



Members Update for February 4th, 2022

Bargaining Committee Nominees & Voting – (from our Election Committee – Jason Atkinson, Kathleen Powell and Lynn Babich) We have a list of the members who have accepted their nominations to run for the Bargaining Committee and you can find it at the end of the update. These are the people who will meet, discuss, argue and bargain with the employer on your behalf for all Local Collective Agreement issues later this year.

Members elect 5 people from the list and along with the current President and Chief Steward (at the time of bargaining) - you have 7 people that make up the Bargaining Committee. The election will be on February 7th and all approved election materials will be posted on our website at www.cupe4153.ca.

Members are encouraged to reach out to nominees and ask what they feel is important in bargaining but keep in mind that once the committee is finalized, a survey will go out to all members to get input on what's important to change or leave alone in the local collective agreement. The bargaining committee works on your behalf and not just on their own ideas.

Secure online voting will be done through the Simply Voting platform. Voting will be open on Monday February 7th from 8am – 5pm. Voting credentials will be sent to the personal email addresses we have on file as of today, February 4th. If we do not have a personal email address for you, you will not be able to vote. This is the same process we have followed for the last few elections, including June of 2020. Voting credentials will be sent out at 8am on February 7th when the polls open for voting, not before that. You can expect your email to arrive shortly after 8am. You will need to choose 5 members for the Bargaining Committee in order to have your vote recognized.

Any concerns with voting on voting day should be directed to the office at 905-544-7733.

Casuals and Bereavement Days – After we filed a grievance on behalf of an LTO casual member who was denied access to bereavement days, we have great news for casuals in an LTO position. Based on the language in the collective agreement, casuals in an LTO position will be granted bereavement leave as outlined in Article 16.05. This is a big win for the Local as no casuals have been given this benefit in the past. I want to thank Flora for working with me in arguing the grievance and presenting the case to the employer instead of just taking no for an answer as past practice has been. This decision is on a ‘go forward’ basis which means that anyone denied bereavement leave in the past will not be compensated for it. From now on, casuals in an LTO should clearly mark “bereavement” on their timesheet and include hours normally worked in their LTO for their days off. If you are not paid for those days, please contact one of our stewards to assist with getting you paid in full.

Wellness Team Update – (from Patrick Cumbo, Flora DiCarlo and Dave Dickhout) - Dave, Flora, and I have been working hard for all our members, attending many TEAMS meetings, to get our members back to work when they are recovered to their fullest potential and ready to do their job.

We recently just had a Teams meeting regarding Covid 80 for casual employees. It is important that you put Covid down on your timesheet for you to get paid. You will be paid for 3 days. Here are some helpful tips for you to try and remember

1. Make sure you pick up shift fist
2. Then you do your daily screen
3. If you fail daily screen call in covid 80
4. Doing it like this looks like you intended to go to work which entitles you to that day of pay

The ESW team will automatically submit it for the IDEL (infectious disease emergency leave) program. Therefore, you need to put covid on your timesheet, this pays you for 3 total days. Unfortunately, now that is all the board is willing to for casuals. The union doesn’t agree with this, and we are currently trying to figure out a solution for the casuals to be compensated fully just like CA states in 24.01 ALL EMPLOYEES.

Management Meeting & Notes – Earlier this morning, Patrick Cumbo, Mark Lachowicz and myself had a meeting with Stacey Zucker, Jamie Nunn and David Anderson. The board reached out to me last week to request a meeting and find out why we cut off participating in monthly Staff Relations meetings. I did take some flack for agreeing to the meeting and it's been rumored that I'm meeting with management and not being open with members about it. The reason for this update going out a bit later than usual today is to continue being open and transparent with all of you. Management requested a meeting to find out why we're frustrated and not talking to them anymore – so they got exactly that. Attached to this update you'll find the the notes from this morning's meeting. This was the document shared with them and I told them that it would be shared with all my members. No changes, nothing left out. It clearly outlines a list of some our frustrations with the way things are for our members in the workplace. Is it a list of ALL our frustrations – no. That would take way too much time to list. Many of you have direct experience with more than a few of these frustrations. The Local wants a better relationship with the employer but not at the expense of our members well being. There needs to be changes in many areas and this has clearly outlined issues for them to work on. Is it possible for all of them to change? Only time will tell but at least they have some things clearly outlined for them to work on in the coming months.

I hope you all have a good weekend with your families and friends and again, thank you for the work you do to support the students and their extended families across the HWDSB. Your work is essential to the operation of safe, comfortable and clean learning environments.

Cheers,

Blake

Why no Staff Relations?

