



Members Update for October 29th, 2021

Ah, even though Halloween parties will be bit different this year with Covid issues in schools, we all know what to expect this afternoon – candy wrappers all over the place and the calls for upset stomachs and puke cleanups through the day.....

Flags Up Monday Morning – Flags were lowered Tuesday morning to honor the work being done in Brantford to explore the grounds of a residential school where it is sadly expected that searchers will find remains of indigenous children. Flags are to be raised again on Monday morning.

HWDSB Board Meeting – Monday night at the HWDSB board meeting, Manny and Jamie Nunn gave a report to Trustees on the state of the vaccination situation with regards to HWDSB employees. As of October 19th, just under 93% of HWDSB employees are fully vaccinated and all staff not fully vaccinated and who have completed their disclosure are participating in twice weekly rapid testing. Despite these numbers, the Trustees are still pursuing their motion to adopt a mandatory vaccination policy at some point in the future. Trustees have asked the Director to gather more information from legal sources and from the Toronto District School Board after they implement their mandatory vaccination policy on November 1st. I was hopeful that the Trustees would listen to the Director and HR Superintendent about concerns over staffing and operations and realize that what we are doing now, which has been approved by the Ministry of Education and Minister of Health and rescind the motion to pursue a mandatory policy, but that didn't happen. By all appearances, at some point in the future in order to be working at the HWDSB all employees will either have to be fully vaccinated or have an approved medical or religious exemption. Anyone not vaccinating for personal choice reasons will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence once that mandatory policy is adopted and implemented. Stay tuned for more info as it becomes available through memos or board meetings.

Christmas Holidays – Leaving this information on for another week so please take note of what days we are working and off over the Christmas break....

December 17th - last day of school for students,

December 20-23rd - full work days

December 24th - half day – daycares to close at noon

December 27th - day off in lieu of Christmas Day

December 28th - day off in lieu of Boxing Day

December 29th - full work day

December 30th - half day – daycares to close at noon

December 31st - day off in lieu of New Years Day

So, what does this mean? It means you'll need to use a combination of 6 vacation and/or lieu days in order to enjoy two full weeks at home over the Christmas break. School resumes on January 3rd for students and our co-workers.

Priority Cleaning – Leaving this information on for another week so everyone is clear on what the expectations are when your school is short staffed on afternoons.

When your school is short staffed on afternoons, we need to focus on priority cleaning. Priority cleaning is making sure that all garbages are emptied, all washrooms, daycares and kindergartens are fully cleaned and all student desks and touchpoints are disinfected. All staff are expected to help accomplish these tasks and with any time remaining, members should be going back into their own sections and doing anything else they can that is regularly on their schedule (sweeping, spot mopping, glass, etc).

Priority cleaning is not doing the entire school like everyone was at work and running around not taking breaks or time to eat. That's called a work speed up and we don't do that, and it's not the expectation of the Facilities Dept that it happen either.

It is not only for some members of staff to do – it is everyone's responsibility to work together to get the priority areas done and then return to their own sections with any time left.

It is important to make a note on a calendar or note book when your school is short staffed. Because not everything gets done in classrooms, there are usually complaints the next day and the easiest reaction from administration and supervisors is to blame caretaking staff. The easiest way to dismantle those complaints is to be able to say "Well, for the last few days we've been on priority cleaning, so not everything has been done. If you'd like the school cleaned properly, make sure we're fully staffed and can focus on our own sections like we should be doing."

New Office Space – Today is our moving day for the transition between our old office space across from Center Mall to our new home. The walls have been patched and painted, the old dingy carpet has been removed, an old safe and filing cabinet left for decades because they were over 600lbs each have been removed and new flooring has been installed. The boxes have started moving to the new place to reduce the time and expense of movers. I expect that by the end of next week that the new office will be up and running normally. Our office phone number and email address will remain the same and Janna will continue to monitor both for any messages or emails while we make the move to the new office. Once we're all in and settled, I'm hoping to have some sort of an open house for anyone that wants to come see the new place. If fall had waited a few more weeks I hoped to have a bbq in the back parking lot, but that will depend on how the weather goes over the next few weeks. Our new address will be:

CUPE 4153

795 King St. East Unit B2, Hamilton Ontario, L8M 1A8

Phone – 905-544-7733

Email: cupelocal4153@bellnet.ca

Website: www.cupe4153.ca

Staff Relations Meeting Update : Last week we had one of our smaller staff relations meetings and here's the highlights:

Concerns about head caretakers not being informed of afternoon staff absences so that afternoons knows ahead of time if they are doing regular duties or priority cleaning duties. Bob Avery to remind area supervisors that the expectation is to communicate any absences or unfilled jobs prior to 2pm.

