

# TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

**Name:** Kathleen Woodcock

**Date Submitted:** May 2, 2023

**Name of Conference:** Labour Relations & Human Resources Symposium

**Sponsoring Organization:** Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)

**Theme (if any):** *"It's Your Future: Labour Relations"*

**Conference Dates:** April 27-28, 2023

**Location:** Sheraton Centre, Toronto

## **Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:**

### ***Keynote Speaker - Jason Lietaer, President Enterprise Canada***

Drawing from his experience in senior government roles and federal and provincial election campaigns, Mr. Lietaer provided some strategies on branding, crisis response, issues management and strategic communications. He also provided observations regarding how technology is changing the public affairs and communications landscape.

### ***Panel Discussion - Coping with Labour Disruptions***

Presenters: John-Paul Alexandrowicz, Partner, Grant Nuttall, Associate, Hicks Morley Hamilton Stewart Storie LLP; and Sari Taha, Superintendent of Human Resources, Halton DSB

Panelists discussed the overall framework established by legislation including the legal rules concerning union actions and planning for issues that may arise during local withdrawal of services.

### ***Networking Reception***

### ***Panel Discussion - Like, Double-Click and Comments: A Focus on Social Media***

Presenters: Sheila MacKinnon, Partner, Jessica Koper, Associate, Shibley Righton LLP; and Vicki Houston, Superintendent, Human Resources, Greater Essex County DSB

Panelists discussed some scenarios regarding social media as well as the limits of the use of social media, both in terms of postings and the use of technological devices in the workplace. The presentation also covered the law of defamation and the new tort of harassment in Ontario.

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## ***An Introduction to Two Tier Provincial Collective Bargaining in the Education Sector***

Presenters: Andrew Gold, Director of Labour Relations, and Janet Edwards, Associate Director of Labour Relations, OPSBA

The presenters provided a comprehensive overview of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act (SBCBA), lessons learned from past rounds of bargaining and what is new for the 2022-2026 round of collective bargaining. This session was for trustee attendees only.

## ***Panel Discussion - Ambiguity of the Trustee Role in Bargaining?***

Presenters: Cathy Abraham, President and Stephanie Donaldson, Executive Director, OPSBA; Kathleen Woodcock, OPSBA First Vice-President and Trustee, WRDSB

Panelists provided their reflections on the role of trustees during the bargaining process including the role of OPSBA, confidentiality, ratification and conflict of interest. They also provided some observations from their experiences at their respective school boards. This session was for trustee attendees only.

## ***Panel Discussion - Managing Public Communication Regarding Human Resources Issues***

Presenters: 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

Panelists discussed issues of balancing public trust, transparency and privacy when communicating about human resources matters in the public domain. This panel provided insights on how panels have navigated through rather complex challenges, including some that attracted considerable media attention.