

TRUSTEE CONFERENCE REPORT

Name: Kathleen Woodcock

Date Submitted: May 7, 2024

Name of Conference: Labour Relations & Human Resources Symposium

Sponsoring Organization: Ontario Public School Boards' Association

Theme (if any): Innovation & Transformation in a Changing Labour Relations Environment

Conference Dates: April 25 - 26, 2024

Location: Sheraton Centre, Queen St., Toronto, ON

Workshops/Seminars/Presentations/Keynote Speeches Attended:

Mental Health and Invisible Disabilities: Understanding the Obligations and Duties

Panel: *Chris Boulay, Superintendent of Human Resources, Greater Essex County DSB; Jessica Koper, Associate, Shibley Righton LLP; Sheila MacKinnon, Partner, Shibley Righton LLP*

Mental health illnesses, addictions, environmental sensitivities, learning disabilities and other conditions that are non-visible are considered 'invisible disabilities' and pose unique challenges to both employees and employers in the workplace. The panel members discussed best practices, some of the latest cases and an employer's legal duty to inquire.

Networking Reception

Dos and Don'ts of Social Media in the School Setting

Panel: *Chris Boulay, Superintendent of Human Resources, Greater Essex County DSB; Melissa Eldridge, Partner & Co-Chair, National School Boards Practice, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP; John-Paul Alexandrowicz, Partner & Co-Chair, National School Boards Practice, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP*

Many school boards have landed in hot water recently, after someone within the organization has posted or reported a contentious comment on social media. How can a school board effectively manage social media use and investigate social media misconduct? The panel provided some friendly reminders and best practices for social media in the school setting such as the legal ability of employers to address employees'

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off-duty conduct, the heightened legal duties of employees, developing an effective social media policy and privacy considerations.

Making Policy Work: Increasing Representation & Belonging in the Workplace

Panel: *Deepa Ahluwalia, Human Rights & Equity Advisor, Waterloo Region DSB; Carol Dey, Executive Manager of Human Resources, Waterloo Region DSB; Graham Shantz, Associate Director, Waterloo Region DSB; Travis Park, Project Manager, Waterloo Region DSB*

The panel members shared their journey into responding to the direction from PPM 16, related to developing and implementing fair, consistent, and transparent hiring practices to bring a qualified and diverse workforce. The team shared the development of the term “lived experience” vis a vis “life experience”, the new hiring policy, the existing employee networks for Indigenous, Black and racialized employees and how the Board is working to hold themselves accountable. The interactive session provided an opportunity for dialogue with attendees.

The Ransomware Threat - A People Problem

Panel: *Mark Anderson, Director of Claims & Legal Services, Ontario School Boards Insurance Exchange; Dan Michaluk, Partner & National Co-Leader, Cyber Security, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP; David Wright, Associate Director, Corporate Services & Treasurer of the Board, Durham DSB*

School boards are facing the unfortunate reality of ransomware attacks. Threat actors target employee personal information, and thus are a top employee and labour relations concern. The panel members highlighted the critical importance of implementing robust strategies to mitigate the impact of ransomware attacks. Participants heard about what to prepare for in the event of a cyber incident and how employees are the key to a strong defence.