

CUPE WIRE

Official Publication of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, Local 38
1439—9th Av. SE, Calgary, T2G 0T4, Phone (403)233-2700 Fax (403)290-1757
Email—office@cupe38.org Website-www.cupe38.org

VOLUME 25 ISSUE 9



November 2017

When Workload Becomes Overwork

Over the past few months, we have received feedback from members that the number one issue facing our members is high workload demands. We all experience increased workload from time to time --- some call it a bottleneck, where the increase in workload is short-term and due to competing deadlines. The key to this type of workload issue is that it is short-term in nature.

What our members are experiencing does not fall into this category. Our feedback indicates that members are facing on-going and systemic heavy workload demands. In short, CUPE members are facing Overwork.

Overwork is a growing health and safety hazard for our members that is closely related to organizational changes in our workplaces. A simple definition of overwork is too many duties and responsibilities for one worker, with too few hours in the day to complete all that is required. It also includes fewer workers doing the same amount of work previously done by more workers.

Some or all of the following characterizes overwork:

- Working long and difficult hours.
- Unreasonable work demands.
- Pressured/bullied to work overtime (paid and unpaid).
- Fewer rest breaks, days off, holidays and vacation.
- Faster, more pressured work pace.
- Performance monitoring.
- Unrealistic management expectations.
- Additional, often inappropriate, tasks piled on top of "core" duties (e.g., doing more than one job).

Overwork is a consequence of changes in work organization. Specifically, cutbacks, privatization, downsizing and their effects all contribute to overwork. With overwork, control is taken from workers and placed squarely and completely with employers.

The causes of overwork include:

- Conflicting demands from employers.
- Insufficient training, guidance and support from employers.

- Too many additional responsibilities.
- Worker isolation and lack of contact with co-workers.
- Downloading of management responsibilities on to workers.
- No replacement of workers who are away sick or on holidays.
- Staff not being replaced upon retirement.
- Budgetary cutbacks.
- Missing breaks and working through lunches.

Overwork affects the physical and psychological health of employees. But it does more than this when the effects spill out of the workplace and negatively affect members' family lives. The cumulative effects of overwork can be devastating. Major outcomes of overwork can be grouped under the following headings:

- Stress.
- Burnout (including exhaustion and fatigue).
- Musculoskeletal injuries.
- Depression and anxiety.
- Family conflict.
- Gastrointestinal disorders.
- Increased exposure to health and safety hazards such as noise, temperature extremes and hazardous substances.

Overwork hazards are largely centred on issues of control and work organization. Taking action on overwork therefore involves members exercising their own control at work.

The following actions can help combat overwork:

- Take your breaks.
- Refuse unsafe overwork conditions.
- Report overwork hazards on health and safety reporting forms.
- Keep you Manager informed of high volumes of work.
- Clearly express that competing deadlines are unachievable.
- Overtime is for unexpected situations that arise, not for normal regular duties. If excessive overtime is occurring, contact the Union office.



Reminder of Children's Christmas Party

The 2017 Children's Christmas Party will be held on Saturday, Dec. 9, 2017 at the **Genesis Centre, 7555 Falconridge Blvd NE** from 9:00 am to 11:00 am.

If you have sent in your application and are registered for the party, we look forward to seeing you on December 9th.

For those who registered but are unable to attend the event on Dec. 9th, gift pick up will be at the Local 38 office at 1439-9th Ave SE from Monday, Dec 11 to Wednesday, Dec 13 between the hours of 7:30 am—3:30 pm. If coming over a lunch hour (between 12:00-1:00 pm), please call the Union office at 403-233-2700 to ensure someone will be able to assist you. Gifts not picked up by 3:30 pm on December 13th will be donated to charity.

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH



Never regret a day in your life: good days give happiness, bad days give experience, worst days give lessons, and best days give memories.

Looking to become involved in the Union?

CUPE 38 has four standing committees to assist with the work of the Local.

Social Committee – this committee organizes approved functions such as the Children's Christmas Party, the annual Retirement banquet and a variety of social events, such as the Hitman games tickets.

Occupational Health and Safety – this committee reports on health and safety concerns, arranges on-site inspections and educates the members on H&S matters.

Public Relations and Education – this committee keeps the membership informed of Local issues, National issues and general Labour issues. They produce content for the newsletter and recommend information for the website.

Equal Opportunities – this committee focuses on workplace issues affecting equity issues relating to women, workers of colour, workers with disabilities, and the LGBT community.

Committee members are elected at the Regular General membership and participation is open to all Local 38 members.

Important Notice:

Due to the holiday season, the December Regular Membership Meeting has been rescheduled to Tuesday, December 19, 2017. Come by at 7:00 pm for the meeting and stay for the small Holiday Social afterwards.



Get involved!

REGULAR MEMBERSHIP MEETING

All CUPE 38 Members Invited to Attend



**When: Tuesday, November 28, 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. By-Election for One (1) Trustee (Term to 2019)
5. Six (6) Eligible Delegates to AFL Winter School, Jan 14-19, 2018 in Jasper

Advance Notice:

Election for Eighteen (18) Eligible Delegates to CUPE Alberta Division Convention, March 13-16, 2017 in Grande Prairie will be held at the December Regular Meeting