Educational Assistants Association

The Front Line

Welcome to the '24/25 School Year Edition

Insights from the Recent Labour School

Recently, the EAA Executive team had the opportunity to participate in a series of Additional Professional Development activities aimed at enhancing our skills and effectiveness in our roles. One of the most impactful experiences was attending a Labour School hosted by the Canadian Confederation of Unions (CCU).

A standout moment of the Labour School was a presentation by Carlo Fanelli, PhD, co-author of *From Consent to Coercion*. Dr. Fanelli provided a thought-provoking exploration of the historical context of low wage work, labour rights, and the legal framework that often favours market interests over the needs of workers. He emphasized that while labour laws are intended to protect employees, they frequently fall short, serving more to uphold market stability than to address the rights and dignity of individual workers. Dr. Fanelli's insights were a powerful reminder of the challenges we face as advocates for our members. The complexities of labour relations require us to be vigilant and proactive in our approach. Understanding the historical roots of low wage work equips us with the knowledge necessary to advocate for meaningful change within Waterloo Region and beyond. A critical message from the Labour School was the necessity for unions like ours to undergo transformation. Dr. Fanelli pointed out that to create a significant impact, we need to rethink our strategies and adapt to the evolving landscape of labour relations. Traditional approaches may not suffice; we must innovate and explore new pathways to advocacy. This transformation cannot occur in isolation. It is essential that we establish connections with independent working-class organizations such as the CCU. Collaborating with these groups enables us to connect campaigns and build coalitions, ultimately fostering a political infrastructure that supports systemic change. By uniting with other organizations that share our vision, we can amplify our voice and increase our influence in advocating for our members' rights.

In addition to the Labour School, the CCU extended an invitation to the EAA Executive to attend one of their meetings. This experience provided valuable insights into the various independent unions within the CCU and the diverse challenges they face. We learned about the different forms of violence and maltreatment experienced by workers in various sectors and the proactive measures these unions are implementing to address these issues. Hearing firsthand accounts of the struggles faced by the workers in other unions highlighted the importance of solidarity within the labour movement. By sharing experiences and strategies, we can work together to combat the systemic issues affecting all workers.



photo credit: Sean Cain, CCU

Another significant takeaway from our time with the CCU was understanding what a union executive looks like when working from the bottom up. This perspective is vital for fostering a culture of collaboration and engagement within our own association. It reminded us that effective advocacy begins with listening to our members and ensuring

their voices are heard in our decision-making process. As we reflect on these experiences, we are more committed than ever to advocating for our members. The insights gained from the Labour School and our engagement with the CCU will help us strengthen our approach to supporting Child and Youth Workers and Educational Assistants. The professional development activities we participated in are instrumental in shaping our advocacy efforts. By embracing the lessons learned about labour history, union transformation, and the importance of collaboration, we can build a more powerful Association.



It's Giving Kindness

Hey Educational Assistants and Child and Youth Workers! Welcome back to the 2024/25 school year at the WRDB. Now that we are a month into the semester you are probably getting into the swing of things, giving all of your compassion, patience, and resilience as you support students in their educational journeys. Let's go beyond that and talk about something that extends past the school walls, a chance to come together and make a tangible impact on the lives of others. Giving Tuesday-that magical day when kindness and generosity take centre stage is on December 3rd this year and will be here before we know it. You, our unsung heroes, have the chance to come to the Blood Donation Clinic at the Bridgeport location in Waterloo, and give the gift of life. Whether you are a first time donor or have been giving for years, our collective donations will strengthen the community and will give more than just blood, it will give hope. This selfless act has a lifesaving power and can be crucial to patients in need. Whether your donation goes to someone undergoing surgery, a cancer patient receiving treatment, or an accident victim, our donated blood can be the difference between life and loss. If you are interested, spread the word, create a buzz. Encourage your fellow EAs and CYWs to join the cause, enthusiasm is contagious! Our Membership has a group donation reservation and you can pre book your time slot using the following information:

Group Name: Educational Assistants Association

PFL #: EDUC614636

Where: 94 Bridgeport Rd E, Waterloo

When: Tuesday December 3rd, 2024

Look up our group on the GiveBlood app if you are already registered, or sign up at www.blood.ca or call 1(888)2 DONATE (1-888-236-6283). You can also always reach out to the office for support.

Email: office@wrdsbeaa.com

Telephone: 519-624-1221

Tips to improve your donation experience

- In the hours before you donate, have something to eat but avoid fatty or fried foods.
- Drink at least 500 ml of water and eat a salty snack just before donating.
- Continue to drink plenty of fluids such as water or juice throughout the rest of your day.
- Leave the bandage on for at least 1 hour, then remove the bandage and wash the donation area with soap and water to prevent a rash.
- Avoid strenuous activity for six to eight hours and heavy lifting for 24 hours after donating.

In Other News:

Last call for new EAA Awards Committee Members. Last year we had numerous nominations and our Committee Members did an amazing job choosing the winners. This is a short term virtual commitment between April and June, meeting a few times per month. We are looking for at least one more member to join, if you are interested reach out to the Committee Chair, Chantelle Zurbrigg at the following email address.

Email: secretary@wrdsbeaa.com

We also want to encourage you to reach out to Laura Parker, CYW Representative and Chris Letizi, EA Representative for any job specific support or general questions you may have.

Email: cywrep@wrdsbeaa.com

Email: earep@wrdsbeaa.com

If your concerns are related to health and safety, reach out to Lynn Wilson, Health and Safety Representative.

Email: healthandsafety@wrdsbeaa.com

All of this information and much more can be found on our website: www.wrdsbeaa.com

EAA Website

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