



Update for March 19th, 2021

Quick Updates:

Membership Meeting – Sunday @ 10am on Zoom: please use the Zoom app on phone or laptop to join

Topic: CUPE 4153 March GMM

Time: Mar 21, 2021 10:00 AM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89363815931?pwd=ZVFiSVc0NVcxMzBQSIVkWkZ3UVNDQT09>

Employee Assistance Program – Very important for all our members to be aware that help is available and no problems anyone is facing right now are too big to talk about with a professional. The EAP information will continue to stay attached to the weekly update for quick reference.

Pictures for the website – If you have a good picture of our members at your school and want to have us use it for the website, please email it to Janna at our office – cupelocal4153@bellnet.ca. Pictures of our members doing their work, wiping touchpoints, disinfecting desks, mopping floors, working on boilers, changing valves or anything else we do or just posing in front of your school sign (safely distanced and masked up) are all welcome!

Wellness Team Changes – There's been some changes in the Wellness Dept lately – please click the link for the current list of who to contact for return to work meetings, WSIB inquiries, etc.

https://hwdsbonca.sharepoint.com/sites/myhwdsb/human_resources/myWellness/

Now onto some new info for you.....

The Ugly Thing That I Don't Want to Talk About – Last week, I talked about the Ministry and the funding for school boards as part of the provincial budget. But since then, the language and signs being communicated by Queen's Park have changed. We're hearing more about the 3rd wave, more cautionary statements of staying at home and of course, we're seeing numbers go up again. Some of our members seem to be ok with the possibility of schools closing to in-person learning and going fully online. That worries me and has literally kept me up late into the night for a few nights now. And I'll share why.....

Last year, when Covid was new and nobody really knew much about it and schools closed, all education workers had assurances and promises and statements from Queen's Park that there wouldn't be any job losses or income losses due to schools being out and in person learning not happening. Many of our members were at home for weeks with no loss of income. Fast forward to this year and we **DO NOT** have those same assurances from the government. We have a government that has stripped many in the medical professions of their collective agreement rights. We could see that happen to us. There's been lots of talk already from school boards across the province (likely driven by off the record communication from the Ministry) that schools may not return after the Spring Break in April (12th-16th) and that's the real reason for pushing it back. Every other worker group from principals to office admins to teachers to ECE's to EA's - can all do their work virtually. Our work can't be done virtually. We are in person workers that need in person learning to continue to do our jobs.

I'm not here to tell you the building is on fire, but rather just to let you know that we're smelling a faint bit of smoke right now and it's causing us some concern. There is no way to tell right now what will happen if schools across the province or even just in our area move to fully online for the rest of the year. There's no way to tell right now what the response from Queen's Park would be to override collective agreements. What we do know is that it's a possibility and it wouldn't be right to let members carry on without being aware of the concern that might be right in front of us shortly.

We have health professionals calling for a 3 week lockdown to combat what they think is a much more infectious 3rd wave with the Covid variants. Sudbury school boards are currently in a mandatory time of online learning only. Now there's talk about Peel board schools going into online only learning and at least one school in the Peel Catholic system has had 15 students and 8 staff test positive – 3 of the staff are hospitalized.

Thinking that if kids aren't in school for the rest of this year and we'll just continue to be paid as usual like last year isn't an assumption we can make right now. And it's difficult to suggest that because nobody has any concrete answers to any of this right now – it's all just a possibility. If numbers go down and people are responsible and the infection rates stay low, schools may continue in person and all this may be for nothing. But, it could just as easily go the other way and numbers increase, infection rates go above 5% and someone down the highway decides that it's not safe to keep schools open anymore. If there is any concrete, black and white information on this issue that we can pass along to you, it will be sent to you as soon as possible to keep you all up to date and well informed so you can make the best choices for you and your families.

Support Our Schools Campaign – If you haven't done so already, please make the time to visit <https://www.supportourschools.ca/> and sign the letter to protect the education funding in Ontario. We are going to be dealing with Covid related issues in schools for quite some time to come. This isn't going away soon and we all know it. Unless all staff and students are vaccinated before September – there will continue to be lingering issues in the schools and proper funding for PPE, supplies and staff is going to be needed. We are encouraging you to share this with family and friends on social media and ask them to get involved too – it only takes a minute or two!

Enhanced Cleaners – Like I mentioned last week and we discussed at our Staff Relations meeting with the employer on Tuesday – all staff across the HWDSB need clear and concise direction on what happens when children and staff are sick at school, along with other issues like cleaning plexiglass partitions.

I expected an updated memo from the employer last week on this issue, but we still haven't seen it yet and with my luck, it will come out between the time I set this email up to be sent out and when it actually is sent out. LOL.

For now, we remain status quo:

When a student is symptomatic at school – that student is sent to the isolation room to be picked up by caregivers. The student's desk, chair and all touchpoints on the way out of the room are to be disinfected by caretaking staff. Once the student has been picked up, the isolation room is disinfected as well.

When a student is symptomatic AND there is a bodily fluids spill (vomit, feces, etc.) then the entire class is evacuated to another space and the classroom receives a full clean – desks, chairs, sinks, soap dispensers, paper towel dispensers, floor, etc. The students and teacher remain outside the classroom until the room is ready again (floor is dry, desks are dry, etc.)

