

CUPE WIRE

Official Publication of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 38
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Stress at the Workplace

Some simple questions and answers

What is a healthy job?

A healthy job is likely to be one where the pressures on employees are appropriate in relation to their abilities and resources, to the amount of control they have over their work, and to the support they receive from people who matter to them. As health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but a positive state of complete physical, mental and social well-being (WHO, 1986), a healthy working environment is one in which there is not only an absence of harmful conditions but an abundance of health-promoting ones.

These may include continuous assessment of risks to health, the provision of appropriate information and training on health issues and the availability of health promoting organisational support practices and structures. A healthy work environment is one in which staff have made health and health promotion a priority and part of their working lives.

What is work-related stress?

- Work-related stress is the response people may have when presented with work demands and pressures that are not matched to their knowledge and abilities and which challenge their ability to cope.
- Stress occurs in a wide range of work circumstances but is often made worse when employees feel they have little support from supervisors and colleagues, as well as little control over work processes.
- There is often confusion between pressure or challenge and stress and sometimes it is used to excuse bad management practice.

Pressure at the workplace is unavoidable due to the demands of the contemporary work environment. Pressure perceived as acceptable by an individual, may even keep workers alert, motivated, able to work and learn, depending on the available resources and personal characteristics. However, when that pressure becomes excessive or otherwise unmanageable it leads to stress. Stress can damage an employees' health and the business performance.

Work-related stress can be caused by poor work organisation (the way we design jobs and work systems, and the

way we manage them), by poor work design (for example, lack of control over work processes), poor management, unsatisfactory working conditions, and lack of support from colleagues and supervisors.

Research findings show that the most stressful type of work is that which values excessive demands and pressures that are not matched to workers' knowledge and abilities, where there is little opportunity to exercise any choice or control, and where there is little support from others.

Employees are less likely to experience work-related stress when—demands and pressures of work are matched to their knowledge and abilities—control can be exercised over their work and the way they do it—support is received from supervisors and colleagues—participation in decisions that concern their jobs is provided.

http://www.who.int/occupational_health/topics/stressatwp/en/

So what can and should employers do?

Since stressors vary by profession, employers can start by talking to workers about the specific conditions that drive stress in a particular job, things like a harmful or unsafe workplace, understaffing, variable hours, overwork or expanded responsibilities due to downsizing, inadequate or failing equipment or materials, and a lack of regular and clear supervisor feedback.

"It isn't all... 'if we only go to the gym and have an apple every day, this will all go away,' " said Blendon [see link below]

Offering financial incentives to get healthy isn't the answer either, said Quelch. "Just motivating people on price may result in a behaviour change, but it does not result in attitudinal commitment, it does not result in a change in passion or perspective—it's just superficial.

Paloma agreed. [see link below] "If it's not a part of the culture of the company, if it's a one-off thing, then research has shown that it does not work." she said. Companies need to take a more holistic approach to worker health, one that extends beyond 9 to 5. "If we're really going to have an impact, if we're going to care about our employees—their health and well-being—and [the] productivity of our country, of the world, we've got to be investing in the communities and meeting the health needs of the communities we live in."

<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2016/07/the-high-price-of-workplace-stress/>

Thank you Stewards!

Having active stewards is vital to any union. They are the link to the workplace and to the members on a daily basis. Active stewards will regularly attend membership meetings and share the information they learn with other members in their workplace. They become the go-to person for members in their business unit to come to when they have a question or concern about work practices and the collective agreement. This communication component, helps to connect the member and the steward in solidarity, as we work to reach the goal of a fair and equitable workplace.

Stewards are given union education opportunities to broaden their knowledge of the labour movement and to better understand labour practices. Having this knowledge allows a steward to interpret the collective agreement and recognize how it applies in their workplace. This training is critical in being able to identify possible violations of the collective agreement as opposed to poor management style. Each work unit has its unique challenges and issues and having a steward familiar with the area, helps the union to identify where the problems are occurring.

While our stewards are representatives of the union in the workplace, their role does not include approving management processes on behalf of the union. Occasionally, the employer will approach the steward to obtain feedback on how the union may view potential changes in process. While the steward is a worker in the area that will be directly impacted by any changes, and providing feedback from a worker's view is encouraged, they do not speak for the union. If approached in this manner, the steward should make it clear that they do not hold that responsibility. If while being presented with a process change, the steward identifies a possible violation of the collective agreement, they should pass that information to the union office to be handled through the appropriate channels. Communication is crucial to avoiding problems before they impact the membership.

Our stewards have a vast knowledge of the issues relating to health and safety practices, collective bargaining, respect in the workplace and fair labour practices. Get to know the steward in your area, and if there is no steward, consider becoming one! The union office is available for you to contact with your questions on how to find your steward or how to become one.

