



CUPE 4153 Update

October 31st, 2024

Complete the OSBCU Survey

I wanted to take a minute and just encourage everyone to take 5 minutes of your time and fill out the survey for OSBCU. For those that are new or just don't know - OSBCU is the Ontario School Board Council of Unions. They are the bargaining agent for all CUPE Education Workers in Ontario. Do you know that every school board is different on who does what jobs? In our board, CUPE workers perform maintenance and caretaking duties. In other school boards, CUPE workers can be EA's, clerical staff, librarians, ECE's, DECE's, IT Specialists, Speech Pathologists and dozens more support staff roles.

OSBCU is responsible for bargaining with the Crown (government) and CTA (school board Trustees) for the Central half of our contract including sick benefits, vacations and our benefit plan and probably most importantly for most people - our pay rates and increases. Our current contract expires in August of 2026 and OSBCU is already gearing up and planning to not only defend our current collective agreement but also make proposals and suggestions to make our working life better. That's why you need to complete the survey because they need front line information and experiences from all of our 55,000 OSBCU members across the province.

If you don't complete the survey, they won't know what's important to our members. Would it be fair to send your partner to the grocery store with no list and then be upset when you didn't have what you needed to make a family dinner? OSBCU is asking for 5 minutes of your time to tell them what's important to you so they can better represent, advocate and fight for you as a worker. Tell them what you need.

English: <https://survey-sondage.cupe.ca/index.php/258247?lang=en>

Friday PD Day

At our Staff Relations meeting last Friday, we were told that all CUPE staff would be required to attend the PD Day staff meeting in their school location along with other staff to receive training on anti-Muslim and anti-Jewish hate. I received a call on Tuesday that changed that decision and alternate arrangements are being made through Facilities to provide that training to all of our members in accordance with the HWDSB at a future date. CUPE members are not normally part of PD Day staff meetings unless specifically directed to be in attendance.

CUPE 4153 members will not be attending the week's PD Day staff meeting training. Further direction on the training for all of our members will be communicated from Facilities when further arrangements are made.

Caution on Your Sources

Earlier this week we had an email from a member about being successful in posting for a position. Normally that's a good thing, except this time it wasn't. The member had been given bad info on being able to stay in an LTO position instead of going to their newly awarded position. Depending on who you ask, you could get quite a few different answers if you asked them "If I post for a position, do I have to go there?"

Please be cautious when asking for information regarding workplace policies, collective agreement issues, etc. There's lots of myths, half truths and just plain bs floating around. Call or email our office and we'll have someone get back to you with proper information so you can make a better informed decision.

Halloween Issues

Every year we end up having some vandalism or damage done to board property around Halloween, Devil's Night or whatever you want to call it. The board has put certain things in place this week and through the weekend to help deter and minimize any vandalism or break ins. Please pay extra attention to locking doors and windows Wednesday night to Sunday night.

Christmas Party

Well, the deadline has come and we're nowhere near enough interest from members to go ahead with the Christmas Party without wasting a lot of money and time. So, if you've paid for tickets already - please contact Laurie Penner or Kristin Cox to arrange to get your money refunded. We will be going ahead with the kids Christmas Party so if you're at all interested in volunteering some time to help with organizing, wrapping gifts or helping on the day of the party - please get in touch with Laurie or Kristin.

Feel Good Story

I really do enjoy sharing these feel good stories with all of you. There's so many negative comments, criticism and lack of encouragement in the workplace sometimes we forget that our members do good things for each other, our co-workers and students every day. Maybe it's getting older and wanting less drama or maybe it's because I've entered my hippie phase and it would be great if everyone could just get along or at least be respectful to each other but I like sharing good stuff with everyone so if you've got a good story to share - let me know!

Earlier this week Sherwood had an early morning fire alarm pulled in the building. The fire department responded, couldn't find the issue but silenced the alarm. A call went out to Hamilton Fire Control to come find what the issue was and in the meantime, Ken Joslin the Head Caretaker continued looking in various places for the reason for the alarm and finally found it. A fire damper was tripped but hidden behind a garbage can so it was difficult to find. Ken takes a lot of pride in his building and knowing his building and we can learn a lot from his example. Being familiar with your building and how it operates through the seasons can be a real asset for your team in the school when an emergency or urgent situation happens. Kudo's to Ken and his team at Sherwood for being on the ball and figuring the problem out!

The Team Is Working

I wanted to take just a minute to share some events that happened last week and half in our Local. One of our members had an issue with the Employee Support and Wellness Team. They had been off work due to an injury (not in the workplace) and went to their doctor to get the FAF filled out. Sent in the FAF and wanted to come back to work. Next day they get an email from Wellness saying that there isn't enough information on their FAF and that their sick benefits are being cut off back to and starting from their first day of absence. This also put them in an overpayment situation for money they had already been paid while off sick.

Luckily, this member didn't think this was right and called one of our stewards - Laurie Penner - and Laurie was able to ask the member the right questions and get the answers and then brought it to myself because she was going to be away last week for a health & safety conference. No time was wasted and we went into action knowing that this kind of decision goes directly against our sick leave language in C6 of the Collective Agreement. Within a few days, the decision was overturned, sick benefits were restored and an EFT payment was issued for the days the member wasn't paid last week. CUPE members are NOT penalized for their doctor not providing enough info on the FAF form.

By the time we reached our Staff Relations meeting on Friday, I closed out the meeting letting folks on the other side of the table know that our members get letters of direction and discipline for behavior that doesn't change - like showing up late or sitting after the start of your shift. Our expectation is that Ed Center staff are held to the same level. Making the same mistake over and over isn't acceptable, especially when it absolutely turns people's lives upside down and causes an enormous amount of undue stress, anxiety and emotional overload. Especially from a department under the banner of EMPLOYEE SUPPORT and Wellness.

Luckily for our member - Laurie knew what questions to ask, dates to get and would have been able to argue it on her own successfully if she wasn't going away but we're not about notching up wins for ourselves. Passing it on to someone else, giving all the information and an opinion on how to go about getting this resolved was all part of the process. Assisting, helping and navigating our collective agreement, employer policies and legislation for our members is what matters at the end of the day. She passed on the info and made sure I had it all and I ran with it from there. If she had been in town last week, she would've been sending the emails and making the phone calls with me as backup. End of the week, member happy, sick leave back in place and a full pay in the bank ended the week of just nicely.

Why do I say all this? There's lots of criticism and blame tossed around for our elected reps. We're not all experts on every aspect of working life. We have lives of our own outside of work. Sometimes you're going to hear "I'm not sure about that - let me check and get back to you." And that's exactly what I want someone to hear instead of getting bad or wrong information.

Sometimes issues aren't as easy to resolve as sending a very blunt email or raising voices over a phone call or in a meeting. It takes time to make sure your information is right, the facts line up and we're in the right to fight for someone that needs it because someone else overstepped again. We're working as a team together - there's nobody serving as an elected rep that does anything totally on their own or without assistance from someone.

We have lots of new people at the table, we have lots to learn and be trained on. Some of us have been around for a while and are used to a certain amount of criticism but remember when you have an issue and someone is trying to resolve it and figure it out for you because you don't know how to or even who to contact - they're doing it because they care, not because it's a full time job for them that they're paid for. A little patience and understanding goes a long way. A thank you at the end is like getting a basket of warm muffins waiting on your counter when you wake up in the morning.

Enjoy your weekend folks and don't forget to turn your clocks back this weekend! Yay for some extra sleep!

Cheers,

Blake