

It is too soon to know how long a vaccine will last. Some experts believe that we may require booster shots. Research is ongoing.

More and more vaccine information is being released on an ongoing basis. If you require further information, we suggest that you contact your local health unit and/or your family doctor.

OUT OF PROVINCE/COUNTRY HEALTH BENEFITS FOR HYDRO ONE RWC MEMBERS AND PWU STAFF

TRAVEL

Please note: All travel coverage responses apply to GSC's standard travel benefit. (For example, they do not apply to the SureAway travel plan, which is a stand-alone, single-trip travel product that is purchased separately and is not part of a health benefits plan.)



WHERE CAN I ACCESS THE LATEST TRAVEL UPDATES SPECIFIC TO COVID-19?

First and foremost, we strongly encourage you to review the [official Government of Canada travel advisories](#), with the March 13, 2020 advisory stating to avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada until further notice. However, if you do decide to travel, it's important to understand your travel coverage and what's expected of you.

In terms of GSC-specific travel information, you are in the right place! The Support Centre continues to be the best source of the most up-to-date information.

THE OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT OF CANADA TRAVEL ADVISORY (ISSUED MARCH 13, 2020) SAYS TO AVOID NON-ESSENTIAL TRAVEL OUTSIDE OF CANADA UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR MY TRAVEL COVERAGE IF I STILL CHOOSE TO TRAVEL FOR NON-ESSENTIAL/LEISURE PURPOSES?

While we continue to view the Government advisory as the primary guideline, we understand that plan members will make their own choices around travelling. In these situations, we firmly believe that providing peace of mind is the right thing to do.

For that reason, your travel plan may include coverage for emergency medical expenses related to COVID-19 from August 15, 2020, through to June 30, 2021, up to the existing maximums and limitations within each plan.

This additional coverage will apply to all destinations globally – regardless of the COVID-19 travel advisory being in place or reason for travel (i.e., leisure, work, school) – and is subject to all other terms, conditions, and limitations of your benefits plan, including the requirement that you must be symptom-free, in good health, and that all pre-existing conditions must be stable for 90 days prior to departure.

If you are unsure if this upcoming change applies to your plan, you can:

- Contact the GSC Customer Service Centre
- Speak with your plan sponsor – if applicable

Additionally, we encourage you to review [Government of Canada travel information](#) for the latest updates, including travel advisories for other reasons, in addition to requirements upon your return to Canada.

If you do travel and COVID-19 symptoms arise, contact GSC Travel Assistance immediately for support. You can find the phone number on the back of your ID card (as well as on your electronic ID on GSC's mobile app). It is important to remember that travel coverage is for emergency treatment that cannot be delayed until you return to your home province.

When travelling for work, before seeking medical treatment outside of Canada, the expectation is that the employer is contacted to initiate a claim with Worker's Compensation.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I EXPERIENCE COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AHEAD OF UPCOMING TRAVEL?

Keep in mind that, per the Government of Canada advisory, regardless of your health status, all non-essential travel to countries that are the subject of a travel advisory should be avoided. As with all pre-existing medical conditions, you may not be covered for medical treatment if you experience symptoms prior to travelling. Please refer to your benefit booklet for more details on pre-existing conditions/being "stable" to travel.

While all standard GSC travel plans will include coverage for emergency medical expenses related to COVID-19 from August 15, 2020, through to June 30, 2021, the requirement to be symptom-free, in good health, and that all pre-existing conditions must be stable for 90 days prior to departure, means that having COVID-19 symptoms ahead of travel will result in no travel coverage for COVID-19 related expenses.

IF I STILL DECIDE TO TRAVEL, IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE I SHOULD DO BEFORE I LEAVE?

If you choose to travel, we strongly recommend that you complete the [Registration of Canadians Abroad](#) with the Government of Canada as another source of timely information.

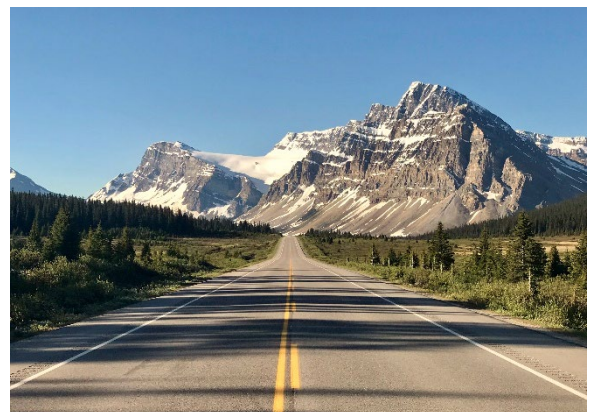
Refer to the [Government of Canada's travel restrictions, exemptions and advice](#) to learn more, including requirements for travelers returning to Canada. Travelers are encouraged to [download the ArriveCAN mobile app](#) prior to arrival to reduce wait times and limit contact at the border.

IF I TRAVEL, AM I COVERED FOR THE COST OF A REQUIRED COVID-19 TEST TO RETURN TO CANADA?

