

CUPE BC Occupational Health & Safety Committee

Report to Convention – April 2018

The CUPE BC Occupational Health & Safety Committee meets several times a year in person or by conference call. We continue to strive to make our workplaces safer for all workers in British Columbia. The Committee discusses a variety of different subjects related to occupational health and safety with the shared objectives of improving workplace safety in many different capacities: by lobbying for improved legislation, advocating for regulation and Policy changes, addressing and strategizing on current and emerging issues. We are committed to raising awareness amongst our CUPE members regarding workplace hazards and effective means to reduce and ultimately, eliminate them. We are optimistic that under John Horgan and the BCNDP government that we will see improved legislation which will effectively result in improvements not just for our members, but for workers across the Province of BC.

For information on CUPE BC OH&S Committee safety activities and resources, please check the website at: www.cupe.bc.ca/occupational_health_and_safety_committee.

Violence in the Workplace

Violence in the workplace continues to be a major issue in all our workplaces and it comes in various forms; physical, verbal, psychological, and sexual. These serious violent incidents continue to increase exponentially in all sectors across British Columbia and throughout the Country. CUPE BC and CUPE National have committed to making this subject a priority focus and in doing so, encourages locals and district councils to order sufficient quantities of their updated 'Preventing Violence in the workplace' kits. These kits offer great tools to strengthen our OH&S committees, educate our members, and ultimately, work towards eliminating the horrors associated with workplace violence. To order these kits, please access the CUPE National website or make your request to your National Servicing Representative for assistance.

On January 18, 2018, CUPE BC sent a number of CUPE committee members to attend the BCTF summit on workplace violence in schools. Sister Theresa Alexander from the

OH&S Committee attended and reported that the summit provided an excellent opportunity for both the BCTF and CUPE to review current trends regarding workplace violence in schools through the sharing of personal experiences, making observations, and providing suggestions for improvements. Such ideas included discussions around current WorkSafeBC regulations, legislation and the opportunity for member engagement and education. CUPE's own, Brother Tom McKenna, was a panelist and provided an educated, experienced perspective regarding current workplace violence regulations in BC and drew relevant parallels to violence claims that came specifically from the education sector. A few points to highlight from the summit are as follows:

- BCTF/SFU bullying and Workplace Violence survey (preliminary) report was presented by SFU faculty and graduate students
- Incidents identifying workplace violence in the education sector are rapidly increasing despite the reality of vast under reporting
- 70% of violent incidents reported come from support workers; however, increases are prevalent among all employee groups in the education sector
- CUPE and the BCTF are optimistic that joint efforts will result in workplace improvements and reduce the number of violent incidents occurring
- BCTF organizers of the summit indicated that there would be future opportunities to collaborate and are committed to prioritizing this important issue within the education sector

Conferences

The CUPE BC OH&S Committee is pleased to have had attendance at the BCTF summit as referenced above. In addition, the CUPE BC Executive Board has approved two members of our committee to attend the upcoming Pacific Safety Centre-Western Conference on Safety.

The last CUPE BC Health and Safety Conference was held in Victoria in 2014. Our committee is working with the division to coordinate a date for another one in the near future. Health and safety affects members in all workplaces and in all sectors. There is a common, resonating statement from all members of our committee whereby the

notion is that the hosting of a conference is not only important, but crucial to the work we do, the awareness that must be raised, and the educational aspect that our members will undoubtedly be able to build from. Furthermore, a conference of this nature will provide an opportunity to give locals and district councils the opportunity to strengthen their own OH&S committees and work towards improving safety in the workplace for all members that they represent.

Resolutions to Convention

The CUPE BC OH&S Committee has re-submitted several resolutions to convention. In years past, many excellent resolutions were submitted that unfortunately, did not reach the floor of convention. The committee will continue to prioritize and advocate for the following resolutions:

- Employer requirements to ensure violence and threats in the workplace are taken seriously and acted upon.
- The importance of reporting violent incidents and near misses.
- Investigation and enforcement of violent Client to Worker investigations.
- Mental health and safety education in the provincial school system

Day of Mourning April 28th

In Canada, according to the Association of Workers Compensation Boards of Canada, nationally:

- *Approximately 1000 workers die*
- *Each day, almost 3 works die*
- *On an annual basis, workers suffer from 250,000 work-related injuries/diseases*
- *On a daily basis, workers suffer from 685 work-related injuries/diseases*

We pause every April 28th to remember workers killed and those still suffering from work related injury or illness and who have seen their lives and livelihoods forever compromised. Take time to remember by:

- Attending a Day of Mourning ceremony in your community while encouraging others to do the same. A complete list of ceremonies for the following areas can be found by accessing the BC Federation of Labour's website at:
dayofmourning.bc.ca
 - Cariboo, Kootenays, Lower Mainland, North West, Skeena-North Coast, Thompson Okanagan, Vancouver Island-Coast
- Draft a message for your local or district council's publication or website

- Coordinate a Day of Mourning event in your workplace
- Convince employers and public institutions to lower flags to half-mast
- Share the stories of workers injured and killed on the job and ensure that they are never forgotten

Every day, as activists, we shall mourn for the dead and fight for the living.

Conclusion

In closing, we would like to thank the CUPE BC Executive for their continued support, support staff at CUPE BC and the BC Regional Office. Tom McKenna has been a valuable resource and support mechanism for us. His knowledge and experience consistently prove to be crucial to our function and for that, we are grateful. We have also enjoyed working with CUPE National Communications Representative, Kathryn Davies, who has provided us with her expertise in all communication related projects that we have or will be executing.

Respectfully submitted:

Tanya Paterson, Chair
John Gibson, Co-Chair
Martha Higgins
Theresa Alexander
Michael Annesley
Kristy Brons
Dean Brotto
Nicole Cooke

Marie Dydzuk
Carlos Flores
Brian Larsen
Henry Lee
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Isabel Smith
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April 2018

move**up**