



Bluewater Occasional Teachers' Local

2019-2020 Report by Byron Harris
Health & Safety Officer

Health and Safety within the workplace is of great concern to both workers and management and is governed under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA). BWDSB has a site based system, with Joint H&S committees (JHSC) at each worksite. Occasional teachers are not attached to a single workplace, and so daily OTs are not affiliated with a specific JHSC. If OTs have a H&S concern about a specific workplace hazard they are encouraged to submit that concern to the relevant JHSC. But this can certainly be seen as restrictive or inadequate. However that is the system under which we work. If help be needed in submitting a concern or learning of response to that submission's concerns then members are encouraged to contact the Local's President who may then engage in determining steps towards resolution or remediation as required.

Fortunately here in BWDSB, unlike all other boards but one, there is a steering committee for H&S and the OT Local has a chair at that table. The steering Committee has no authority in the aspects assigned to local JHSCs in the areas of work refusals or critical injury investigations. However system wide H&S concerns do receive discussion and as this OT Local's representative to this committee I participate and bring forth Workers' Concerns on behalf of all workers, not confined to the OTs specifically. In the past this often concerns such things as monthly and annual site inspections, general lockdown protocols and site-based lockdown plans preparation, air quality testing, slip, trip, fall statistics, WSIB claims history etc.

New to this portfolio will be the Steering Committee's participation and comments upon the protocols that will emerge as the schools move toward reopening after the COVID-19 closures. It remains unknown how that will emerge, but the need to have OTs represented in this discussion has been voiced to the out-going director, Ms. Murray, by this representative and by this local's president. Our ongoing concerns will be forwarded to the incoming director, Ms. Wilder, as she assumes the responsibilities of her new role. This representative will remain vigilant and vocal in representing Workers' Concerns, with an eye towards specific concerns related to the role of Occasional Teachers.

Respectfully,

Byron Harris

Representative of Bluewater OT Local to the BWDSB Joint Health & Safety Steering Committee