



## Members Update for December 17th, 2021

Not really much of an update today – more of a “fireside rant”. So grab a cup of hot cocoa or any beverage of your choice and get comfy for a bit.

This isn’t the update I wanted to share with you. I wanted to have some good news for you in this final update of 2021 after the last 4 months and all we’ve been through. And while there’s been some bright spots for us – what we have ahead of us isn’t good at all. The only way we’re going to get through the next year or so is by sticking together, standing up for each other and really functioning as a family of close to 600 people. Right now, we have some very serious employer issues and moving into 2022 we have preparations for bargaining and then a provincial election and bargaining a new contract with both a new government and our own employer.

Here’s why it’s not going to be good for us right away....

Things are changing at the HWDSB. The attitude of management is changing. The way employees are dealt with is far different than how managers are dealt with. Management wants us to “talk to them” about our concerns, while they cut off members pay and terminate members without just cause. Supervisors aren’t doing their jobs and our concerns are falling on deaf ears. But heaven forbid that someone misses cleaning up a piece of paper in a classroom – that gets everyone’s attention real quick and brings the cavalry with them. Management thinks you’re taking too many sick days – let’s hire a private investigator to follow them around and report back about going to Fortino’s for Tylenol (and spend education funding dollars on them could be directed to supporting students better). Bring up a concern to your supervisor and have them brush it off and tell you to mind your own business and let them handle it – only to have the problem continue on and on because they can’t be bothered and are “too busy” for these little things. Bring up a safety concern to your supervisor and wait weeks only to find out that they “forgot” and “let me get back to you on that”.

At the end of this update, I'm going to share with you an email I sent to our Director and Superintendent of HR Services yesterday. I don't share this lightly, but I thought it was important enough to know what your elected representatives are dealing with on a daily basis and what we all need to come together on and truly work as a team. It's going to take a lot of communication and action from all members and elected reps. In addition to that email, I sent a memo to our Executive and stewards telling them to be ready to start filing a lot of complaints and grievances on behalf of and with members. This is the time when we can either choose to be pushed around and treated like the dirt we clean up – or fight back and show the employer that we deserve the same respect they show themselves. I've made my choice and it sure as hell doesn't involve getting pushed around.

Here's some concrete evidence of what's going on:

- Member was questioned by the Labor Relations Manager over 1 day of sick leave absence because "the board has information" that they were at Fortino's on that day. No request for medical documentation was made by Wellness. Just jump straight to an intimidating meeting with one of the top people in HR causing anxiety and stress. Apparently the board expects you to be totally incapacitated and on house arrest in order to use a sick day.
- The use of 3<sup>rd</sup> party private investigators has been confirmed by more than one of my local president associates from the HWDSB. During HR meetings with their members – the same language was used - "you were observed" and multiple questions about "were you here, or here, or here on that day?"
- Multiple members have had their pay suspended while on sick leave because of a lack of documentation – while the employer fax machines were down for weeks. Oh, and that was even before the date that the medical was to be submitted by. So they just ignored their own dates and cut off pay, directly violating our Central Agreement and when it was brought up to them that they couldn't do that without following a process – their response was they felt they could. Complete disregard for black and white rules written in plain language.
- Member went to get medication for a medical condition and had to pay out of pocket for some reason. Got home and made a few phone calls and found out that Canada Life had been informed by the employer that the employee was terminated. **3 f'n days before they were being notified by the employer.**

Quite literally, I could go on with examples but I think you get the point – right now the relationship with the HWDSB is as toxic as it gets. I've never been more convinced that I work for a broken system than right now.

Getting out of this is going to take everyone's effort and commitment. We need to support each other – even if we don't always see eye to eye with each other. **It's literally us against them.**

**Moving forward, if you have any instances where your supervisor may have done something wrong and against the collective agreement, a board policy or procedure or the HWDSB Code of Conduct – you need to contact one of our stewards and provide them with the facts around the situation.** If there is a grievance to be filed over the information, don't be afraid to put your name on the grievance. This would include issues related to overtime in your building, how your supervisor talks to you or a lack of response to general concerns in your building. If you're not familiar with any of our stewards, you can always call Peter Bowker our Chief Steward and he can assign a steward for you.

**If you have brought up a health and safety concern with your supervisor and haven't had a response from them within 48 hours for general concerns or immediately for an urgent concern – you need to contact one of our Health and Safety Core Reps** (Kathleen Powell, Marilyn MacAloney or Danny Cantanyag) and they can direct you on what your next steps should be and possibly file a complaint with the Ministry of Labor on your behalf or support you in exercising your right to a work refusal.

**If you are off work and on sick time** – please keep in mind that the board does use the services of outside private investigation companies to provide surveillance data on employees to the board. To borrow a quote from an ex president of ours – if you're off sick and driving to an appointment or the pharmacy and see someone needing help with a flat tire, don't stop to help because that person is probably the investigator looking into your time off.

**Your supervisor is not your friend.** The Wellness Team are not your friends. When they ask you questions, they're asking for a specific reason. They are management employees with a job to do for the employer and don't ever forget that. I'm nice and polite with my supervisor and I can make small talk with them but I don't share personal information with them, I don't make any questionable comments around them and I sure as hell don't talk about my coworkers to them.

Like I mentioned earlier – I wish I had a better last update for this year, but this has been the crappiest week in our Local's history in a long time and you all deserve to know what's going on and be aware for yourselves and each other. Now I'll try and move on to some quick updates on other issues.....

