



ESSENTIAL SERVICES - INFORMATION

Under the *Labour Relations Code*, employers and unions are required to maintain services related to the health, safety or welfare of the public if there is job action, such as a strike. These are known as “essential services”.

The Minister of Labour has the authority to direct the Labour Relations Board to designate the services considered to be “essential” if they are of the view that a labour dispute is an issue and a lack of services could become a threat to the public.

When the Labour Relations Board makes a designation concerning essential services, the employer and the union both have obligations; the employer has to provide the services as designated by the Board, and the union must permit its members who provide those services to do so if a strike or lockout occurs.

Before involving the Minister of Labour or the Board, the parties will commonly work together to ascertain what services are essential and how many individuals will be required to maintain those services.

Job action cannot begin until such time as essential service levels have been determined. The *Code* sets out time lines for the designation of essential services so that the union’s right to job action will not be delayed by the process.

The VPD has made an application for the designation of essential services. The Minister has directed the Labour Relations Board to designate essential services and the Mediation Division of the Board has been in contact with the parties. The parties are meeting next week to discuss essential service levels. We will keep you informed.

