

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Name: Fred Meissner
Date Submitted: Monday May 1, 2023
Name of Conference: OPSBA Education Labour Relations & HR Symposium
Sponsoring Organization: WRDSB
Theme (if any): Labour Relations & Human Resources
Conference Dates: April 27-28, 2023
Location: Toronto Sheraton Centre

Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:

April 27, 2023:

Welcome: Cathy Abraham, OPSBA President

Keynote Speaker: Jason Lietaer: Enterprise Canada President

An enlightening introduction as to “how technology is changing the public affairs and communications landscape, including those “cutting edge tools that didn’t exist even a decade ago, such as influencer outreach, digital activations, and geo-targeting.”

Providing Inclusive and Safe Learning/Working Environments:

Jane Gooding, Partner, Filion Wakely Thorup Angeletti LLP
Melanie McNaught, Partner, Filion Wakely Thorup Angeletti LLP

A fascinating session which focussed “on the duty to accommodate all students and how this duty is balanced with a school board’s statutory obligations to employees.” As well, the presenters reviewed the “applicable responsibilities that school boards have under human rights, occupational health and safety, and education laws and how these responsibilities intersect,” and included “a number of actual and/or hypothetical cases involving school boards.”

Co-Creation of Staff Wellness Programs:

Lindsay Goerzen, Employee Support & Wellness Officer, Hamilton-Wentworth DSB
Lori Steacy, Manager, Employee Support & Wellness, Hamilton-Wentworth DSB

This interesting session presented “the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board’s (HWDSB) strategic development and co-creation of a comprehensive staff wellness program that is focused on supporting the holistic well-being of all HWDSB staff through inclusive, equitable, and evidence-informed wellness strategies.”

April 28, 2023:

Employee Wellness: Mental Health Resiliency:

Cathy Beach, Consultant, Attendance Support Services, SBCI

Denise Gibb, Wellness Officer, Greater Essex County DSB

An informative session that provided “an overview of best practices in developing a healthy workplace strategy focusing on the mental health and well-being of all staff through prevention promotion, and workplace support.” The audience learned “about the progress made to date including the development of an Employee Wellness Advisory Committee and the implementation of the GuardingMinds@Work survey accompanied by an organizational review.”

Policy into Practice through Collaboration:

Lisa Coppins, Senior Manager of People & Culture, Durham DSB

Heather Mundy, Superintendent of Equitable Education, People & Culture, Durham DSB

Jaime Sheepwash, Manager of Employee & Labour Relations, Lead Negotiator, DDSB

An enlightening workshop that outlined “how the Human Resources team embed the Indigenous Education Policy, Human Rights, Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Racism Policy and the Safe and Respectful Workplace and Harassment Prevention Policy into their daily work.” The presenters shared the “collaborative structures, processes and initiatives that have supported their policy implementation.”

Ambiguity of the Trustee Role in Bargaining? Trustees ONLY:

Cathy Abraham, President, OPSBA

Stephanie Donaldson, Executive Director, OPSBA

Kathleen Woodcock, OPSBA First Vice-President, Vice-Chair, WRDSB

This lively panel discussion included topics such as “the role of OPSBA, confidentiality, ratification and conflict of interest.” The panel shared “their reflections on the previous rounds of central bargaining over the last 9 years, since the implementation of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, as well as their experiences at their respective school boards.”

Managing Public Communication Regarding Human Resources Issues:

Erin Kelly, Director of Education, Greater Essex County DSB

Linda Nicholls, Acting Associate Director, Thames Valley DSB

Diane Pernari, General Manager, Communications, Ottawa Carleton DSB

“As a follow up to the Keynote presentation,” this panel led a discussion “regarding balancing public trust, transparency, and privacy when communicating about human resources matters in the public domain.” Panelists shared their “insights on how [they] have navigated through complex challenges, including those attracting media attention.”