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**Infrastructure Health and Safety Association**

## **Ontario Electrical League accuses safety councils of union bias**

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The terms of reference for new Infrastructure Health and Safety Association advisory councils contain a union bias in worker representation, states the Ontario Electrical League (OEL).

"At the end of the day, worker safety is critical regardless of affiliation or lack thereof — why would we need to exclude non-union and separate open shop and closed shop unions in these discussions" asks Mary Ingram-Haigh, OEL president.

The recently-minted IHSA is comprised of the Construction Safety Association of Ontario, the Electrical and Utilities Safety Association and the Transportation Health and Safety Association of Ontario.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board stated that the merger of these associations was designed to achieve greater efficiencies in services such as accounting, IT, HR and administrative services and to allocate the savings to safety and prevention program.

The IHSA has currently rolled out an extensive outreach initiative with its various stakeholders and 75,000-plus members.

A meeting on Tuesday, Feb. 9 included an outline of the terms of reference for the seven possible IHSA advisory councils which cover transportation, residential, general ICI, heavy civil and aggregates, mechanical, electrical and priority rates.

The councils will each consist of eight members, equally split between worker and management reps.

For all the proposed councils, other than the one representing priority rates, the terms of reference state that the four worker representatives will be from unions representing that particular sector.

Various industry stakeholders have also noted that the IHSA's board is projected to have a mandated composition of nine unionized worker representatives and nine management representatives.

The OEL, which consists of non-union, open-shop union and union employers and employees, finds this also frustrating.

"As I understand it, the IHSA is funded by WSIB which is funded by employers, whether non-union, open shop or closed shop and is intended to get feedback from and provide support to employers and employees from all facets," explains Ingram-Haigh. "It seems as though that non-union employees will not be given a chance to act either in a decision-making capacity at the board nor even in an advisory capacity."

In describing advisory council membership the IHSA states in its terms of reference that an advisory council should be comprised of a "broad base of knowledgeable individuals who have demonstrated leadership in health and safety or another discipline" and are committed to worker health and safety improvements and can provide advice and guidance "from many perspectives".

"Although there are certainly some differences in philosophy on certain subjects between these groups (union and non-union), I am quite confident all parties can sit at the same table on the subject of keeping our employees safe at work," adds Ingram-Haigh.

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