



Bargaining Update

March 6, 2013

Psychological Health in the Workplace

Your Pre-Bargaining Team has raised the issue of psychological health in the workplace, and proposed that psychological health be added to Article 32 of the Collective Agreement.

A recent Desjardins (2010) study of Canadian workers indicated that many identified insufficient salary, work overload, a lack of recognition, and negative work environments as major sources of workplace stress.

This is not dissimilar to what has been reported by many YEU members—constant overtime in some sectors, increasing reliance on Auxiliary-on-Call staff, inadequate staffing levels, and the push to do more with less. This has contributed directly to the increased stress being experienced daily by members. The cumulative effect is a potent hazard to their psychological health and well-being.

Increased stress leads to poor workplace mental health and a higher rate of short and long-term absences due to burnout, depression and anxiety. It also leads to job dissatisfaction, increased turnover and higher accident rates.

Recently, the Mental Health Commission of Canada in conjunction with the Canadian Standards Association released a national standard for psychological health in the workplace. Employers are encouraged to adopt this voluntary standard for developing a systematic approach to minimize or eliminate risks to the mental health of their employees.

This approach would include identifying organizational factors that could contribute to workplace stress, and developing programs and practices that support the mental well-being of everyone at work. There is much evidence and research to show that not only do employees benefit, but organizations gain as well through reduced costs and the productivity gains that come from a healthy and engaged workforce.

While the employer may already be doing some things that provide support to employees in the area of psychological health (having an EAP, for example), the Union feels very strongly that much more can and should be done. Psychological health and safety must be treated in the same way as physical health and safety. Prevention is key to building a healthier workplace.

Your Bargaining Team will continue to bring this very important issue forward at main table negotiations starting March 12. We hope that the employer will agree that they cannot afford to avoid dealing with the issue of psychological health in the workplace.

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