

COUSA MEDIA RELEASE

COUSA Conference: June 11-13, 2010

- Intergenerational Communications
- Ontario's Anti-Bullying Law
- New Executive Elected

The intricacies of intergenerational communications can challenge associations and unions to maintain their relevance with young workers. Organizations have to learn new ways to recruit the next generation of leadership. A second workshop emphasized the uncertainties of using the new anti-bullying provisions of the amended Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA).



The intergenerational workshop, led by **Shirley Riva**, required the participation of both young workers and workers of other generations who are young at heart. Participants confronted the different meanings that members of different generations infer from the same messages. The aim was to increase everyone's awareness of the needs and the realities of different generations in the workplace and in representative organizations. Participants came away with a level of comfort and skills for engaging in meaningful cross-generational dialogue.



The afternoon workshop “Workplace Harassment and Bullying” was led by **Catherine Burr**. At long last bullying is now designated as an occupational hazard under Ontario law. Catherine explored the benefits of placing harassment in the OHSA rather than under Human Rights law. Being a potential occupational hazard puts the issue of workplace bullying squarely before the legion of health and safety committees across the province. The law also delegitimizes bullying in the same way as smoking bans delegitimized smoking. Actually

using the law to investigate a claim or to carry out a work refusal, for instance, is far more problematic. None of the definitions has yet been tested. An abundance of caution is recommended.

The conference also saw elections for the COUSA Executive. The new COUSA Executive is:

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| Barry Diacon – President | Stephen Markan – Secretary |
| Keith Goulet – Treasurer | Fran Parry – Vice-President (Internal) |
| Gail Everall – Vice-President (External) | Rob Bell – Past-President |

Since Dawn Munday is retiring from not only the COUSA Presidency, but also from her job at the University of Western Ontario, Rob Bell agreed to continue in the Past-President role.

The morning workshop was presented by three workers from the Public Service Alliance Canada (PSAC): Shirley A. Riva, **Shell Sweeney** and **Todd Woytik**. Shirley Riva is the Education Officer for PSAC, Ontario Region, responsible for the PSAC Union Education Program. Shirley develops and delivers courses in Leadership, Human Rights, Representation Union Governance, Bargaining, International Solidarity, Popular Economics and Activism.

The afternoon workshop presenter was Catherine Burr. Catherine is considered by many to be a Canadian Expert on workplace harassment and bullying. She has worked for both the Canadian and Ontario Human rights Commissions. Since 1990 Catherine has had her own consultancy firm specializing in working with public, private and non-profit sector employers and unions.

Given the recent amendments to the *Occupational Health & Safety Act* (Bill 168 re: workplace violence, workplace domestic violence, and workplace harassment, effective June 15, 2010), it is even more important to understand, prevent and respond effectively to these challenging workplace issues.

The COUSA Summer 2010 conference was hosted by Wilfrid Laurier University Staff Association and the University of Waterloo Staff Association. It was held at the Waterloo Inn in Waterloo.



June 13, 2010 Business meeting:

In the back row: Jason Gorrie (Waterloo), Mark Publicover (Queen's), Gail Everall (Lakehead), Keith Goulet (WLU), Stephen Markan (Waterloo), Gaston Taylor (Carleton), Rob Bell (Lakehead).

In the front row: Gail Spencer (Waterloo), Gillian Berry (Queen's), Pam Griffin-Cody (Carleton), Debi Rideout (Brock), Fran Parry (WLU), Lesa Mansfield (Brock), Sandra

Castellanos (WLU), Dawn Munday (Western) and COUSA President, Barry Diacon (McMaster).