

**McMaster University and Service Employees' International Union Local 2.0n
Facility Services Management and Operations & Maintenance Staff
Joint Working Conditions Committee (JWCC)**

**Minutes of the Meeting of December 9, 2008
10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., CSB-B109**

*These minutes are drafted for the members of the JWCC and may be subject to amendments and improvements suggested to the Chair by those present at this meeting. At the next meeting the final draft minutes will be approved, or amended and approved. *Minutes are for information only.**

In Attendance

Vicki Bilechuk, Denise Cochrane, Alex Coldwell (recorder), Tony Cupido (chair), Carlos Figueira, Shawn Fleming, Kim Holland, Dave Lilley, Maggie Pooran, Dave Stevens, Bob Twiss.

Regrets

Shawn Large

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of November 11, 2008

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

2. Business Arising from the Previous Meeting

2.1 Uniforms

As a follow up regarding heavy and non-waterproof coats, C. Figueira indicated that coats purchased for this year were the same style of coat as last year, and would be available in 30 different sizes/styles. Coats were only available for staff involved in snow shoveling duties and who had not previously received a coat.

2.2 Vacancies

Vacancies were discussed in section 3.2 *Budget Pressures*.

2.3 Prescription Safety Glasses

The Union advised that some teams were not made aware of the memo regarding the required CSA standards for prescription safety glasses. A. Coldwell responded that the memo was forwarded to area teams on November 20 instructing managers to post and to schedule a team meeting to ensure employees were fully aware of the standards and the reimbursement process. C. Figueira to follow up with supervisors.

A Union member remarked that there were some brands of non-CSA approved prescription safety glasses that were deemed to be equivalent and/or better than CSA-approved prescription safety glasses.

2.4 Benefits Booklets

M. Pooran advised that benefits booklets would be revised to include the new dental assignment provision by the end of 2008.

2.5 Dental Assignment

A Union member noted that an employee had experienced difficulty with the processing of their dental assignment through their dentist's office a few days after the December 1 implementation date. M. Pooran to follow up with Sunlife. M. Pooran suggested that employees should bring of copy of the HR dental assignment memo (dated November 11, 2008) that noted the policy number and Sunlife toll-free number in the event of a processing error at the dentist's office.

2.6 Request for Time Off

The Union advised the Committee that a supervisor was not informing staff of approvals/denials for requests for time off. It was agreed that prompt confirmation from the supervisor was expected and that verbal notification was acceptable. C. Figueira to follow up and remind supervisors.

2.7 Assessing Employee Illness

The Union expressed concern about the procedure for employees wanting to leave work early when they become ill during the night shift. It was alleged that a supervisor has requested employees to rest for an hour and that the employees' conditions are assessed by the supervisor.

The Union felt that the supervisor was not qualified to assess an employee's health condition. C. Figueira responded that the supervisor took appropriate steps to ensure that the health and safety of the employee was not at risk. It was deemed a preventative measure, in case the employee had a serious medical issue that may have required immediate attention.

The Union disagreed with Management's position. Management to review.

2.8 Workwell Inspections and PDAs

The Union expressed concern that some workers had experienced anxiety with supervisors' recent use of handheld devices (PDAs) to conduct inspections.

C. Figueira responded that supervisors were expected to carry out inspections as a component under the Workwell program.

T. Cupido added that the use of PDAs was also necessitated due to findings from a provincial audit that noted that there were no mechanisms in place to ensure service delivery and accountability for value-for-money. The department was expected to demonstrate quantifiable proof as a record of verification for future audits.

The PDA was intended to assist with validation of Workwell initiatives, confirmation of completed tasks and processes, monitoring preventative maintenance items (such as replacement of flooring), and determining improved scheduling needs. The device would provide the department with a global view in order to meet defined standards.

The Union requested clarification regarding McMaster's cleaning scheduling standards. C. Figueira responded that the university standard was based upon what the university could afford. The standards at another university may differ from McMaster, however the ideal goal was to meet the standards set by APPA (Association of Higher Education Administrators).

The Union understood that Workwell initiatives were ongoing, particularly as there were continued injuries and return to work issues. A Union member was concerned that with the advent of inspections, workers with restrictions, in particular, had felt additional undue anxiety. Some were unable to perform a number of their tasks as they were not being provided with the tools to assist them to complete their schedules. Another Union member added that some workers with restrictions had experienced unconstructive reactions from their supervisor when advised of the employee's limitations.

A Union member remarked that the University had worked diligently to meet the initial Workwell obligations, however there were various outstanding items to tackle, such as developing additional SOPs, hazard analysis, updating MSDS sheets, providing ongoing training, etc. Workwell required continued vigilance. Another Union member suggested that employees should be continually quizzed on Workwell initiatives to ensure that information was fresh in mind.

A Union member noted that ESL (English as a Second Language) training was particularly important for WHMIS. Another Union member requested clarification regarding the hiring/non-hiring of individuals whose first language was not English. Management responded that prospective employees whose first language was not English would not be turned away from available positions, and would ensure that proper language training was provided to them.

C. Figueira demonstrated the inspection software on the PDA for Committee members.

3. New Agenda Items

3.1 Proposed Two-week Summer "Shutdown"

T. Cupido advised that the department was proposing to shutdown for two weeks during the summer from July 27 to August 7, 2009 for a total of nine days.

Employees would be encouraged to take the time off as vacation. The shutdown was not mandatory as it was anticipated that the majority of staff would intend to take the time off. Operations within the Residences were excluded from the shutdown, however, personnel from that area would be backfilled by staff from

other areas. Vacation requests would be based upon seniority.

C. Figueira added that there were no issues during the previous shutdown from 2007 and that Night Shift workers were particularly pleased to have had those days off.

Logistical arrangements would be determined at a later date.

3.2 Budget Pressures

T. Cupido updated the Committee on the budget forecast for the next three years. He indicated that the Facility Services operating budget was flatlined with no increases or decreases. It was anticipated that the 2008-09 fiscal year was satisfactory, however, there were foreseeable challenges for the 2009-10 budget year and continued duress for 2010-11. T. Cupido stated that Facility Services was better-positioned than the Faculties who were struggling considerably. McMaster was not alone in having to deal with such dire financial matters.

T. Cupido indicated that most vacancies were not likely to be filled. The Night Shift coordinator position was on hold. Moving Night Shift staff to days was an option under exploration. T. Cupido stated that his primary goal was to modify operations as much as possible in order to reduce expenditures and protect the department's workforce.

Strategies included:

- Reviewing space utilization with regard to cooling and cleaning, particularly during the summer months where the greatest savings were achievable.
- Reviewing and optimizing frequencies.
- Restricting food and beverages in classrooms and libraries (or limiting hours of availability).
- Submitting infrastructure incentives through provincial and federal government agencies and utilizing department staff to complete the work.

There was a need for the department to be proactive in providing cost-saving measures, efficiencies, strategies, and solutions for immediate presentation to

the Board of Governors.

T. Cupido extended an invitation for suggestions, especially from the department's frontline workers, to strategize solutions to help alleviate some of the budget pressures. For example:

- Which buildings were empty?
- Which areas could be closed off?
- Which classrooms were under-utilized and could be locked out?
- Was there a more efficient way to complete a schedule or task?

Staff were encouraged to forward their ideas to A. Coldwell at CSB-108A / ext. 23057 / coldwella@mcmaster.ca.

4. Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for **Tuesday, January 13, 2009, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in CSB-B109**. The next meeting would be chaired by the Chief Union Steward.