Higher than normal absentee rates – employer concern about number of absences being taken lately – Fridays and Mondays are higher than mid-week. Previous week had 140+ jobs to be filled on Friday. Reminder to staff about what is a proper use of a sick day – for personal employee use only. Not for family issues or pet emergencies. Abuse of sick time can lead to termination of an employee. This is rare, but it does happen from time to time.

Union concerns about classroom conditions continue to be an issue. Classrooms that are frequently left in a mess should be documented and reported to area supervisors who are expected to follow up with principals about expectations on teaching staff. It is not any of our own members job to advise teachers on how their rooms are to be left at the end of the day. That's for their supervisor (principal) to do.

Attendance Management Plan concerns from the union surrounding medically documented days off are not to be included in the days. Mark and Pat A will continue to monitor if this is being followed or not in meetings with members and the employer.

Bargaining Education – As part of our strategic planning meeting for bargaining that the Executive and our National Rep was a part of on Friday, it was identified that communicating and educating members on aspects of the bargaining process that we follow in the Education Sector in Ontario should be a priority. So, for the next while, each week I'll try and hit on a couple points that explain the process for members that wouldn't normally be concerned with or too interested in what happens, when it happens and why it happens as we approach the end of our current contract in August of 2022.

So, this week I'll go over the big picture of Education Bargaining in Ontario. Many years ago, our Local bargained directly with the HWDSB for all aspects of our Collective Agreement. This included wages, benefits, health & safety, discipline process, etc. Then it all changed in 2014 when the Ontario government introduced the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act which effectively split negotiations in two parts – Central and Local Bargaining. Central Bargaining deals with issues that apply to all workers in OSBCU across the province, like wages and sick time. The other half of the bargaining is Local Bargaining which deals with issues that only affect members in our own Local, like overtime and grievances.

Central bargaining for all CUPE locals in the Education Sector is done through the OSBCU – the Ontario School Board Council of Unions. OSBCU represents over 55,000 workers in CUPE Locals in over a dozen work categories such as red seal trades, caretaking, EA's, Librarians, Office Admins, Speech Pathologists, Lunchroom Monitors and more. You can follow the OSBCU on Facebook and Twitter. The current President of the OSBCU is Laura Walton. Laura and her team bargain with the provincial government and CTA (Council of Trustees Association) which is made up of representatives of all school board trustees across the province. This is why it's so important to take an interest in who is elected to our own school board trustees.

Local Bargaining is done by an elected group of 7 members of our own Local. According to our bylaws, the bargaining committee should be elected 6 months prior to the expiration of the contract, which would put us into February of next year. Your local bargaining team negotiates with representatives of the HWDSB including representatives from Human Resources, Facilities and Finance.

The two parts – Central and Local – make up our complete collective agreement, which you can find on our Local website under the Resources tab. Trying to read it can put you to sleep pretty easily, but we do have a number of Executive and stewards that are very good at taking the legal terms used and putting them into plain everyday terms that can be easily understood.

Increase in PCR Testing : Late yesterday, there was an announcement from Queen's Park about a few things for the Education Sector. The most important one for our members who are not fully vaccinated is that the twice weekly testing being done now will increase to 3x per week. There's no date stated on the government news release, but I would expect that to be introduced at the board level within a few weeks at most. The link to the news release can be found here - <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1001065/government-takes-further-action-to-protect-schools>

Check the website : I have to thank Geoff Thompson, Darlene Barrick and Janna for keeping our website up to date for everyone. If you're looking for copies of these updates, medical forms, our collective agreement and lots of other stuff – all you need to do is go to www.cupe4153.ca and find it all there. When there is new info to share, even if you don't get it from these emails, you can find it on our website. If you notice something that's not right or out of date on the website, please let Janna know by calling our office or sending her a quick email.

Enjoy your weekend with your family & friends – if you have little ones going out for Halloween, please be safe and just to be helpful I will take any Reese's Pieces, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups or any other Reese's products that your kids or grandkids don't want. Please send them through board mail to Memorial School, Caretaking Dept. And remember – if you can wait for some sweet treats and even sweeter deals, Monday will be half price treats day at all your local retailers. LOL

Cheers,

Blake