

CUPE National Sector Conference

November 5-8, 2018

Shaw Conference Centre, Ottawa

I would like to thank the membership for allowing me to attend my first National Sector Conference that took place in Ottawa.

Some highlights were:

- The discussion regarding the recent legality of cannabis and impacts at the workplace such as impairments and ramifications with oral, inhaled, both and average lengths of time it remains in the system and impairments and how the employer may try to combat employees using the substance (ie: drug testing); what constitutes addiction (ie: if you have to use every day before work; you are most likely addicted); and how it alters brain functions; discipline for off-duty conduct is only permitted in very narrow circumstances; how it may impact an employee's work performance. Even testing is ONLY allowed in a safety-sensitive environment if the workplace endorses testing at all.
- How mental health is everyone's business; role of the workplaces; and how as many as 500,000 Canadian in any given week are unable to work due to mental health problems or illnesses (this does not include "sick" time).
- Labour Force Shortage affecting Pensions – a professor from the Ottawa University has found birth rates are declining throughout the world and populations is aging. This is ultimately affecting our Pension as there are less contributing. As such, a dramatic increase in immigration will be needed to close the gap of those paying into pensions. Ultimately, automation will be replacing jobs (ie: your order-menus at McDonalds, self-serve check-outs, etc are already in play). Although the speaker was highly entertaining; her facts and predictions were chillingly real.

A great conference of good information adds to our arsenal of how to keep working toward protecting our members.

Yours in solidarity,

Marg Lemoine
Secretary, CUPE Local 973