**Bylaw Meeting and Info** – January 2<sup>nd</sup> - I'll be sending out the proposed bylaw amendments approved by the bylaw committee and Executive for discussion and voting on at our special meeting called for January 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Return to School** – As of right now, school is to resume on January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Also as of right now, we're seeing the highest Covid daily numbers that we've seen since the end of the last school year and many people are wondering if the break may be extended. I wish I had a crystal ball to tell you what's going to happen, but sadly I dropped mine years ago and it stopped working. If there are changes announced to break, as soon as they are confirmed and not just rumors we will send out information to everyone to their personal emails.

**Member Information Updates** - Starting sometime in January, all members will be contacted to update the personal information we have on file at the office for you. This would include your address, home phone, cell phone and personal email address. This is required for the Local to contact you, to validate your possible strike pay later in 2022 and for the OSBCU to contact you. We will never give out your information to anyone other than a CUPE organization (CUPE National, CUPE Ontario, OSBCU, etc.) without your express permission.

**Food Drive Donations** – Later today, brother Stephen Clarkin and myself will be delivering the food drive donations to the Good Shepherd food bank. I'll try and remember to take some pics and post them on our Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/cupe4153](http://www.facebook.com/cupe4153)) or our website ([www.cupe4153.ca](http://www.cupe4153.ca)) I want to really thank everyone at the schools that did collect donations and for those that weren't aware of the food drive, you'll get another chance to donate in the spring and we'll make some adjustments to our messaging to try and get 90%+ participation.

**Holiday Break Hours** – as stated in the collective agreement, alternate hours of work are in effect for the holiday break. If your location has a daycare center operating, someone will have to work a later shift to provide coverage and cleaning for the daycare. If you don't have a daycare or any rentals over the break, all members should be working a day shift. Any changes to the alternate hours must be approved by your supervisor. December 24<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> are half days of work for our members in accordance with the collective agreement and members should be working a maximum of 4 hours while still covering daycares to approximately 1pm or 1:30pm.

To close out this last update for this year, I am incredibly proud to be part of this Local. I'm humbled to be your President and even though there's some very long and tough days – it's all worth it when things work out for our members and we can provide them real help and assistance with whatever issues they're facing. Never forget the jobs that we do allow everyone else in the schools to do their jobs properly, safely and comfortably. Our maintenance members are some of the hardest working people I've met who have to find creative ways to keep systems running smoothly despite their broken down trucks and limited budgets. All our caretaking members keep things clean, disinfected, safe and warm or cool for the entire staff and student population. These aren't jobs for lazy people. These aren't jobs for people who don't give a crap about kids and the state of the schools. Our jobs are for people who are proud and committed to the students and co-workers in the education system despite the increasing amount of crap coming from school boards and provincial government.

Cheers, Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you and your Families!

Blake

Here's a copy of the email I mentioned earlier to be transparent with all of you.

**From:** Blake Corkill [Staff] <[bcorkill@hwdsb.on.ca](mailto:bcorkill@hwdsb.on.ca)>

**Sent:** Thursday, December 16, 2021, 6:56 AM

**To:** Jamie Nunn [Staff]; Director

**Cc:** David Winger [Staff]; Mark Lachowicz [Staff]; Patrick Cumbo [Staff]; Darlene Barrick [Staff]; Peter Bowker [Staff]; Pat Amatangelo [Staff]; Geoff Thompson [Staff]; Danny Catanyag [Staff]; Michelle Madley [Staff]; Shelley Livingston [Staff]; Florence Dicarlo [Staff]; David Dickhout [Staff]; Darren Kerr [Staff]; Doug Thornberry [Staff]; John Thompson [Staff]; David Wardell [Staff]; Kathleen Powell [Staff]; Marilyn MacAloney [Staff]

**Subject:** Bob Dylan said it best.....

Oh the times, they are a changing....

Manny & Jamie,

For the sake of transparency, I've copied all of my team on this email to both of you. All of my Executive, stewards as well as health and safety reps.

I wanted to calm down for a few hours after the events that transpired for a few of my members yesterday to put the employer on notice about their conduct and what the response from CUPE will be moving forward.

In the past few weeks we have had numerous incidents that have resulted in our members being disadvantaged in one way or another. I'm not sure what has transpired at 20 Education Court lately but it's not going to do anything to further the relationship between our Executive team, our stewards, our health and safety reps and your management team members. In fact, it's putting our relationship back to where it was about 5-6 years ago.

The heavy handed treatment of members, the unwarranted requests for additional medical for no other reason than Wellness Team members feel they can ask for it (and if they don't get it within an unreasonable timeline they will disregard the Central Agreement and cut off members access to pay - all despite the employer fax machines being down for weeks) and overall hostility has not gone unnoticed.

Just yesterday I had a member terminated with various medically documented issues and there was no notice given to the Local before that happened - in stark contrast to the long held practice of doing so.

From now on, every supervisor infraction, every management misstep, every incident that breaches the code of conduct, every time a health and safety concern goes without a response and every time anyone crosses what's in black and white in the Central or Local agreements will be met with a grievance, a code of conduct complaint or a call to the Ministry of Labor. No more meeting to talk about it, no more phone calls to keep things off the record. No more "leave it with me and I'll talk to them". No more phone calls that end with apologies and assurances it won't happen again only to have the same conversations a week or so later.

Grievances and official black and white complaints is what will be coming. And lots of them. Every single time. Order some more pens and notepads because I have a very good feeling you'll be needing them to keep up with all the meetings that will be happening, both locally and centrally.

Now we will see in black and white just how bad this relationship is. How my members are treated, how a lack of equity and equality is applied in deciding who gets investigated or disciplined and who doesn't, how this employer is not leading by example amongst their own ranks but expecting the world from the rank and file workers.

Blake Corkill

Head Caretaker Memorial School

CUPE 4153 President

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