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WHMIS Has Changed!

Get recertified through CLAC

Federal WHMIS legislation has been amended to align with the Globally Harmonized System for Classifying and Labeling Chemicals (GHS). CLAC has developed a new online course to ensure you are up-to-date on the new standards.

This course is free to CLAC members employed by bargaining units that participate in the training fund.

Visit clac.ca/whmis2015 to register and learn more.

Those Lazy Summer Days?

By the time this newsletter arrives, we'll be well into the summer season. As my friend from South Africa observed recently, we Canadians really appreciate our summer months. We seem to collectively assume a more relaxed pace in July and August. When the days are long and warm, perhaps we just accept a more patient posture as the entire nation works to coordinate their work and home schedules to enjoy a week or two away.

While our neighbours seems to be ratcheting down their work pace, call volume increases for volunteer firefighters. For those who manage Ontario's rural areas, summer can be treacherous. Backyard barbecues and campfires can be the source of risk, but so can fireworks and wildfires. For many of our members, summertime means an increased population in their area as cottagers and campers arrive.

It's also a time when our own members might want some R&R at the cottage or camp. This can mean diminished response numbers. In the volunteer world, this is generally managed informally, with each station adapting its own system for tracking which members are away for the week, or the weekend.

Tracking planned vacation time provides officers and incident commanders with better information about likely response numbers. Planning vacations well in advance, and publishing those vacation schedules at the hall, can allow others to book their time off with the impact on the hall in mind. In Sudbury, volunteers take turns on weekend standby duty during the summer months to ensure that response times don't diminish.

Whatever practice is at use in your hall for vacation tracking, consider making vacation tracking and planning a part of your next training event. A good strategy will allow peace of mind for all members as we prepare for the summer call volume, and our members' own vacation plans.

Ian DeWaard, Cambridge Regional Director



Local Updates

Local 911

The Greater Hamilton Volunteer Firefighters Association, CLAC Local 911, held its annual general meeting on June 14, 2016. At the meeting, Paul Osborne and Mario Kovacevic were elected to serve on the board along with current board members Paul Leggatt, Michael O’Blenis, and Coleman Robinson. Paul Leggatt was selected to serve another year as president, a decision endorsed by those present.

The members heard updates on negotiations with the City of Hamilton and on grievance resolutions that were reached for our members. There was also a discussion on a retirement ceremony that will take place before the end of 2016. The local also committed to sponsoring the Canadian Fallen Firefighter Memorial in Ottawa for another year.

Ryan Gauthier, volunteer training officer, spoke to us about the training officers’ seminars at the OAFCA 2016 conference in Toronto that he attended. The seminars covered a review of the Lac Megantic train derailment; managing workplace behaviour, human behaviour and psychology in the fire house; and PTSD. The highlight of the conference was a presentation by Dr. David Griffin, who was the driver of the first engine to respond to the 2007 Sofa Super Store fire that claimed the lives of nine firefighters—the “Charleston 9.” Dr. Griffin spoke about the tragic fire and how that crisis impacted both the fire department and his personal life. He highlighted the importance of each firefighter’s responsibility to be committed to organizational change and continuous learning and improvement so that tragedies like the one in Charleston aren’t repeated.

Local 920

On April 23, Local 920 held its regular board meeting and annual general meeting. This year’s meeting was jointly sponsored by the members of Belleville and Quinte West and held inside the National Air Force Museum of Canada. The board holds the annual meeting at different locations each year so that each of the seven departments will have an opportunity to host.

At the meeting, Corey Ley of Kawartha Lakes and Rebecca Wheeler of Midland were confirmed as board members. Below are decisions made by the board.

- The members approved the proposal to change our local’s name to **Ontario Volunteer Firefighters Association, CLAC Local 920**. This is in response to the fact that our members now come from a broader reach than just Eastern Ontario.
- To continue our local’s support for the work of the Fire Service Women of Ontario (FSWO), and to promote their work to our union, the board members resolved to each take out membership in that organization and to renew our contribution to their annual conference.
- The members heard reports on successes and challenges in each of our bargaining units, and enjoyed a time of learning about best practices based on their respective experiences.
- The members were given a report on CLAC’s government relations work on behalf of volunteers, and in particular about *Bill 109 – Amendments to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act*, and changes to the

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act in respect of coverage for first responders afflicted with PTSD.

The highlight of the day was the tour of the new fire station at CFB Trenton. The tour was organized by President Mike Knowles and member David Wheeler. As you can see in the photos, the board members were particularly enthralled with the crash truck.



Dave MacMullen, Local 920 board member



Local 920 board members try out the crash truck



Local 920 board members at National Air Force Museum – Gord O’Coin, J. D. Alkema, Corey Ley, Dave Jeff Wemyss, Dave MacMullen, Ian DeWard, Mike Knowles, Peter Purday (Local 911), Martin Pilon, Chris Empey

Help for First Responders with PTSD

On April 16, the province passed an amendment to the *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act* so that first responders who are diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder will be presumed to have incurred the injury in the line of duty, unless proven otherwise.

