

2008 CONVENTION UPDATE

Day 3—April 19, 2008

Stephen Lewis Presents the 2008 Humanitarian Award

Stephen Lewis, a well recognized figure at OPSEU events and staunch supporter in the fight against HIV/AIDS, was greeted by a resounding ovation at the 2008 Convention. Mr. Lewis was presenting the Stanley H. Knowles Humanitarian Award to Dr. Philip Berger.



Mr. Lewis extended his heartfelt thanks to the members of OPSEU for their generosity in the donations given to the Live and Let Live Fund. Lewis said, “I salute you, I applaud you and I hope you take immense pride in what you have done.”

OPSEU gives \$50,000 annually along with other contributions to the Stephen Lewis Foundation. The foundation has managed to carve out new ground with programs such as the Grandmothers campaign which OPSEU is a part of. There are over 10,000 grandmothers in Canada who have raised over \$3 million in 14 months for use in Africa and the fight against HIV/AIDS. The grandmothers in Africa are overwhelmed by the solidarity shown by those Canadian Grandmothers in Canada. Lewis stated that 40-60 per cent of orphaned children are being cared for by their grandmothers in Africa.

Lewis identified another integral program where the foundation used the donations

received. In places like the Congo, sexual violence is not a weapon of war but a strategy of war, in that these attacks make women more susceptible to HIV/AIDS. Over 200,000 women who suffered these attacks now have somewhere to turn. The City of Joy was created,

which includes 10 homes each housing 10 women who are recovering from surgical repairs from injuries sustained in these sexual attacks.

Mr. Lewis spoke of two qualities that Mr. Knowles was known for: his integrity and his commitment to individuals. Lewis said Dr. Berger exemplifies those qualities.

The Ontario Hospital Association built a clinic in South Africa to treat people dealing with HIV/AIDS. This clinic is a model of treatment in this country and Lewis said Dr. Berger is a driving force behind that. People, who would have otherwise been dead, are receiving treatment in this community.

“Thank you, Stephen Lewis. Those kind words from you mean so much to me because of everything you represent in the fight against AIDS,” Berger said on accepting the award. He said that OPSEU is a union in the forefront of social justice and social solidarity. “This is a

(Continued on page 2)

Resolutions and Constitutional Amendments

More education is on the way!

Delegates unanimously carried the resolution to create education materials and to inform and educate activists and employers of mental health accommodations. Emotions ran high as members spoke of the difficulty of dealing with “invisible disorders” for their members, and how these disabilities desperately need union support.



Organizing the unorganized

A resolution passed for OPSEU to make all necessary resources available to organize all unorganized hospital professionals. At a time when LHINS are setting up internal markets and competitive bidding models for the provision of services, OPSEU must ensure that worker on worker bidding does not occur. The consequence of this is the driving down wages and benefits.

A call for social mapping

A resolution was put forth for OPSEU to complete a social map and survey of the membership. The resolution stated this would ensure that the union’s policies, programs, and services would be inclusive, barrier free, and better reflect our diverse membership. After much debate this resolution was carried.

Stronger wording adopted to define convention alternate status

Stronger wording in the constitution will ensure the employer will not unreasonably deny the rights of alternate delegates to attend Convention. Delegates passed changes amending wording from “alternates” to “alternate

delegates” in relevant articles.

This amendment was proposed as a result of some employers refusing to allow elected alternates to attend OPSEU convention.



Disclosure debate ends in defeat

Delegates defeated a proposed constitutional amendment that would require those seeking election as President or 1st Vice-President/Treasurer to disclose campaign contributions of more than \$100.

No additional seats on executive board

After much debate, delegates turned down a proposal to create two equity seats on the Executive Board.



Stephen Lewis presents Award

(Continued from page 1)

union that stood fast in the face of destruction that Mike Harris inflicted. OPSEU was valiant and courageous and their fight against this destruction was admirable.”

Berger said that OPSEU’s Live and Let Live Fund has made possible programs in Africa such as pay for homecare workers who do farming, cooking, and daily chores and raise many of the children. While the pay may be modest, it establishes a sense of self worth in these women and accentuates the importance of their work.

