

Public Service Alliance of Canada

BC Regional
Health and Safety Conference

Our Power Our Responsibility

Vancouver

February 25 – 26, 2012

Introduction

The British Columbia regional caucus met at the 2009 National Health and Safety Conference to formulate regional strategies and develop a regional health and safety action plan.

The Regional Executive Vice President (REVP) and forty three members participated in the development of the BC Regional action plan. Incorporating lessons learned from this conference and after lengthy discussion, we identified several issues that required our attention. The following five issues emerged as our top priorities:

1. Joint Health and Safety Training – We agreed to expand our training initiatives to include union as well as workplace training.
2. Strengthen the ability, knowledge and effectiveness of the union activists on joint health and safety committees.
3. Better identify harassment and bullying and learn to identify what makes harassment and bullying a health and safety issue and how to better cope with these issues in the workplace.
4. Make the connection between “The Environment” and health and safety.

The REVP and the health and safety activists present all agreed to build and promote health and safety in our region and to continue to move the unions priorities forward in our region.

2012 BC Regional Conference Opening

The REVP opened the conference reminding participants that health and safety remains a high priority for the PSAC. The British Columbia Regional Union Safety and Health (BRUSH) committee has worked hard on achieving our regional goals established at the 2009 National Health and Safety conference. Sam Wiese, the Health and Safety Representative on the BC Regional Council, has worked on building a network of health and safety activists within the Region. Joint training continues to be a top priority for the BRUSH committee and inroads have been made with the Department of Veteran Affairs, and the Passport Office.

Panel Presentation

There were 67 participants (up from 52) in attendance at the Conference. To start there was a panel discussion on “Health and Safety Matters”. The panelists were:

Bob Kinston the National President, Agriculture Component and health and safety activist for over 20 years. Under Bob’s leadership the Agriculture Union has launched the “Food Safety First” website in response to the shortcomings of Canada’s food inspection program.

Denis St. Jean, PSAC National Health and Safety Officer

Workshops

The participants were then assigned to one of three workshops based on their preferences. The workshops were held on Saturday afternoon and were based on the following subject matter:

Health and Safety Basics: (Facilitators)

Emergency Preparedness: (Facilitators, Domonic Lavoie and Bob Bridgeman).

Making your Committee Work: (Facilitators, Bob Jackson and Bob Kingston)

Guest Presenters

Dr, Gary Namie: who is a social psychologist and widely regarded as North America's foremost authority on Workplace Bullying addressed the conference for three hours on Sunday morning. By all accounts his presentation was well received timely and appropriate given the current state of our respective workplaces.

Denis St. Jean: Gave us an overview of the new Canadian Standards Association's standard for psychosocial health.

Bob Kingston: Discussed the application of Regulation XX Violence in the Workplace and discussed strategies for using the Canada Labour Code as a redress mechanism. Bob shared some of the tools and successes the Agriculture component have developed and experienced.

BC Regional Planning Session

The conference participants worked in small groups to identify how we might improve communication/networking, education/training and promotion/participation in the BRUSH committee. The participants shared the results of those discussions and some of their innovative ideas are presented here:

What can the BRUSH Committee do to better equip and educate or members in the area of Health and Safety? What do we need to do to better prepare ourselves to provide input to the next cyclical review of the National Joint Council (NJC) directives.

Participants were assigned to groups to answer these two questions.

Q1 - How can the BRUSH better meet the needs of our H&S Activists?

- make website easier to navigate, by topic, etc.
- demystify BRUSH and other H&S acronyms
- more BRUSH meetings, increase from 4 to 6 per year and devote time for training
- BRUSH members should be recruiting and training members and raising awareness
- develop a newsletter

- Create a BRUSH calling card/kit/package for new members. memory stick with basics
- create posters to raise awareness of H&S issues as well as promote the committee (fire prevention, emergency preparedness, first aid, day of mourning)
- BRUSH members should be present at all PSAC BC regional events
- utilize social media
- onsite visits and facilitate brown baggers
- attend worksite joint workplace H&S committee meetings
- promote H&S training and education in the region and ensure H&S education is provided at all Union Schools

Q2 - How to prepare and provide input into the NJC cyclical review process

- send a call out to local presidents and BRUSH members
- provide a list of previous unaccepted proposals so we can review, amend and resubmit
- Train members on the importance of the NJC Directives and the importance of being involved in their development
- provide education on the process
- add to other committees agendas
- better utilize the website and provide a section for NJC
- create a sub-committee of the BRUSH to oversee and provide direction
- use regional newsletter to raise awareness
- update PSAC toolkit
- each local should have a designated contact for H&S

Communication:

- develop a topical weekly H&S newsletter to be posted on the PSAC BC BRUSH webpage as well as sent electronically to all BRUSH members, Regional Component Presidents, DCL Presidents and members signed on to the Regional E-News.
- develop Flash Bulletins for electronic distribution to Locals and points of service keeping the message simple and limited to a “did you know” one point.
- obtain a complete list of Union representatives on each worksite H&S Committee which would include workplace contact information. Use this list for distribution of newsletter, flash bulletins etc.
- as a means of visual attraction and where possible, have H&S activists use the BRUSH logo as a screen saver on their workplace computers.
- have impromptu “tailgate” meetings at the worksite.
- utilize community newspapers and other forms of inexpensive advertising to promote union H&S issues. Could be done in conjunction with other affiliates.

General Conference Overview

The BC Regional H&S Conference Organizing Committee worked very hard to improve the environmental impact of the 2012 BC H&S conference. Rather than pre-printing and distributing reams of paper, all participants were provided with a “USB Flash Drive” containing most all of the conference resource material. These flash drives have sufficient data storage capacity to allow H&S activists to download additional H&S information such as future

BRUSH meeting minutes, PSAC H&S bulletins, Health Canada advisories, updates to the Labour Code, etc. The conference tote bag was Made in Canada and produced from recycled materials. We recognize that these are small measures but believe that this is a step in the right direction.

The Organizing Committee should be commended for their part in making the 2012 BC Regional H&S Conference a very enjoyable experience for all those that participated. These energetic individuals brought a new definition to networking and teamwork; from playing Wii during the meet and greet to participating in "A Minute to Win It"; participants applied physical and mental adeptness to gain points while learning. In keeping with our aim to provide some enjoyment during the conference, we purchased a laptop computer for use during the conference. During the conference, we sold raffle tickets to recoup the cost and were fortunate enough to have raise over \$400.00 for charity. The Regional Executive Vice President, Bob Jackson was the lucky winner and donated the laptop back to the committee for a second raffle

We take from this conference an abundance of very useful knowledge. We have identified specific goals for the next couple of years, we were able to identify some very useful best practices for future conference planning and the feedback from participants has provided additional guidance that will be taken into account in our current and future plans.

This report is respectfully submitted,

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BC Regional Council – Health and Safety
BRUSH, Chair

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BC PSAC Regional
Health and Safety Rep.