



## Quick Update for August 30th, 2023

**Welcome back to everyone!** – It's that time of year again. Senior members returning from taking multiple weeks of vacation, teaching staff returning to set up classrooms, administrative staff returning to offices and organizing class lists, supplies and registering students and next week, the students return. I want to welcome everyone back to what for us, should be a much less stressful and chaotic start to the school year than last year was. We had our Central contract negotiations that were stalled, the threat and eventual reality of what for most of us was our first strike. This year, we have a contract in place at both levels and we have stability in our positions. I also want to thank and congratulate everyone who has contributed to our summer cleaning for a few weeks, for the entire summer or just for a few days here and there as a casual – every bit of work that has gone into preparing our schools has contributed to the student safety and comfortability in all of our locations. It's hard work – many of our buildings are not fully air conditioned and it's physically demanding work. Lifting, scrubbing, climbing, rinsing, sweeping, mopping and all the other jobs we do takes a toll on us.

**Training Course Requirements** – on behalf of Michelle Madley, Membership Officer – Neelam Sanduja sent out an email on August 21<sup>st</sup> on behalf of Bob Avery about our members letting the employer know what courses they should run this year based on needs. The email states “To: All Caretaking Staff, We are collecting information on how many individuals are interested in taking required courses in order to be qualified for a Caretaker position as per the Collective Agreement. You will find a log in the Logs module of eBase. Please check ONLY the boxes for the course(s) that you need. Detailed instructions are outlined below. The log will be available to complete until September 8, 2023. Please direct any questions to your FOS. Thank you.

There was also a few graphics on how to fill in the form in eBase and **I STRONGLY encourage anyone who does not have all their courses to fill that form out so the courses YOU need to be able to move up and even for weekend overtime come up in what courses will be in the rotation this year.** Having your courses and not wanting to be a head caretaker is totally fine. Having all your courses and not wanting to be a caretaker is all good too. Not having your courses and wanting to work a day shift or some weekend overtime and not be allowed to because you don't have your courses sucks. Big time. **Get the training – it's paid time and it's better to have it than not.**

**Healthcare Protest** – September 25<sup>th</sup> – Noon – Queen's Park. That's the line in the sand for a massive protest against what the Ford government is doing to our publicly funded healthcare system. Many of us know someone who works in healthcare and have heard literal horror stories about their challenges in properly staffing hospitals and entire wards needing to be shut down or closed due to lack of resources. Meanwhile, if you have money – like say you're a developer of Greenbelt lands you just happened to purchase at the right time for a good price and now you're sitting on a goldmine – you can jump to the front of the line for many things simply by tapping or swiping your debit or credit card and paying out of your own pocket.

This will be a BIG protest with the entire labor movement behind the healthcare workers, supporting them and raising our voices, fists and flags to demand changes.

If you would like to attend – the rally is on a Monday, you can sign up and buses are being organized for people not wanting to drive. You can find a list of those bus locations and get yourself signed up by clicking on this link.....

<https://cupe.on.ca/ontario-health-coalition-rally/>

**Unhoused Guests on HWDSB Property** – We've all seen an increase in encampments, tents and other temporary housing structures in parks, green spaces, City Hall and even some of our schools. Whatever your thoughts and ideas are around the homeless problem, there may be a time when doing our jobs that we have to deal with the issue head on. As a head caretaker in a downtown location with a good amount of green space, I've had to a few times. The first priority is the safety of our members. **The Local is advising all members that engaging with unhoused guests is never to be done. If any Local member encounters a situation with unhoused guests on HWDSB property, the procedure is to call the non-emergency police line and let them deal with the situation with the tools and resources they have available to them.** The following is an excerpt from a supervisor email that I wish had been sent out to all CUPE staff but it wasn't for some reason:

"I am noticing more Homeless guests on our properties. My first concern and priority is your safety. I would like to ask that you not engage with anyone in these situations. In these situations we call the non emergency police line and ask for their assistance. We should never be engaging with anyone in these type of situations. I would request that you notify the police (905)546-4925 on the non-emergency line"

I'm sure there will be lots more to share both from within our own board and across the province in the coming weeks. Neither of the big teacher unions have settled a contract yet and we may see some big shakeups at Queen's Park depending on #greenbeltgate or any number of other things that could impact our work.

We'll have some decisions to make about our own local issues as well. Do we start putting money back into our strike fund to prepare for 3 years from now? We need to go over our bylaws and make some badly needed changes. We need to look at how we communicate in our Local – members contacting our office, stewards and executive with questions. We need to look at how the Local communicates with our members and how can we do it better or more effectively. All of these things have one thing in common – member involvement.

I remember when I first started on the board and I knew I was in a union and that was about it. I never attended union meetings, didn't pay attention to much of the communications. Then after a few years I was accused by a student of picking them up around the neck and tossing them across a classroom. CAS got involved and I was suspended with pay during the investigation.

For about 3-4 days I wasn't sure what my fate would be and I wouldn't wish that on anyone else. I was a single father at the time and being accused of child abuse at work would definitely have had a negative impact on my custody arrangement. Long story short – kids were lying and I was cleared to go back to work. No apology from the child, their parents or anyone else involved for being dragged through the mud over a child making up a lie. That's when I got involved and wanted to help make the workplace better for our members.

I hope that last fall our job action, protesting and striking gave some of you an added interest in the Local and how it functions, helps, and supports all of our members. It would've been a pretty sad protest and strike to see just your executive, stewards and health & safety reps out on the street waving signs. YOU – the members made it a success. And you the members ultimately decide what works and doesn't work for us as a Local.

Over the next few months consider challenging yourself to get a little bit more involved. Maybe attend union meetings every other month and see how you like it? Maybe get in touch with our office and see if there's a way you can help out with our Christmas Party coming up in a few months? Maybe you really like social media and technology and want to pass on info to members as a communications person?

Maybe you're good with a camera and want to document attending a protest or a social event for the Local? Maybe you're really interested in politics and would like to attend HWDSB Trustee meetings and bring information back to our members that's going to have an impact on them? Maybe you really enjoy helping people save money with coupons and want to start a coupon club we could host at our office for anyone else that wants to save?

I could go on and on but the bottom line is this – without the involvement, ideas and input from our members – we can't grow as a Local or grow stronger as a Local.

Cheers,

Blake