If you choose to travel, the cost of a COVID-19 test to return to Canada is not covered through your GSC travel coverage or through your benefits plan. It would only be covered through a health care spending account or personal spending account – if one is available to you. However, the COVID-19 antibodies test is not eligible even through one of these additional spending accounts.

IF I TRAVEL, AM I COVERED FOR THE COST OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE IF I CHOSE TO GET ONE WHILE I'M OUTSIDE OF CANADA?

If you choose to travel, the cost of a COVID-19 vaccine is not covered through your GSC travel coverage or your benefits plan. It would only be covered through a health care spending account or personal spending account – if one is available to you.



WHAT ARE THE NEWEST TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS ANNOUNCED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA ON JANUARY 29, 2021?

You can find information on the new rules updated with details as they are provided by visiting the Government of Canada [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Travel restrictions, exemptions, and advice](#).

Below are some of the items included in the announcement and how they relate to your GSC coverage:

- The Government and Canada's airlines have agreed to suspend all flights to and from Mexico and Caribbean countries until April 30, 2021. Any loss suffered for the cost of these cancelled trips or additional expenses incurred by travelers in these destinations are not eligible under GSC travel plans.
- International flights are limited to arriving in Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, and Calgary. Additional expenses incurred by travelers to return to their point of departure are not eligible under GSC travel plans.
- It was announced in early January that travelers on inbound flights to Canada would be required to present a negative COVID-19 test result at the airport prior to boarding. In addition to this, passengers arriving in Canada on international flights will now be required to reserve a room in a Government of Canada approved hotel for three nights and take a COVID-19 test on arrival – at the traveler's expense. Travelers are still required to complete a mandatory 14-day quarantine. Expenses incurred by returning travelers for testing, accommodations, meals, or other costs related to quarantine requirements are not eligible under GSC travel plans.
- The Government of Canada will introduce a 72-hour pre-arrival testing requirement for travelers seeking entry in land mode, with limited exceptions such as commercial truckers. The cost of a COVID-19 test to return to Canada is not covered through your GSC travel coverage or your benefits plan. It would only be covered through a health care spending account or personal spending account – if one is available to you.

FLIGHTS ARE BEING CANCELLED AND/OR RE-SCHEDULED, AND I'M WORRIED ABOUT QUARANTINE RULES AND OTHER ENTRY RESTRICTIONS AT MY DESTINATION AND/OR WHEN I RETURN TO CANADA. WILL MY TRIP CANCELLATION AND INTERRUPTION INSURANCE COVER THESE TYPES OF THINGS?

It depends on many factors such as:

- When you bought your insurance and whether the trip cancellation/interruption wording excludes trips booked when a travel advisory is in effect,
- Whether your policy excludes claims for trips cancelled or interrupted due to an event or cause that is already known (such as COVID-19, a global event that has been in the news cycle daily for many months), or
- Whether trip cancellation/interruption for COVID-related events is excluded entirely.

It's important to know your policy before booking your travel plans.

Note: *Trip cancellation benefits are not included in GSC's standard travel plans. If your GSC travel coverage includes trip cancellation benefits – again, this is not common, expenses related to cancellations, delays, restrictions, interruptions, quarantines, etc. incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are not eligible for travel that is booked, or for a trip that is taken while there is a Government travel advisory in effect.*

IS IT SAFE TO TRAVEL AFTER BEING VACCINATED?

This is the question many of us have. There naturally is no clear answer and there are many variables. Each of us will have to make our own choices in this regard. The following are some issues to consider before planning a trip.

- What are the travel restrictions posted by the Government of Canada and for your province?
- What are the travel restrictions for visitors to the country you wish to visit? Do you have to quarantine on arrival, do you have to have proof of being vaccinated, etc?
- If you are travelling outside of Canada check on the requirements for your return.
- Some countries, airlines & hotels are currently considering vaccine passports.
- What are the COVID-19 infection levels in the area you wish to visit?
- Will your medical insurance cover you at your destination?
- Do you have trip cancellation insurance?
- What is the vaccination rate at the destination you wish to visit?

The following are comments from medical experts on the question of travel.

1. CAN I GO ON VACATION ON AN AIRPLANE AND STAY AT A HOTEL?

Getting vaccinated makes travel much safer, but the risks are not gone. Medical experts still recommend delaying travel to many destinations. Remember that no vaccine is 100% effective—your chance of being exposed to COVID-19 when travelling is still high, and we are still learning about just how well COVID-19 vaccines keep people from spreading the disease. Also, new variants of the coronavirus are emerging in several places around the world. These new variants are slightly different from the ones used as the reference for the vaccines. People passing through busy travel centers with other travellers risk being exposed to these new variants. If you don't need to travel just yet, the safest course is probably to wait just a little bit longer. If you've had the vaccine and you need to travel, take comfort in knowing the shot has given you a high level of protection. Make sure that you take necessary precautions when travelling and at crowded places such as airports—wear a well-fitted mask, wash your hands often, and maintain a physical distance of at least six feet from others.

