

2008 CONVENTION UPDATE

Day 2—April 18, 2008

Smokey and Patty open the 2008 annual Convention: “There is real power in our union”

Following an amazing opening performance by Sharon Riley and the Faith Chorale, Canada’s premiere gospel troupe, President Warren “Smokey” Thomas introduced Reverend Michael Blair who performed the invocation for this year’s convention. Brother Thomas then introduced Toronto Councillor Paula Fletcher who welcomed OPSEU members to Toronto. John Cartwright, President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council and Brother Yosief Ogbasellaise from UNITE HERE (Hotel Workers) Local 75 also extended greetings to the members.

Thomas began his address by passionately thanking each and every person in the room. New delegates attending their first convention were recognized as well as the members, the staff, and his family.

Thomas spoke about this year’s annual convention theme, “It’s a New Day” by stating, “This is a celebration of what we have done and what we will do.” The theme “It’s a New Day” also has international involvement for our union in such causes as the Live and Let Live Fund. Thomas said he was honoured at being elected President of this great union and gave credit to his many advisors, friends and fellow union leaders for their guidance, advice and most importantly, friendship.



“It has become a priority for this union in the next year, with over 90,000 members entering into bargaining, to do everything possible to ensure Premier McGuinty lives up to his campaign promise of ‘Rebuilding Public Services,’” Thomas told the convention members. “The union’s intention is to ensure that there are good jobs being made available for those losing their jobs, ensuring the labour movement continues to move forward and that we make Ontario a better place to live for everyone.”

“We have had some major gains in the last year and everyone involved should be proud,” Thomas continued, referring to the developmental services gains and the college part-timer campaign successes. “Last year, I made the promise that I will do what needs to be done. I have, I am and I will continue to do what needs to be done. There is real power in our union.”

(Continued on page 4)

Choir inspires a new day

The clock struck 9:00 am. Convention floor was buzzing with good morning hellos. People were mingling from table to table. A steady pulsing heartbeat could be heard in the background, growing faster. A voice came over the loudspeaker, welcoming us to OPSEU 2008 convention, telling us it is “A New Day”. The doors behind the stage opened. In walked Sharon Riley and the Faith Chorale, singing the song “A New Day,” a song made popular by Canadian singer, Celine Dion. Playing behind on the screens around the room were slides of our union from region to region, each sector and city with our logo strong and true.

Smokey thanked the choir and shared with attendees the inspirational story of Sharon Riley and the Faith Chorale. Riley was in a car accident in 1990 that left her unable to walk. During her recovery, she joined this group and



together they helped her find the strength to walk again, find a purpose and start a new day. Their story is an inspiration to stand strong and together in our beliefs. Together and as a union, we can accomplish feats against all odds.

Sharon Riley and the Faith Chorale are a Grammy winning Toronto-based choir with the distinction of being the first Canadian gospel group with an international recording contract.

Budget passed in record time

In a record 11 minutes of debate, the 2008 budget was passed on Day 1 of Convention.



This was a good news budget. Patty Rout, 1st President/Treasurer announced that the Executive Board made a decision to pay off the mortgage for OPSEU Head Office and that the line of credit has also been paid down.

This year's budget also included funding for additional staffing, savings in legal costs with the hiring of additional grievance officers and education costs increases.

Debate about the budget focused mainly on the line of credit and the details of the strike fund.

Team OPSEU makes its debut

On Day 1 of Convention, Team OPSEU made its debut.

On behalf of OPSEU Enterprises, Executive Board Members Mandy Dumais and Lynn Orzel presented to President Smokey Thomas and 1st Vice-President/Treasurer Patty Rout the first Team OPSEU merchandise, which included hats and jackets. Team OPSEU was created to promote togetherness within our union, especially with up to 90,000 members going into bargaining. As a union we stand together, we move forward together, we are a team together and this is a great way to show our solidarity as a union.