This legislation is prompted by an increased understanding that PTSD is not a point-in-time injury in which the effects and symptoms are experienced at the time of the event. First responders could go for months or years before experiencing the debilitating impact of PTSD and so would often face significant hurdles in proving that the injury was connected to their work. This new amendment will elevate PTSD injuries to presumed status in the same way that several types of cancer have been.

A volunteer firefighter who served after April 6, 2014, and is diagnosed with PTSD by a psychiatrist or psychologist on or after that date can make a claim to WSIB for lost earnings or economic loss. Volunteers who no longer serve, but who are diagnosed within two years of leaving the service, may also submit a claim to WSIB.

To make a claim, a volunteer must submit a WSIB Form 6 (Worker's Report) or ask their department's management or human resource staff to prepare a WSIB Form 7 (Employer's Report). The volunteer's psychiatrist/psychologist will also need to complete a WSIB Form 8 (Health Professional's Report).

While the legislation was being developed, CLAC, on behalf of its members, sent letters to Kevin Flynn, minister of labour, supporting this legislation. We wrote about the stories of our members



and representatives who had firsthand experience with the deficiencies in the system and urged the passage of the bill. On April 7, 2016, Kevin Flynn wrote back expressing his appreciation and also describing his plan for furthering prevention strategies, which include:

- the creation of a radio and digital campaign aimed at increasing awareness about PTSD among first responders, their families, and communities and eliminating the stigma that too often prevents those in need from seeking help;
- an annual leadership summit to be hosted by the minister of labour to highlight best practices, recognize leaders, and monitor progress in preventing and addressing PTSD;
- a free online toolkit at firstrespondersfirst.ca with resources on PTSD tailored to meet the needs of employers and each of the first responder sectors; and
- grants for research that supports the prevention of PTSD.

As you engage your municipal leaders and fire department administrators, consider making PTSD a topic of discussion so that we can use our collective voice to develop strategies for prevention, and also support for front-line responders. As we're learning, the risk of bodily harm is not the only kind of injury that our members risk when the pager goes.

Current Organizing

Local 920 is currently in discussions with City of Ottawa volunteer firefighters, who have expressed interest in joining CLAC.

At 455 volunteers, this is one of the largest volunteer groups in the province and would be a very significant addition to the CLAC volunteer firefighter community.

If you're interested in hearing more or getting involved to support the organizing campaign, contact a CLAC representative!

Help Support a Cause You Care About!

Win 1 of 15 prizes for your favourite local cause.

Up to five prizes in each of the following amounts:

\$1,000

\$1,500

\$2,500

Twice per year, CLAC awards up to 15 cash prizes to causes nominated by its members. Nomination deadlines: **November 30 & May 31**

Visit clac.ca/BCT to learn more about CLAC's Building Communities Together program. Log in to myCLAC.ca to nominate a cause online.

Together, we can build stronger communities.

The Importance of Volunteers

The City of Sudbury is considering eliminating its area rating taxation system. In the course of the debate at city council, there was a suggestion that volunteer firefighters should be referred to as "part-time hourly employees." There was also an insinuation that they are less reliable than full-time firefighters. Local 920 wrote the following response to set the record straight.

The Value of Our Volunteer Firefighters (April 29, 2016)

The City of Greater Sudbury has an excellent level of fire service, both in the outlying areas served by volunteer firefighters, and within the city core served by full-time firefighters. This city is not unique. In fact, 423 of Ontario's 455 municipalities are served by a total of 19,000 volunteer firefighters.

Volunteer firefighters are highly trained and provide an outstanding level of service to their communities. All volunteers must complete the training standards established by the National Fire Protection Agency, which is identical to the training program for full-time firefighters.

Volunteers work in other paid professions to feed their families. They only receive a nominal stipend for the time they spend serving their department. An average annual honourarium amounts to less

than \$3,500. This is in consideration for being available nearly 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 365 days per year.

At any time, a volunteer can be called away from the dinner table, a warm bed in the middle of winter, and even their workplaces to respond to an emergency. They do this to keep their community safe. They rush to the fire station and respond within a matter of minutes.

It's important that citizens and councilors understand that the nominal honourarium offered to volunteers does not make them part-time employees. The *Income Tax Act*, *Employment Insurance Act*, *Workplace Safety and Insurance Act*, *Employment Standards Act*, and *Fire Protection and Prevention Act* all state that a first responder who responds when able (as opposed to one who is regularly scheduled to work) and who earns a nominal amount of money is considered a volunteer firefighter.

This common definition creates cost savings and special insurance protection that would be lost if the city were to treat volunteers as part-time employees. As municipal leaders undertake to secure new sources of tax revenue by eliminating area rating for fire service, they should take care not to diminish or underestimate the important role of our volunteer firefighters.

Working at Heights Training

Is your training up to date?

Sign up for CLAC's new Working at Heights program and stay safe, skilled, and certified on the job.

Visit clac.ca/WAH to learn more and sign up today!

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Formed in 1952, CLAC is one of Canada's fastest-growing unions. Operating through 15 member centres, it is the country's largest national, independent, multi-sector union representing over 60,000 workers in almost every sector. Based on values of respect, dignity, and fairness, CLAC is committed to building better workplaces, better communities, and better lives.

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CLAC's Commitments

Positive Work-Life | Champions of You | Everyday Greatness

 CLAC
better together