Local 38 Awards Scholarships!

Recently, CUPE 38 held its annual Scholarship contest for students pursuing post-secondary studies. Students were asked to write on a selection of topics regarding issues and opportunities impacting unions both locally and globally. Out of nine total essays submitted, two were selected as the winners of the competition.

Congratulations to **Kristyn Coons** and **Keeliana Hopkins**, who will each receive a \$1000 scholarship, and a special thank you to each of the students who participated! We look forward to continuing this tradition in 2018.

Following is an excerpt from Kristyn Coons' submission, on "challenges facing unions in Alberta over the next 20 years."

"As our economy in Alberta continues to grow and evolve, unions will continue to face a number of significant challenges. Some of these challenges will include tough bargaining in the renewal of Collective Agreements, the general public's misconception around union workers, as well as the ongoing fight to increase unionization rates across Alberta.

Over the years, the public's perception of unions has seen a slight slide in reputation. Unionized workers are sometimes seen as lazy, overpaid, underqualified and entitled. This perception has developed an ongoing public relations issue that needs to be addressed. Unions have long fought for fair pay, equal pay across genders and ethnicities, as well as for regular pay increases that can keep up with rising inflation. All of this done in an effort to increase the standard of living for Alberta workers... Until the public is further educated on what it means to be part of a union, and Albertans [are reminded] of the benefits unions bring to the table, like equal pay, job satisfaction, and career progression, this old fashioned misconception will continue to develop into the future.

With over two million employed Albertans and almost 400,000 employees covered by a union agreement, unions have plenty of opportunity for growth in Alberta. The provinces overall unionization rate is estimated at just 23.5% leaving a large slice of the pie untouched. Over the next 20 years, Alberta unions may see an increase in demand for unionization due to an increasingly pro-union millennial generation...

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EVENT NOTICE:

Your Social Committee is pleased to offer discounted tickets for the

CALGARY HITMEN TEDDY BEAR TOSS

Sunday, December 10, 2017
at 2:00 pm

Tickets will be on sale from
November 1st to 29th, 2017

Check the website on November 1 for a list of Stewards selling the tickets at
www.cupe38.org

Tickets are \$10.00 each with a maximum of 4 tickets per Local 38 member

CASH ONLY – NO REFUNDS

Tickets are first-come, first-served with no reservations taken

Tickets are NOT available thru the office

For further information please contact the Social Committee at:

cupe38socialcommittee@gmail.com



THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH



The capacity to learn is a gift;
the ability to learn is a skill;
the willingness to learn is a choice.

~ Brian Herbert

Local 38 Awards Scholarships

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This could result in a major breakthrough for unions looking ahead but it does not come without opposition. The private sector has been known to challenge the concept of unionization, sitting at just 10.8% of employees covered by a union agreement compared to a whopping 70.7% of public sector employees... [In a recent email obtained by The Canadian Press,] WestJet warned employees to be “armed with the facts” about unionization saying that “unions are a business” and that “unions are opportunistically trying to grow their business by targeting WestJetters.” The solution to this [type of resistance] would be to reinforce the concept that unionization is intended to benefit both employees and employers, to establish a win-win situation with companies in the private sector.

As Alberta continues to develop and change its economic landscape, challenges of bargaining, perceptions, and the effort to unionize Alberta will continue to face obstacles... Attempting to provide mutually beneficial solutions will be sustainable in moving unions forward into the future.”

2017 Children's Christmas Party



The 2017 Children's Christmas Party registration form is enclosed in this issue of the newsletter. The party will be held on Saturday, December 9, 2017 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

NEW LOCATION: Genesis Centre
7555 Falconridge BV NE.

***Please make note
of the new location for this event***

The facility entrance at Genesis Centre's north parking lot (adjacent to the high school) will take you to the party location. If using the south parking lot, enter the facility and walk through to the “feature gymnasium”. A map will be posted on Local 38's website www.cupe38.org.

Get involved!

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP MEETING

All CUPE 38 Members Invited to Attend



**When: Tuesday, October 24, 2017
at 7:00 p.m.**

**Where: CUPE 38 Office,
1439-9 Avenue SE**

Business: Regular & Elections

Elections:

1. Two (2) Members to Occupational Health & Safety Committee
2. One (1) Member to Equal Opportunities Committee
3. One (1) Member to Social Committee
4. One (1) Eligible Member to Executive Board—2 year term
5. By-Election for One (1) Trustee (Term to 2019)

GENERAL MEETING

OF CUPE LOCAL 38 LABOUR ORGANIZATION SOCIETY

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2017

UPON ADJOURNMENT OF REGULAR MEETING