



March 25, 2020

Business Manager's Message to the Local 488 Family

When the COVID-19 virus was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 16, Local 488 took immediate action to limit the spread of the virus. First, we closed our main office as well as the Fort McMurray office to the public. All services were moved to email, phone, and the Local 488 website. My priority as Business Manager was and is to ensure the safety of everyone associated with Local 488, be it a member, retired member, a young apprentice or our office staff. I can assure you that we are doing our best to ensure you have access to all critical services the Local offers.

In addition, we as a team decided to cancel or postpone all non-essential events such as our Long Service Awards, rescheduled our March 21 Union meeting to a later date. We decided it was best for all concerned to close the Weld Test Centre during the evenings and cancelled all courses at the Alberta Pipe Trade College apart from safety training.

The nature of our business is to perform an essential service to Albertans. I want to emphasize that we are actively engaged with our Contractors, the Building Trades of Alberta (BTA) and the provincial government on daily basis. For example, when news broke on a potential outbreak of COVID-19 at the Borealis Camp at Suncor, our Business Agents were on top of the situation from the outset.

Through conversations with all those involved in the situation, we were able to ensure that safety was the number one priority for Local 488. We will not send our workers into potentially dangerous situations. Our team continues to work tirelessly with contractors, customers and clients in an effort to continue providing access to our work while complying with the new social standards.

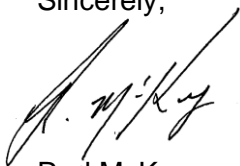
Unfortunately, we've already heard from several Members and their families affected by the COVID-19 virus. This past week has witnessed significant layoffs, quarantines and cancelled apprenticeship classes. Although our offices are closed, we remain committed to our membership. For members, we have provided unprecedented access to our staff to answer the many questions you may have regarding layoffs, hirings, disability claims, and mental health resources. In short, we are in the midst of putting together a long-term plan in dealing with the COVID-19 virus. We can no longer resort back to week-by-week planning – we need long-term solutions and answers that directly affect our membership.

I would like to address our retired members, who, for so many years, helped build this Local into the best union in Canada. Your experience and dedication to the Local will be needed more than ever. As the COVID-19 curve flattens and we return to some semblance of normalcy, I will be asking for your expertise and knowledge. You are the members who have witnessed the most difficult times this province has faced. As such, I will certainly be asking for your input moving forward.

Finally, I cannot stress the importance of taking care of your mental health. This virus will play on our minds for weeks and months to come and you may become worried, concerned, anxious. If you are currently experiencing a high level of anxiety, please visit the Local 488 website: <https://www.local488.ca/> for important links that you can utilize during these difficult days. In addition, our website also contains links to important services such as numbers to call to apply for Employment Insurance Benefits through Service Canada as well as disability claims.

Please know that our entire staff will continue to work long hours as this crisis continues to unfold. I want to assure you that things will get better – we are all in this together and like so many other obstacles that we have faced historically, our Local is too strong and resilient for this pandemic to handle. Rest assured that our team is on top of this situation and we will continue to move ahead in light of any obstacles we face.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rod McKay', written in a cursive style.

Rod McKay
Business Manager
Local 488