Meeting attendees – Stacey Zucker, David Anderson, Jamie Nunn, Mark Lachowicz, Patrick Cumbo, Blake Corkill - Friday Feb 4th at 9am via Teams

- 3 terminations a week and a half before Christmas – currently in the grievance process and I'm confident that at least two end with rulings against the employer, 1 of which had NO notice given to the Local prior to the termination meeting because HR "forgot" to let the Local know. "Forgot" that an employee was being terminated. How much value does it speak to in order to forget that someone is being terminated from their 15+ years as an employee? The HWDSB speaks volumes about supporting mental health but when it comes to dealing with employees with various mental health issues – your actions speak louder than words. Terminate them because they have difficulties from time to time sticking to a 40 hour week.
- Private investigators – personal information of members shared without their express consent – one member had one single day off and was followed on that same day – brought in for questioning by the Labor Relations Manager – then released from the Attendance Management Program for good behavior? Why the private investigator and meeting with top brass after 1 day of absence? Scare tactics? How much attention did that one member receive to call in sick and have someone from HR or Facilities call the private investigation company, share personal information like their home address and have them under surveillance on the same day? Why isn't there that much attention given to CUPE concerns and have them dealt with on the same day? Members are afraid to take time off they are entitled to for fear of being investigated and come to work when they should be at home for various reasons.
- Covid80 issue – our CA language has been clear on this for years. Why does it have to be a fight to recognize the language we have had and everyone should understand? It's pointless and what we believe is an attempt by the employer to slide something by in the hopes that the caretakers don't catch it because they don't have the resources or the manpower that the teachers do for officer release. The time and effort needed to manually go back and reinstate sick days to sick bank accounts, reimburse lost pay due to sick days taken in error – was it all worth the risk that the Local wouldn't argue about it? There is also an outstanding issue with casuals and the Covid80 code. The CA states "employee" in our quarantine clause but there are casuals not being paid and not using that code because they know they will not be paid and come to work when they should be home.

- The lack of understanding of our provincial and local collective agreements by HR staff, FOS staff, etc. When FOS staff are calling us to make sure they're doing something right – that's a problem. When HR staff are making decisions regarding CUPE staff based on another worker group's collective agreement and what they "think" is in there – that's a problem. For instance, member taking parental leave is told that they will lose their benefits and other items by a staffing coordinator in HR. Frequently being told that "we don't read the language that way and if you need to grieve it, go ahead". The Local has direct access to the Executive team at the OSBCU. The HWDSB has direct access to the CTA. Both parties bargain the Central Agreement. How often does the employer or its managers reach out to the CTA to get an opinion on what the language means and the spirit it was negotiated in?
- Lack of respect in general. Rapid test kits, N95 masks – ask us for help when the employer is under deadlines to comply with provincial mandates and deliveries and then turn around and exclude us first when all provincial language speaks to "staff". If the HWDSB really valued us other than in words, there would be a press release calling on more supplies for the school boards to fully support all staff and not just reacting badly and trying to exclude our group.
- FOS staff can't be trusted to do the right thing when given very simple directions – Just this week, a new PPE Log showed up in eBase which head caretakers see every day while doing other logs. The log required a count of all PPE items at each school. Many phone calls early Monday morning about this so I emailed Bob about it. His reply stated that he had sent a group chat message to all FOS staff clearly telling them that it was NOT the responsibility of caretaking staff to complete the log but it was in fact theirs and the principals and if they wanted to ask for help from the caretaking staff, they could. The same day I along with other head caretakers received emails from our FOS staff instructing us to complete the logs and if we needed help to ask them. How are we supposed to trust managers that bend the directions given to them to get out of doing work and download it onto my members?

- Do as I say, not as I do mentality – Education Center staff will protect each other and downplay concerns about lack of job accountability – but if a caretaker misses sweeping a room and a principal complains – there's likely to be a verbal recorded warning in their file. But in a school like mine, members of Capital can “forget” or “overlook” issues again and again and there’s no consequences at all. Project managers simply get contractors to “talk to caretaking” for direction or call caretaking for updates on the project. That’s NOT our job. We aren’t paid for being a liason between contractors and project managers. They should be getting out of their chairs at the Ed Center and being on site to actually inspect situations and handle them. For instance – at my location we have ongoing issues with a gymnasium addition that has a leaking roof and incorrect grading of a concrete pad that lets water into a hallway. How in the world is that allowed to happen and someone be praised for the good work they’re doing? I also had a highly publicized ventilation project that was supposed to take 10 days. Media showed up, the Director showed up, Stacey and Dave showed up for a press conference and 6 months later the project still isn’t completed. But again, circle the wagons and protect each other because there’s always a reason why something didn’t happen for Ed Center staff and managers that we should just accept and move on, but heaven forbid a teacher or principal complain about “I don’t think my room was cleaned last night because there’s some paper on the floor” - I guarantee an FOS will be having a chat with someone and making a record of it because there’s performance concerns.
- CM issue – pay issue going back to November 10th that I was made aware of on Monday – lack of attention from HR reps whose job it is to pay attention to these things. Again, “we’re sorry” is supposed to be good enough when my members are held to other standards and have to literally beg and repeatedly ask for help when it comes to HR issues. I’ll bet that if an Ed Center manager or employee had an issue with their pay it wouldn’t take 3 months to get it resolved. It would be done that same day because they are respected and valued as employees. But when it comes to caretaking - “we’ll get to it” or “sorry we missed that” or some other excuse is handed out like late slips at an elementary school and we’re just supposed to be patient and understand that HR staff is working hard. And again, that same attitude is NOT given when CUPE members forget or miss something in a school. It should not take half a dozen emails asking for assistance to get an answer for our members.

