

2009 CONVENTION UPDATE

Welcome to Day 3 – April 25



Convention Day 2 Highlights

Smokey acclaimed to second term

“I never dreamed that one day I would be president of one of the greatest unions on this planet. To be elected or acclaimed to this position is absolutely incredible.”

To the cheers of more than 1,600 convention participants, OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas spoke about the balancing act of raising a family and union work, and thanked his family for their support.

“My take on the political front in Ontario is that the Liberal government is becoming more arrogant with each day they are in power,” Smokey said. He pledged to use every opportunity to protect the gains made by workers in this province.

President Thomas said over the next couple of months we will be in the position to make a valuable contribution to the labour movement in the province of Ontario. “If the government just listened to the suggestions that labour organizations put forward, I don’t believe the mess we are in would be happening today,” he said. “We didn’t create the problem. And it is particularly obnoxious for anyone to say the working people are greedy.”

“Every one of us in this room, by being active in the union, will be part of the solution,” he added. “If this government or any government wants to kick working people when they’re down; if they want to abandon the working force in this province and promote more wage cuts; if they want to marginalize workers and continue



to bust unions; they will have a fight in their hands...the likes of which they have not seen before.”

Looking forward, Smokey said the next two years will be vital to the labor movement. “I’ll work as hard as I did the last two years.”

Who is here?

Delegates	874
Alternates	465
Observers	205
Retirees	7
EBMs	21
Committees	38
Solidarity Guests	23
Guests	75
Total	1708

Brought to you by the OPSEU In Solidarity Editorial Committee

Patty Rout acclaimed for two more years

Calling her re-election a great honor and privilege, Patty Rout gave a rousing speech and urged OPSEU to stay the course and protect union gains.

She praised the great teamwork of staff and members. “We have a great team. I want you to know how important it is to represent you.

“OPSEU derives its strength in its organization, as well as its bargaining teams and



its good collective agreements,” she said.

“It is so overwhelming at times to realize how strong we are,” Patty said. “I consider our union uncontrollable because when we want change no one can stop us. That’s the reason we are successful.”

The union came together as one to weather the “Perfect Storm.” “We have seen OPS, BPS and other sectors of our union come together, which provides strength to our union.”

In a separate election, the Regional Vice-Presidents were ranked by the delegates as follows:

2nd VP	Gino Franche
3rd VP	Nancy Pridham
4th VP	Michael Grimaldi
5th VP	David Lundy
6th VP	Claire Rowett
7th VP	James Tocker
8th VP	Sue Brown

Public services key to weathering economic storm

The current economic crisis and role of public services were the topic of the speech given by guest speaker, Andrea Horwath, New Democratic Party (NDP) Leader.

Horwath does not buy the notion that the international economic downturn was a total surprise, as the media and the “financial titans” would like the public to believe. “The warning signs were there for all to see,” she said. When the issues were raised at Queen’s Park, the current and previous governments showed inaction and lack of concern. “Many of these same financial titans,” Horwath said, “are now defendants in a public boardroom, exposed for their greed.”

Horwath says the 2009 Ontario Budget fails to

deliver a mandate that will help rebuild Ontario as a financial leader in Canada and also lacks accountability on spending. She believes the recovery of the financial crisis rests on strategic spending; including investing into Ontario-made green energy products. Horwath also calls for action for pay equity, public child care, maintaining and creating good jobs and ensuring that everyone can retire in dignity, with quality of life and security.

Horwath acknowledged the work of the public service workers. “The need for public services is never more critical than in time of trouble,” she said. “It is you, the public service worker, that have the skills, dedication and expertise to help our communities weather the storm.”



General sends humbling acceptance

Larry Brown, Secretary-Treasurer of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), accepted OPSEU's Stanley H. Knowles Award on behalf of Lieutenant General Romeo Dallaire. The award was given to General Dallaire for his exemplary global humanitarian work and his acts of courage as the commanding officer during the Rwanda genocides.

In a humble message of acceptance, General Dallaire says, "I am greatly honoured to be awarded the Honourable Stanley H. Knowles Humanitarian award by OPSEU and I humbly



accept the award for the recognition of my work in the attempt to bring social justice and human rights to the disenfranchised and destitute."

General Dallaire goes on to praise the work of OPSEU members. "As Ontario public servants, you are where the 'rubber hits the pavement' in terms of showing compassion and understanding to a public in need of government

services. As a society is always judged by the way it treats its less fortunate, the people of Ontario are fortunate to be served by a caring and professional union of Public Service employees."

