



Laurentian University
Université Laurentienne

**Centre for Research
in Human Development**

**Centre de recherche
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April 15, 2010

Ms. Angie Haché
City Clerk
City of Greater Sudbury

Dear Ms. Haché:

I am writing on behalf of the Youth Workplace Safety Coalition, in reference to a presentation that the Coalition will be making to City Council at its meeting on April 21, 2010. Attached you will find an overview of the Focus on Youth Safety Project that will be presented. As you are aware, the Project is the result of a collaboration between the four school boards in the city, the United Steel Workers local 6500, the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation and two universities (Laurentian, U of Toronto).

As with many interesting initiatives, the project evolved over a period of three years. It has now reached the point where the Coalition felt it was important to inform Council members of the project and the potential it holds for the youth of Sudbury, and perhaps the city at large. The attached overview will familiarize Council members with some statistics on youth workplace injuries and some details on the Coalition and the Project. It ends with a direct overture to Council to take an active role in advancing the Project.

The Coalition appreciates the assistance provided in arranging for the presentation to Council. I am sure that Council knows how valuable you can be, Ms. Haché, in such undertakings. Your guidance was truly appreciated.

On behalf of the Coalition, I wish to thank Council members in advance for taking the time to focus on youth, and in particular the safety of our youth as they explore the realities of working.

Sincerely,

John H. Lewko



Focus on Youth Safety

Did you know that...

- that more than 2.9 million youth aged 15 to 24 worked in 2008, representing almost 70% of Canadian youth?
- that more than 70% of youth start working in the service sector and the retail trade sector is the largest employer of young workers?
- that young workers are at a greater risk for workplace injuries than any other age group?
- that young workers are almost a quarter more likely than adults to suffer lost-time injuries at work, when considering hours of exposure?
- that in Canada, almost 43,000 youth aged 15-19 and more than 100,000 youth aged 20-24 reported a lost-time injury between 2006 and 2008?
- that Ontario is the province with the second highest accepted time-loss injuries to youth aged 15-24, between 2006-2008?
- that in Ontario, 43 youth lost their lives on the job between 2003 and 2007?

The Youth Workplace Safety Coalition

The injury statistics presented above are unacceptable! The Youth Workplace Safety Coalition is a collaboration between Greater Sudbury's four School Boards, the United Steel Workers (USW) local 6500, the Centre for Research in Human Development (CRHD) at Laurentian University and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (OISE) at the University of Toronto. The Coalition came together three years ago to work towards improving safety for youth in the workplace.

Prompted by the Local 6500 and their concern for youth workplace safety, over this time, the group has been trying to identify what could be done together to improve the workplace experiences of our young people in Sudbury.

A unique opportunity was presented to the Coalition when USW international entered into a collaboration agreement with the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation to jointly explore ways of preventing workplace injuries, particularly serious injuries to the head and back.

The Coalition set out to develop a project which was eventually submitted to ONF for consideration. After external peer review, ONF provided funding in the amount of \$146,000 to support the two-year project. As the Coalition worked together, the possibility of developing something unique in Sudbury began to form. Coalition members believed that the ideas they were working out could lead to Sudbury becoming a model for the province in advancing safety learning in the school systems.

In November 2009, the project was formally launched at Laurentian University by Leo Gerard, International President of the United Steel Workers. “The Ministries of Labour and Education have made considerable progress towards integrating health and safety-related learning expectations into the classroom,” said Leo Gerard. “The reality remains that most teachers have not been exposed to the particular work settings that students are experiencing. The Focus on Youth Safety project will standardize the approach used in schools for health and safety training and make the most efficient use of the available resources to make sure that all students are prepared to safely enter all work environments.” In concluding the launch, Mayor Rodriguez underscored the importance of youth workplace safety.

The two-year project will focus on six areas of safety learning within the education system.

- 1) Safety Awareness Workshops: a series of cross-board workshops will provide CO-OP students entering the workplace with greater understanding of hazards and risk in specific settings.
- 2) GLC grade 10 course: The grade 10 career studies course is mandatory for every study in Ontario. New modules on health and safety in the workplace will be integrated into the current curriculum. Teachers will be provided with additional resources and materials and will receive indication on how to use the new materials to satisfy current curriculum requirements.
- 3) CO-OP students as Teachers of GLC Health and Safety: This initiative will draw upon the successful experiences of peer-teachers, where CO-OP students will be given the assignment of teaching the GLC students about health and safety issues, especially as they relate to their current CO-OP experiences.
- 4) CO-OP Professional Development: A professional development program will be designed to expand the current skill level of CO-OP personnel and serve as a resource for the Province. Part of the program will be focus on opportunities to collaborate across the four boards.
- 5) USW Retirees as “real-live” resources: A roster of the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) with workplace safety experience will be developed who can be called upon by teachers, to integrate the real-life experiences of various work settings into the GLC 10 course and the CO-OP/ specialized skills program.

6) The United Steel Workers' Young Workers Awareness Program: The USW YWAP presentation will be revised in order to reflect the needs of the CO-OP programs and the demands of the Ministry of Education so that all expectations within the curriculum are being met.

A Partnership with the City

The Focus on Youth Safety Project provides a unique opportunity to work on cultural change towards health and safety beyond the classroom and in to our community. While this may be a somewhat ambitious goal, we are confident that a culture change can occur over time if Greater Sudbury works together at various levels, including the education system, the workforce and the community. Sudbury can become a leader in improving workplace health and safety for its youth, much like it has over the past decades for the adult workforce. With the participation of City Council, Sudbury can serve as a model for other communities in the Province.

A partnership between the City and the Project provides a way forward. As a first step in establishing the partnership between the City and the Project, we would encourage Council to identify a member who will become directly involved with the Coalition. This relationship will provide for closer communication between Coalition activities and Council. Council involvement with the Coalition creates a platform where various other youth safety actions can be considered. For example:

- Helping to engage more local employees as CO-OP placements
- Linking the project to the City of Greater Sudbury website
- Including youth workplace safety in future city activities that focus on youth.