- Grievance responses – condescending language that would appreciate issues being raised by other means than grievances. Stick to the grievance response and why you’re agreeing with it or denying it.
- The Local being blamed for the performance and attitudes of newer members when we have no say in the hiring process. If whoever is involved in the process and the supervisors responsible for the probationary evaluations actually took an interest in the quality of the candidates and their work performance (as opposed to simply asking head caretakers if there’s been any complaints about them) maybe some of the issues that HR is having with Local members wouldn’t be so great. FOS staff should be actually observing work being performed and giving coaching and feedback to do proper evaluations. But coaching and feedback have been replaced with letters of expectation because it requires less work on the FOS’s part. In the cases where performance and coaching during probation haven’t improved performance, we have mechanisms to extend probation if necessary.
- FOS support – If Local members actually had the support of the FOS team, morale would be much higher. If Local members saw and heard FOS team members defending them and advocating for them when it comes to frivolous complaints and negative comments towards them, things might be different. But that would require an understanding of our work, which many FOS staff simply don’t have – they just have experience working with unions. Years ago we had 6 daytime supervisors and 1 afternoon supervisor. They were respected. Not always liked, but they were respected. All of them came up from being caretakers themselves and had a wide understanding of the challenges and job requirements in all of our buildings. They each looked after about 15-18 schools. They knew how much snow was likely to pile up at the back doors of Flamborough Center because they shoveled it at one point. They knew when it got hot over the summer that you couldn’t wax on certain days because the wax would go all cloudy because it was too humid because they had made that mistake themselves at some point. We had far less issues than we do now because they had understanding and they weren’t interested in simply walking into the school and straight to the principals office to chat. They came to the caretaker office and asked how things were going because they had a relationship with their staff from working with them for years. They went over plans for school breaks and summer and order quantities because they knew the needs of the buildings because they worked in them.

They could offer coaching tips and tricks because they had learned themselves what worked and what didn't. They walked around the school and pointed out health and safety infractions to teaching staff and administration because they knew what to look for. They were actual hands on supervisors. Now we have 17 supervisors and nobody can do a thing without talking to Bob. Is it lack of training? Is it lack of competency? Is it lack of proper motivation? That's not my question to ask – my job is to point these things out to you as senior managers and let you figure it out. Being a competent and reliable supervisor means more than performing investigations and handing out discipline letters.

- Classroom conditions – supervisors not showing up at end of instructional day to see what's being left from the daytime classes and nutrition breaks. Classroom expectations have been on the Local's radar and brought up many times with Staff Relations and are still a major issue. In almost every school we have, there are concerns that have been around for many years about classroom conditions. These issues have been addressed many times with senior management before this along with hundreds of pictures of what Local members are faced with each day. But somehow the response is the same – FOS staff don't have the ability to give direction to principals or teaching staff. While that is understandable and the same goes for teaching staff giving direction to caretaking staff – there needs to be a mechanism for classroom condition concerns to be properly addressed. This cannot just be a one way street where nutrition garbage and debris are left all day long to sit and then regular classroom debris (dirt, mud and moisture tracked in from outside) is piled on top of glue, paint and markers and nothing is done or said about the conditions of classrooms at the end of the instructional day but if a piece of paper is left on a floor after allotting 20 minutes to clean it and there's a complaint about a room not being cleaned – it gets immediate attention. Local members are committed to the cleanliness and safety of the students, families and co-workers we serve. Local members are part of the community and care about the conditions in the schools. But there needs to be equality in who is responsible for what during the day because an allotment of 20 minutes per classroom for Local members in many cases just isn't enough based on what the rooms conditions are when we get to it after the instructional day.
- Management Transparency – if there are to be open and honest communications, there needs to be transparency. For instance, when schools are renovated and square footage changes, that information is known months ahead of time but for some reason, that information is withheld from the Local which impacts members pay structures. Another issue associated with this is ongoing – when should an elementary school be given a caretaker designation? There needs to be a policy or set guidelines associated with this decision and not the current “Will Bob approve a caretaker or not?”