OPSEU locals pledge support for the children of South Africa

In response to a moving presentation provided by Tom Potter, Fundraiser for the Umduni and Vulamehio HIV Aids Association (UVHAA), Convention attendees have generously donated more than \$50,000 to the organization. OPSEU Head Office has matched the pledges.

UVHAA helps children stricken with or impacted by HIV and Aids in rural Africa. The project began in 2004.

In his speech, Potter urged OPSEU leaders to respond to the problem afflicting the South African children. Potter met President Smokey Thomas last month in South Africa. He said the conditions in the African country are stark, with more than 3,000 orphans in dire need of assistance. "Children are the future. There's an urgent need to extend the assistance as more and more children are dying of HIV/AIDs on a daily basis," he said.



Potter was moved by the OPSEU's generosity and show of solidarity. OPSEU's help and financial assistance will help bring access to basic health care services, income-generating opportunities and training community volunteers and members in health and nutrition projects.

Social Justice Fund Silent Auction

Sandra Snider, Chair of Social Justice Fund

As you approach the bottom of the escalator you will notice rows of tables with items from around the world. Items include moose hide mitts made by a member at the northern airport in Fort Hope; an autographed Ottawa Senators jersey; award-winning Niagara wines; and items from Africa and El Salvador. The Kenora Community Association for Community Living donated a painting by a client involved in their art program. Many other items, too numerous to mention



were also donated by OPSEU locals, regions and members.

They are all up for auction. Make your bid and keep an eye on it throughout the day. The auction closes at 5 pm Friday, April 18. The winning bidders will be notified and items can

be collected Saturday morning. All proceeds will go to the OPSEU Social Justice Fund. The Fund supports exchanges, direct funding to development projects in education, health, water and combating poverty and emergency and humanitarian aid to those most in need in Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and Asia. We thank all our donors

and ask for your support as we assist those most in need in this world so full of inequity.

Smokey and Patty open Convention

(Continued from page 1)

Patty Rout, 1st Vice-President/Treasurer, summarized the successes OPSEU experienced in 2007 and future goals in the 2008 and forward. Talking about the “Perfect Storm, Perfect Opportunity” bargaining situation, Sister Patty stated, “You are the perfect solution,” referring to all members within OPSEU.

Who is here?	
Delegates	841
Alternates	421
Observers	176
Retirees	6
EBMs	21
Committees	42
Solidarity Guests	15
Guests	17
Total	1539



Solidarity Cookbooks Available

Visit the Social Justice booth, located in the main hall at the bottom of the escalators, to purchase your copy of the Solidarity Cookbook. The cost for each book is \$10. In its second print, supplies are limited. Proceeds go to the Ontario HIV/AIDS network.

New delegates the lifeblood of OPSEU

Approximately 100 new delegates attended a seminar to learn about the processes at convention, wide-eyed and full of questions. Grant MacGillivray, OPSEU’s Rules of Order Advisor, chaired the seminar. Discussed were parliamentary procedures and Roberts Rules of Order.



Smokey Thomas, OPSEU President, addressed the new delegates. “OPSEU is a member-driven union,” he said. Brother Smokey spoke about the various events at Convention. He shared his personal experience as a first-time convention delegate, of how nervous and shaken he was stepping up to the microphone.

Presentations from the Credentials and Resolutions Committees were also made.

Leslie Amaral, Local 105, a young worker new to working within a union shop said, “I found (the new delegate seminar) to be a very informative session and I am looking forward to hitting convention floor tomorrow.”

Albert Shmon, from Local 378 said, “I have a lot to learn and remember.” He was looking forward to using his new found knowledge at this and future OPSEU Conventions.

Brought to you by **IN SOLIDARITY**.

This is the 15th year that the editorial committee of **In Solidarity** has produced the daily updates. We will provide a record of Convention events and happenings.

Who we are: Karrie Ouchas, Local 340, Laurie Sabourin, Local 368, , Moira Cowan, Local 105, Edwin Mercurio, Local 526 and Felicia Metcalfe-Fahey, Local 681. Ex-officio members are: James Tocker, Executive Board Liaison and Don Ford, OPSEU Communications.