TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

NAME: Kathi Smith
DATE SUBMITTED: April 1

NAME OF CONFERENCE: Labour Relations Conference

SPONSORING ORGANIZATION: Ontario Public School Boards Association

THEME: School Boards Collective Bargaining Act

CONFERENCE DATES: March 27-28, 2015

LOCATION: Sheraton Centre Toronto

WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS/PRESENTATIONS/KEYNOTE SPEECHES ATTENDED:

March 27

1. Minister of Education – Liz Sandals
   • The task at hand is to come up with a positive solution with our front line workers
   • Ultimately, it is important to do positive problem solving so that our students benefit
   • Ontario, in the long run, has a positive relationship with respect to Labour Relations
   • Our focus is on student achievement and wellbeing and enhancing public confidence
   • The provincial goal is to move Education from Good to Excellent
   • System leadership (senior staff and trustees) is a key driver in our education system

2. Succession Planning: a Proactive success Planning Process makes Good Business Sense – TVDSB HR Staff
   • Excellent presentation – new process to ensure succession plans for all levels of positions within the Board as well as great hiring practices
   • Be aware at all times of who might be leaving the organization – need a fluid plan that moves people across as well as up – not a generic plan that is one size fits all
   • Use talents of a team to help strengthen service to students as well as team members
   • Leadership in a school should be a well developed team that complements one another
   • Take a strategic approach to succession planning in all areas of the board – use all data that is available within the board
   • Always question whether leaving a position vacant for a period of time is the way to go
   • Consider positions not the people who hold the positions
   • Too often, people get moved up because they have always been there
   • As you systemically review the system, you can have more equity about various positions
   • Succession planning must align with vision, mission, goals and values
   • Must also align with policies and procedures
   • HR people must understand finance
   • Consider lateral moves to strengthen organization
   • Hire with more than one interview

3. Mental Health in the Workplace: We All Have a Role to Play – Karla Thorpe, Mental Health Commission of Canada
   • 40% of people will have to deal with a mental health issue
   • Mental health is not the absence of mental illness
   • Should be considered in same way as physical well being
Common Work Related Stress with Teachers include: Pressure on professional skills; students; difficult relations between parents/teachers; job demands; work environment; educational system; economic pressures
Cost of doing nothing: absenteeism; presenteeism/lack of productivity; disability claims; injuries/illnesses
Barriers to mental wellness – lack of respect; no culture of trust, not enough resources
New resource called “Assembling the Pieces”
The working Mind – training for employees and managers
Mental First Aid
Not making mental health a priority in an organization is a costly mistake

4. The Supreme Court Drops the Charter Bomb – Michael Hines
There is no charter right to strike
But always a wide berth has been given to collective bargaining (for over 14 years)
Right to associate is a derivative right
Collective bargaining has long been considered a fundamental Canadian right
It includes a right to a process of meaningful collective bargaining – the process is protected, not the results (more details available upon request)

March 28

5. Reg Pearson – Associate Deputy Minister, Bargaining & Compensation, Treasury Board Secretariat
One of the things missing is understanding the total cost of compensation costs which includes benefits (this is missing on both sides of the table)
Zero increases will have an impact on pensions
Net zero actually means – you can give increases, but you need to find the money somewhere within the dollars that you have, you will not receive more money
Within education, it is not possible to move dollars around as everything is enveloped
There is an inherent right to strike – it is fundamental
Should the government legislate workers back to work? Education is not an essential service but it is essential
Jeopardy needs to be in the equation before a decision is made – bargainers will have to make the decision

6. Buzz Hargrove – Former National President, CAW
Challenging time in the world
Economic challenge within our world as well
Only 6% in private sector are in unions in the USA
Focus is now on unions in the public sector
Federal government does not believe in the right to strike
Important to have respect for both parties on either side of the table

The clear message is that we are in challenging times with respect to labour relations within this province. The economic backdrop and the desire to manage the finances of the province means that negotiations take on a different flavour.

Full notes available upon request.