2. ROAD TRIPS AND HOTELS?

In general, travelling by car is a safer option than air travel, given there's less exposure involved at crowded public places like the airport. But making stops along the way for gas, food, or bathroom breaks can still pose exposure risk. Because of this, you'll want to take precautions and wear a mask and wash your hands at pit stops. If staying overnight in an Airbnb or hotel, make sure to limit time spent in common areas with workers or other guests who may be unvaccinated.

The decision to travel is still up to each person. Some people will travel as soon as possible while others will delay their travel plans for a long time. If you have further questions or concerns, we suggest that you contact your local health unit and/or family doctor.

WE HAVE OUR 1ST DOSE OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE... WHAT CAN WE DO NOW?

How will life change for us now that we have been vaccinated? Medical advice is ever developing on what we need to do going forward. It is up to all of us to conduct our own risk assessment on how we proceed with our lives in the world of Covid-19.

It is critical to know that until you are fully vaccinated (two weeks after your second shot), you should still continue to socially distance yourself, wear a mask and avoid large crowds.

Although you yourself will be fully vaccinated, there is further research being done on the transmissibility of the disease between someone who is fully vaccinated and someone who is not, or someone who is partially.



Before going out anywhere, please review the public health guidelines in your area. The following are opinions expressed by a variety of medical professionals.

- Public places? Although you may be ready to get back to normal social activities, you should still take necessary precautions when out in public places like restaurants. If possible, be sure to maintain a physical distance of at least six feet from those outside of your household. You should also wear a well-fitted mask if away from your table, when a server approaches you, and anytime you are not eating or drinking.
- Going to the movies or bars? Movie theatres and bars are some of the highest risk spaces for COVID transmission because people are indoors, often seated close together, and unmasked. Despite these risks, movie theatres and bars are opening across the country so you potentially can go to the movies or a bar, but we advise you not to yet. The risk is that you could become infected and, while you will be well protected against severe symptoms including prolonged hospitalization and death, you can have mild to moderate symptoms and transmit the virus to others. Consider how much the virus transmission is ongoing in your community and carefully weigh the potential risks and benefits before you let loose. People who are vaccinated should still mask up in public spaces.
- Large events? The medical experts still advise everyone to avoid large events and gatherings when possible, especially those involving unvaccinated people from multiple households. In

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the case of a family reunion, it's likely that not everyone in your extended family is fully vaccinated yet. If you do choose to gather, make sure that it's outdoors and that everyone is wearing masks and social distancing.

Small gatherings, with no masks, indoors can occur **only when** every person is fully vaccinated. Until we know more about the transmissibility of the virus between vaccinated people, it is critical that we continue to stay safe.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AFTER YOU ARE VACCINATED

Medical specialists point out that while the vaccines are effective, it is still unclear how effective they will be against the emerging variants. For this reason, we must continue to mask and be cautious even after vaccination until we know more. Medical specialists advise to help end this pandemic, no matter where you live is—wear a face mask that fits snugly and is triple-layered, don't travel, social distance, avoid large crowds, don't go indoors with people you're not sheltering with (especially in bars), practice good hand hygiene.

It appears life will be a little better but will not return to the near-normal status until society reaches the stage of herd immunity where a large percentage of the population has been vaccinated.

Once again, this information is provided from a variety of sources and is intended to be food for thought regarding assisting in making individual decisions on activities during the pandemic. We suggest if you have any questions that you contact your local Health Unit.



NEW RETIRED WORKERS' CHAPTER (RWC) EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS

Due to the resignation of two Executive Board members last fall, the RWC solicited for new members a few months ago. Several candidates applied. After reviewing the applications, the RWC selected Marilyn Desserre for Sector 2 and Dan Farrell for the Sector 3 vacancies.

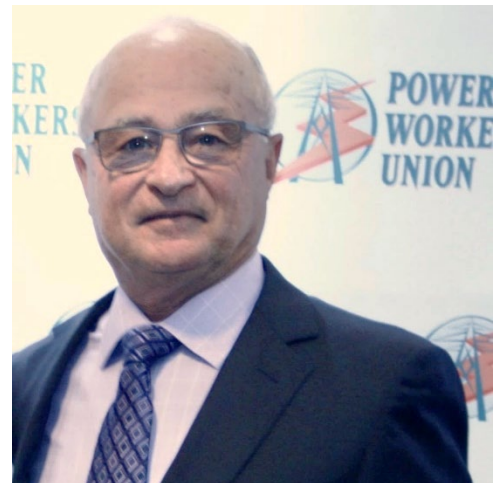
Marilyn is from Atikokan, Ontario. She retired as a Shift Operating Supervisor at Atikokan GS in 2019.

Dan is from Timmins, Ontario. He was a Forester with Hydro One prior to his retirement. Dan served many years with the PWU as a Chief Steward & Executive Board member.

Sector 2 - Marilyn Desserre



Sector 3 – Dan Farrell



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