Injured Workers and Health & Safety Conference October 16 to 21, 2018

I was able to make it in time to see Fred Hahn speak at the opening plenary, and was not disappointed. He has a way of energizing people, motivating them to get loud and proud about our Union.

The first break out session I was involved in was WSIB 101

During this session, some of the key things I learned about were:

There is now a CMS form 8 (stress)

Some Locals have it in their CA that the employer will top up to 100% while on WSIB (bargainable)

After 72 months, LOE is made permanent

Survivors have 6 months to claim after death of a worker

PTSD claims are up 1000% since legislation was introduced in 2016

The 2nd session I sat in was Occupational Disease and How to Report

During this session, we learned the Coles’ notes version of reporting any and all injuries, but the focus was more on what to look for in less obvious cases. There was also a lot of emphasis put on reporting the smaller incidents, such as paper cuts. As an example, if you work in a dirty environment, or there is bacteria on a surface and it gets into the cut, it could become infected and a more severe issue is the result. The biggest warning was to be aware of your environment, and report anything “off”. Occ disease comes from odours, lights, patterns, substances, building materials, and have a huge impact on our day to day lives

We also came together as a large group to hear from many speakers who spoke passionately about their experiences. One woman, Sandra kinart, detailed how 5 members of her family have died from cancer caused by asbestos. She went on to explain how asbestos fibres are extremely small, and can’t be seen by the human eye, yet it only takes one exposure to cause damage, up to and including death. She spoke of the asbestos mine in Quebec, and how it’s only temporarily closed – the current owner doesn’t have the funds to keep it going, and if another company did, they could re-open it and continue to mine. But the laws are changing, and the reports are challenging current laws

I also attended the Social Services Breakout session, where again there was constant reference to “if in doubt, fill it out”, meaning – make a report of the incident, because you never know what might come of it in a year (or 10) down the road.

They brought up a number of “emerging issues” and an action plan for reporting and following up. We also learned the greater importance of filling out the “workplace near miss form” to aid in reporting (Form 6, but filled out when it’s something “before” an issue – bumped your head on a cabinet, but did not break the skin, paper cut requiring a bandaid, tripping but not falling over an upturned floor tile)

There were also a number of handouts, booklets and kits included in out packages, which will be available for anyone to read