Berger concluded by saying that in a small way, the destruction HIV/AIDS inflicts can continue to be slowly pushed back thanks to such remedies as the development of clinics. “This is made possible by what OPSEU is doing through donations and fund raising. Thank you.”

NUPGE asks “If not now...when? If not us...who?”

During a presentation by Larry Brown, Secretary-Treasurer of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), members were asked to stand strong together and hold their ground to do what is right for the labour movement.

An information segment on the Trade Investment Labour Mobility Agreement (TILMA), was given. NUPGE has been working with various labour unions to inform members of the downfalls of the TILMA agreement. This piece of proposed legislation has already passed in British Columbia and Alberta.

Governments in these provinces promised that this agreement would see an end to interprovincial trade barriers. This interpretation



couldn't be further from the truth. Brown said legislation like TILMA could be devastating for many of our sectors.

Brown explained how TILMA will affect every level of government in our province, from the municipal level to school boards to crown corporations. It will take power away from our labour movement. Activists are being urged to lobby and ensure this agreement does not get passed in Ontario.

Brown also addressed the issues NUPGE and its affiliates are having with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC). He went on to state, “This is not a fight with the president of the CLC but rather for a stronger labour movement. The issue is not whether we go to CLC

Convention but rather that attention is drawn to the issue and ensuring raiding becomes a thing of the past.”

“You cannot put a price tag on the right decision – you just do it.” Brown said. He finished his speech by leaving attendees to ponder a simple question, “If not now...when? If not us...who?”

Justice denied for College Part-Timers

A decision today at the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) dealt a blow to OPSEU's ongoing college part-timers organizing campaign. The OLRB has refused to order a vote, and the issue will go to further hearings.

“The application by the union is still alive and will see its due process,” said Smokey Thomas. He promised OPSEU will fight “tooth and nail” against this decision, including petitioning the province's MPPs to immediately table the legislation to allow these workers to join the union. In a moving show of solidarity, convention delegates voted unanimously to support the campaign.

Who is here?	
Delegates	851
Alternates	434
Observers	195
Retirees	6
EBMs	21
Committees	42
Solidarity Guests	22
Guests	28
Total	1599

OPSEU Women recognized for their contributions

The Provincial Women's Committee (PWC) held its annual Convention breakfast early Friday morning. More than 200 OPSEU activists were in attendance.

OPSEU 1st Vice-President/Treasurer, Patty Rout, welcomed guests by congratulating the PWC and OPSEU members on a job well done over the past year.

Guest speaker Debbie Field, Director for Foodshare and former Equal Opportunity Coordinator for OPSEU, spoke to attendees about the importance of healthy foods. She spoke of the "serious disconnect around food," citing three key areas: food and income are disproportionate, local farmers are under



supported and there is a lack of promotion of healthy foods.

In an emotional presentation, PWC Chair Cindy Haynes was this year's recipient of the annual Bread and Roses award. Her sister, Terry Austin, accepted the award in her absence. A previously recorded video was shown of Sister

Cindy, who is still recovering in the hospital from injuries sustained in a house fire, as she learned she was this year's recipient of this prestigious award.

The following women received Regional Recognition Awards for their dedication and commitment to social causes.

- Region 1 – Annie Robert
- Region 2 – Judy Robertson
- Region 3 – Elaine Bagnall
- Region 4 – Laurie Davies
- Region 5 – Charlene Tardiel
- Region 6 – Flo Bruno
- Region 7 – Cassandra Moeller

Blue Jays and OPSEU team up for charity

Following the first day at the 2008 Convention, attendees took advantage of some great weather and supported a worthy cause. Over 500 members attended the Toronto Blue Jays vs. the Texas Rangers game last night at the Rogers Centre.

The Blue Jays organization donated \$5 from every ticket purchased by OPSEU members. Prior to the game, President Warren "Smokey"

Thomas received a cheque for \$2,500 during an on-field presentation. The money, raised from ticket sales, will be donated to the "Live and Let Live Fund." Although the Blue Jays were not victorious in last night's game, a great time was had by everyone and a worthy cause benefited.



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.