Enhanced cleaners DO NOT clean classroom desks during the day – the board has directed teaching staff to disinfect their classrooms (or assign a 'responsible' student) once per day during the instructional hours. The role of enhanced cleaners is to consistently disinfect touchpoints throughout the school and attend to classroom and isolation room disinfection calls.

When a new memo is produced by the employer, if it's not sent to all caretaking staff automatically, we will make sure it goes to everyone and is posted in all caretaking offices.

Education Worker Vaccines - We still have had no communication from Hamilton Public Health or the employer about the announcement from Queen's Park about education workers being vaccinated by April 30th. Personally, I'd put the date more realistically at June 30th, but hopefully I'm wrong. There's a memo concerning the safety of the vaccines at the end of the update from CUPE National Health and Safety that you should read and possibly discuss with your healthcare professional.

Fair Market Assessment - For our members in maintenance positions, there's been a struggle for a couple of years to equalize our wage rates with other comparable employers in the area. Thanks to Peter Bowker and Dave Dickhout working with Dan Crow from CUPE National & OSBCU – we were able to present some data to the employer on Tuesday at our staff relations meeting. While the rates the HWDSB currently pay are on the low end of the scale, presenting a quick overview of the data was just the start of the process. Within a week or two we will be meeting again with the employer along with members from CUPE National and starting the dialogue to hopefully bring some job classifications in line with other employers in the area. Nobody is making any promises about how much, who's going to be impacted by this and so on. There's going to be lots of rumors but again, until you have it in black and white in front of you, don't put too much stock in it. Just like it was rumored that I was meeting with the employer yesterday about this – didn't happen at all, never was a follow up meeting planned for yesterday.

Chain of Contact – I didn't know what else to call this, so I just went with that. When one of our members has an issue in the workplace – the vast majority of the time your first point of contact should be your area supervisor or the afternoon supervisor. This goes for something as simple as asking “what's the priority cleaning areas because we're short staffed” to “can I trade places with another member on the overtime wheel” to “I have a safety concern”. Supervisors have a legal responsibility in the workplace and are in the words of the Ministry of Labor – to be competent.

If you feel you've been given some wrong information from a supervisor or just want to make sure it's right – your first contact with the union should be with a steward or health and safety committee member. If they aren't sure how to answer your questions correctly – and remember, NOBODY has all the answers at a moments notice – they can get in touch with anyone on the Executive or with our National Rep and ask before getting back to you with an answer. That's what the stewards and health & safety reps are for – the first line of defense for our members. We're working to get people trained properly (not easy in a pandemic) in understanding the collective agreement, how to best represent members in front of management and taking better notes to serve all our members better as we move our local ahead. These are the people you have elected to look after you when problems arise – their phone numbers are in your caretaking offices for that reason. Call or text them and if you have an issue with not getting a response in a reasonable amount of time, please let one of the Executive know and we'll reach out to them and help get the information they're looking for to provide you with an answer.

This should be a fantastic weather weekend, so please make time to get out in the sun – go for a bike ride, go for a hike – get out and do something! You've all earned it and deserve to enjoy the time away from work!

Cheers,

Blake

DATE: September 4, 2020

TO: All Employees

FROM: Jamie Nunn, Superintendent of Human Resource Services
Lori Steacy, Manager, Employee Support and Wellness

RE: Lifeworks – Employee Assistance Program

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you that all HWDSB employees and their dependents have access to **LifeWorks** – a confidential Employee Assistance Program (also known as an EAP) and innovative well-being resource. **LifeWorks** is a benefit provided by HWDSB at no additional cost to you. LifeWorks is available any time, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, with support for your mental, physical, social, and financial well-being. The service includes:

- 24/7 access to qualified advisors for expert advice, information, and resources related to work, life, family, health, money, and everything in between
- referrals to counselling
- connections to community supports and organizations
- a secure online platform (login.lifeworks.com) full of practical well-being content
- free mobile app for iOS or Android

There are three ways to connect with LifeWorks:

1. **By mobile app:** The app is the best way to keep **LifeWorks** with you on the go, wherever you go! Available on the APP Store at <https://apps.apple.com/gb/app/workangel/id662088737>.
2. **Online resources:** Available at www.lifeworks.com – new employees will receive an invitation by email to enrol.
3. **By toll-free number 1-888-521-8300**, 24/7, whenever you like, as often as you like. A professional advisor can provide expert guidance and resources to assist you with a wide range of issues, such as:
 - **Life:** Stress/Overload, Anxiety, Depression, Grief/Loss, Community Resources
 - **Family:** Parenting, Separation/Divorce, Blended Families, Caring for Older Adults, Education
 - **Money:** Saving/Investing, Debt Management, Estate Planning/Wills, Home Buying/Renting
 - **Work:** Work Relationships, Job Stress/Burnout, Managing People
 - **Health:** Fitness/Nutrition, Sleep, Addiction/Recovery, Smoking Cessation, Alternative Health

If you have any questions about how to use **LifeWorks**, please contact: **Lori Steacy, Manager, Employee Support and Wellness.**