



Members Update for November 26th, 2021

Membership Meeting – We were able to have our November meeting thanks to about 40 people who took the time to tune in by computer and/or phone. We provided some updates on issues, had some good discussions and got members input into ongoing issue like EasyConnect and the frustrations around the system. During the meeting I was asked to provide some updates to members on various things, so that's what you're getting this week!

Snowblowers, Safety & Machinery – Realizing that many casuals that have been hired in the past 18 months haven't had the opportunity for actual "hands on" training from a supervisor in pretty much anything from cleaning to operating machinery, brings us to this very important point for casuals and permanent staff. If any employee is not comfortable operating any equipment for safety reasons – including lack of training – you should NOT be operating it. The proper process would be to notify your supervisor that you haven't been trained on the safe operation of the equipment and will not be using it until you are trained. This is part of the Occupational Health and Safety Act which reads as follows:

Section 28 (2) (b) - No worker shall use or operate any equipment, machine, device or thing or work in a manner that may endanger himself, herself or any other worker;

Section 27 (2) - Without limiting the duty imposed by subsection (1), a supervisor shall,

- (a) advise a worker of the existence of any potential or actual danger to the health or safety of the worker of which the supervisor is aware;
- (b) where so prescribed, provide a worker with written instructions as to the measures and procedures to be taken for protection of the worker; and
- (c) take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker.

Food Drive – Yes, we’re doing a Food Drive to support one of the Food Banks here in Hamilton. We all are aware that food bank usage has skyrocketed during the pandemic and as a Local, we should be doing our part to help those who are less fortunate and relying on the food banks to feed themselves and their families, especially during the holidays. A little bit from over 500 of us can mean a big difference to a whole bunch of families across the city. If you haven’t already, please put a box in the caretaking office to collect dry and canned goods until Friday, December 10th. We will arrange one of our elected local reps to collect it on Monday December 13th. From there, we’ll make arrangements to get it to one of the food banks and report back to you after the holidays about how much we collected.

Special Meeting for Bylaws – On January 9th we will have a special meeting to discuss and vote on the proposed bylaw amendments that have been given the once over by the Bylaw Committee and the Local Executive. These have been prepared since the summer but we haven’t had quorum to announce a meeting until last weekend. The proposed bylaw amendments will be emailed to all members on January 2nd so members will have a week to go over them and prepare any questions for the Bylaw Committee during the meeting on January 9th. Due to the online nature of the meeting, there will be multiple online polls taken during the meeting to approve or decline the proposed amendments so we encourage everyone to log in with a device capable of performing online votes (computer, laptop, tablet or phone with the Zoom app).

Bargaining Committee Election – In order to comply with our bylaws and to get a bargaining committee in place, the following dates have been assigned for the election of the bargaining committee for the next round of bargaining starting later in 2022.

January 16th - nominations can be made by email (email address to submit nominations to will be announced later)

January 23rd - all nominees will have until this date to accept or decline their nomination to the bargaining committee

February 6th - nominees who have accepted nominations will have until this date to provide election materials to the election committee and have it posted on the CUPE 4153 website for members to view

February 7th - online voting (if needed) for all bargaining committee positions will be open and conclude on this date in accordance with our bylaws around voting

February 8th - announcement of our bargaining committee to the membership depending on the outcome of the online voting

Election Committee - We are in need of two more volunteers for the election committee to oversee the bargaining committee election process. Duties for the election committee would include but not be limited to the following:

- Send emails to nominees to accept or decline their nominations
- Compile a list of accepted candidates
- Review and approve all election literature and flyers by candidates
- Review and approve the online voting results

If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact Janna in the office or Darlene Barrick our wonderful Recording Secretary who helps keep track of everything for the Local.

Absences – What’s Going On? - Lately, it seems like we’re not getting coverage for certain positions on afternoons. One of the reasons is that we’re experiencing a high number of daily absences and it’s very concerning. I said in our meeting on Sunday that sick days have been bargained for and our members are entitled to use sick days when they are needed and in no way would I ever tell someone in need to not use them. But, I think it is worth repeating that members who are using sick days for reasons that they aren’t intended for or abusing them are not only going to cause some grief for themselves, but are also causing grief for our members in general. When the employer is sharing with us the daily numbers of positions needing to be covered and there are always higher numbers on Fridays and Mondays – it shows a negative pattern.

Please remember that sick days are for your own personal illnesses. Sick days are not for taking a parent or child to an appointment. Sick days are not to stay home with your fur baby. Sick days are not for extending your weekend. If you need to make a doctor, specialist or dentist appointment – try and make it outside of work hours if you can.

When you are going to be off work – to be respectful of your co-workers please try and submit your absence as early as possible so there’s a greater chance of a casual picking up the job. If you’re supposed to start work at 2pm and don’t log your absence until 1:55pm (yes, it does happen) then there’s little chance anyone is going to pick up the job and your co-workers and the school suffers by being on priority cleaning.

Medical documentation for an absence can be requested by the employer after 1 day of absence if they believe there is abuse of the system happening. If you are not feeling well after a few days, please contact your medical professional as after 5 consecutive absences you will be required to submit an [FAF form](#) to the Wellness Dept in order to return to work.

New Education Screening Tool – There have been some changes to the Ontario Education Screening Tool provided by the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education. While school based staff no longer have to submit daily attestations that they have done their screening – actually doing a mental screening before coming to work is still required. If you haven't checked the screening tool for changes lately – please make sure to follow [this link](#) and get familiar with the most recent changes.

Testing Procedures - For those members who are not fully vaccinated or have medical/religious exemptions and are doing 3x weekly testing to stay at work – please make sure you are following the prescribed routine for doing the testing and submitting the results to the employer. The testing and submitting the results should be done before coming to work. We did have an instance where a test was found in a caretaking area and that should never happen for confidentiality and personal safety reasons for all our members.

Safe Schools – Secondary vs Elementary - There are some differences between elementary and secondary schools when it comes to the Safe Schools Act. During the instructional day (between morning and afternoon bells) all exterior elementary doors are to remain locked. None of our members working in elementary schools should be keying open doors during the instructional day even if asked by the principal or teaching staff. Secondary schools are different and principals can permit doors to be open during the day to allow students and staff to come and go throughout the day as many of them do not have either a) working swipe card readers or b) staff have not been issued swipe cards. I have asked our Joint Health and Safety Core Reps to push at the Committee meetings that the HWDSB contribute resources and plan to have all secondary schools enabled with card readers and all secondary teaching staff issued swipe cards to enable a more secure work and learning space for all.

Bargaining Notes - As you read above, in February we will elect our bargaining committee. We will elect 5 people in addition to the current president and chief steward. These 7 people will be our members voice when it comes to bargaining local issues directly with the HWDSB. Experience, professionalism, an understanding of the local collective agreement and the ability to constructively argue and defend positions on behalf of the Local are all traits to look for when voting for members to represent you.

I know this has been a long update, but let me end with these words.

It's not said often enough, but I'm very proud of the work all our members do day in and day out on behalf of students and their families across this city. Every chance I get I enjoy telling managers, parents and community members about all the good and important work my members do because we genuinely care about the schools, students and our co-workers. From installing toilets, disinfecting desks, changing ballasts, shoveling snow and everything in between – WE are the ones that make it happen. WE are the first to arrive and the last to leave. WE keep the learning environment safe, clean and comfortable for everyone. Without the work we do – in person learning isn't possible. We should all take pride in the work we do to serve the over 50,000 students and their extended families across Hamilton and the surrounding communities.

Cheers,

Blake