



# NEWSLETTER

published occasionally

## Local 527 General Meetings

Local 527 is having two important General Meetings. The first takes place on Thursday January 24 from 12 noon to 1:15 pm and from 1:15 pm to 2 pm at the Queens Park office, 525 University Ave, 7th Floor. The focus is on OPS bargaining, and we will also elect Local Employee Relations Committee (LERC) representatives for each of Ministry of Citizenship (MCZP), Ministry of Labour (MOL) and Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation (MTCR).

The second meeting will be held on Friday February 15. Agenda items include review and approval of resolutions to the annual OPSEU convention; election of WSIAT bargaining team members; and election of an MOL V.P. for the Local 527 Local Executive Committee. To date, Felicity Fowke and Noela Oliveira have expressed interest in being WSIAT bargaining team representatives and Kevin Hogan is interested in being an Alternate. Ruth E. Adams has expressed interest in being the MOL V.P.

## Health Hazards at the Office

*By Fausta Siu, Steward, Citizenship*

Moulds have been found in many buildings throughout the province where OPSEU members work. Most common moulds are not hazardous to healthy people but they can make you sick. People who have asthma, hayfever or other allergies can have an adverse reaction to moulds. Symptoms include running nose, eye and throat irritation and/or cough. Some people may experience unusual fatigue, headaches, or difficulty in concentrating. Asthmatics who are sensitive to moulds may react with more frequent and severe asthmatic attacks. Prolonged exposure to moulds may cause some people to develop allergies.

Workers who spend long hours at the computer or handling bulky objects can be subject to repetitive motion injuries of the hands and wrists. This may be experienced as numbness, tingling, fatigue or pain in one or both hands or forearms.

Brothers and sisters, do you have any concerns regarding air quality, temperature, lighting, chemicals, equipment and workspace design? Please come forward and contact the Union Steward or Health and Safety Union Representatives in your area. Once your Representative documents your and your co-workers' concerns, the union can seek corrective measures from the employer.

*Note: At the request of the WSIAT Joint Health and Safety Committee, Local 527 members working in the basement at 505 University have been relocated until toxic mould and bacteria are removed from the area. Testing has been conducted throughout the building to rule out contamination elsewhere. Many of our affected members have filed WSIB claims in case of any long-term consequences.*

Contributions  
welcome!  
Please contact your  
Local Executive  
Officer

## Local 527 Web Site

*by Kevin Hogan, Steward, WSIAT*

As the OPS enters its final stages of bargaining, accurate and up to date information becomes essential. Local 527 now has a web site that can be accessed at

<http://www.local527.ca>. The site includes an online forum that posts messages instantly, where questions and concerns can be discussed. It goes without saying that, particularly in the event of an OPS strike or lockout, the site would be a simple and effective means of communication.

We welcome members to visit the site and provide feedback. The site will be updated regularly to include both OPS and WSIAT news and information for Local members.

Please forward any comments or suggestions to either of the below:

kevin.hogan@wst.gov.on.ca  
melinda.reyes@wst.gov.on.ca



# Local Employee Relations Committee and Labour Management Committees at Local 527

*By Rod Sawyer, President, Local 527*

The purpose of Employee Relations Committees or Labour Management Committees is to foster effective and productive communications and labour relations between the Employer (represented by Management) and the Union, and to promote constructive and harmonious workplace relationships. Meetings usually take place every two months.

At the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal (WSIAT) part of Local 527, a Labour Management Committee (LMC) tries to achieve the above goal. Three Local 527 representatives from WSIAT meet with 3 management representatives. Local members submit their concerns to their stewards and these are put on LMC meeting agendas. Minutes are published so that members can see their concerns met. Ideally, from the union perspective, if there is a management practice that is offensive to members, management representatives agree to it being corrected. Both management and the union can invite guests to help in discussion of various issues.

Labour management committees can address issues of fairness in the workplace, information sharing between management and the union, pre-grievance or non-grievance dispute resolution, and other matters.

In the OPS, labour management committees can be created by the union and management for buildings covered by the Local. In the OPS, these committees are called Local Employee Relations Committees (LERCs). Currently, there are no LERCs for any of Ministry of Labour (MOL), Ministry of Citizenship (MCZP) and Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation (MTCR). MOL management, fortunately, have agreed to establish one. This will cover MOL employees at 400 and 505 University Avenue as well as the new location, 655 Bay Street 14th floor.

MCZP / MTCR's shared Human Resources department has balked at creating LERCs, and have been supported in this position by the respective Deputy Ministers, Bill Allen and Donald Obonsawin. HR and the Deputies believe that an informal disputes mechanism exists and can resolve labour disputes at these Ministries. Such a mechanism, however, does not exist, and frequently Local emails to MCZP / MTCR HR receive no response. We need LERCs at MOL, MCZP and MTCR to improve labour relations at all of the three Ministries the Local covers.

To establish LERCs at MOL, MCZP and MTCR, by OPSEU rules, we must elect representatives. Then we can approach management at each Ministry with our representatives. We have Local representatives from all 3 Ministries willing to be LERC representatives. For MOL, they are Ruth E. Adams, Elaine Hector and Victoria Lernell. For MCZP they are Paul de Rege, John Rae and Fausta Siu. For MTCR, John Carter, Malcolm Horne and I

will run. LERC elections will follow the OPS bargaining session at the Local 527 General Meeting on January 24 that targets OPS bargaining. Please participate in these elections! With hope LERCs can help smooth labour relations at all 3 Ministries covered by the OPS side of Local 527.

## Using Email to Manage the Verbal Manager

*By Rod Sawyer, President, Local 527*

Many managers like to pass on comments or instructions verbally. It's easy, it's a great way to communicate, and it's personal. However, some Verbal Managers avoid written or electronic communication in order to advance their own agendas. In those cases, our members can use email to document the verbal exchange and protect our own interests.

A consultant in the Tourism, Culture and Recreation part of the Local was asked verbally by their manager to change a grants formula to accommodate the manager's favourite clients. The funding formula is subject to approval by the Minister's office and the manager did not have the authority to make this change. If the discrepancy were to come to light later, the manager would have been sure to point the finger of blame to our member. Knowing this, the consultant emailed the manager to confirm the instructions and reiterate the consultant's concerns. The manager quickly realized their directive was exposed, and cancelled the instructions.

In situations where a manager is harassing or discriminating against an employee, most managers are smart enough not to put this abuse in writing. Frequently these exchanges take place in manager's offices or when no witnesses are around. It is best to document what the manager has said, back to the manager on email. Use phrases like "this is to confirm in writing that you said (note the objectionable behavior, harassment or discrimination here) on (date and time)". Request that the behavior stop. You can add something like "if I do not hear back from you in writing, I will assume you agree with what I have said".

Save the email to your personal drive. I suggest creating a folder and calling it something like "Management Practices". From time to time, copy your folder to a diskette, and keep the diskette in a safe place, or at home. Use read receipts to note that the manager has read the email - save these to your "Management Practices" folder as well. You can also "cc" or forward the email to your steward. I suggest using email to document each and every discrimination and harassment situation resulting from a verbal exchange.

Tactical use of e-mail can help to curtail the Verbal Manager's worst excesses and restore harmony to the workplace. Email records also help the Local when we take on harassment or unfair discipline cases as grievances.