Members hit a home run for OPSEU

OPSEU members converged on the Rogers Center to see the Blue Jays play the Texas Rangers in support of the Live and Let Live Fund. OPSEU President Warren (Smokey) Thomas threw out the first pitch, and 1st Vice-President/Treasurer Patty Rout accepted a cheque for \$2,100 from the Blue Jay organization in support of the Live and Let Live Fund.

"It was an unprecedented honour to have Smokey throw out the first pitch," event organizer Rob Kinnear said. Two OPSEU members even led the crowd in the 7th inning stretch.

The Live and Let Live Fund was established in May 2004 to support organizations that are

actively involved in combating HIV/AIDS in Southern Africa and Ontario.

The Jays won 5-2.

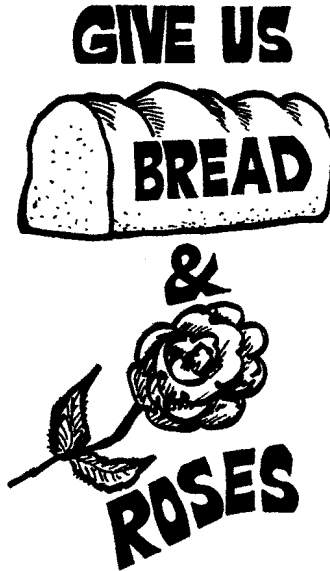


Annual breakfast celebrates women activists

The Provincial Women's Committee (PWC) Breakfast was well attended Friday morning. The breakfast honours outstanding achievements of female OPSEU activists.

Guest speaker Marie Kelly of the United Steelworkers Union addressed issues that affect working people in Ontario, particularly women and designated equity seeking groups. Kelly also spoke of the unity needed between the private and public sector.

Guests at the breakfast included Irene Harris, Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Vice-President/Treasurer and Andrea Calvert from



the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care.

Isabelle Mercier received the Bread and Roses Award. Outstanding OPSEU women were also regionally recognized at the breakfast. Regional awards were given to:

- Region 1 - Kim McDowell
- Region 2 - Shaminder Jhooty
- Region 3 - Doris Middleton
- Region 4 - Pat McGregor
- Region 5 - Louise Lischacz
- Region 6 - Janice Zultek
- Region 7 - Brenda Clapp

Constitutional Amendments

Limited terms for top offices nixed by delegates

A proposed constitutional amendment to limit the term of office for President and 1st Vice-President/Treasurer was defeated by delegates. The amendment suggested that no person can be candidate for or elected to either one of the two positions for more than 4 consecutive terms.



Debate continues for Equity seats on Executive Board

A constitutional amendment to add two equity seats to the Executive Board was the last debate on Friday. The debate was cut short due to adjournment and will continue on Saturday.

Election process remains status quo

Suggested changes to allow for the nomination of President and 1st Vice-President/Treasurer from Convention floor was turned down by delegates after much debate. The process will remain the same: the offices of President and 1st Vice-President/Treasurer are elected from among the 21 members-elect of the Executive Board.

Budget increases reflect member expenses

Budget increases to reflect OPSEU's members Patty Rout, 1st Vice-President/Treasurer, presented a balanced budget to the members on Friday.

Budget highlights include more money for organizing campaigns, the defence fund, membership activities, grievance and legal expenses, as well as negotiation costs. An increase of 9.7 per cent was forecasted above the 2008 budget for member expenses. "Never before has OPSEU seen an increase like this for members," Rout said. "It just shows how member-driven OPSEU is."

The cost of educationals and the transfer to the education fund are going to surpass \$2 million for the first time. Increased funding was needed for the BPS pension plan, Social Mapping, Health Care Campaign, Regional Hardship Funds, Health and Safety Workplace Violence Campaign, SAROC, and the Building Local Capacity. Increased staffing included the addition of a benefits councillor and a Health and Safety councillor. Temporary staff representatives were also added in each region. "As a result, staff will be in place to deal with the challenges ahead and to meet the changing needs of our members," said Rout.

"In February 2009 our strike fund surpassed \$50 million in net assets for the first time. The strike fund increased partly due to member dues, so we have a good cushion if any division should have to strike," she said. "LBED and CAAT are both in bargaining. Dues are expected to exceed \$87 million this year."



Capital expenditures this term will focus on communications technology and building improvements. "A plan to have member portfolios on the portal will hopefully be available in 2010," she said. This portal would allow members access to their individual portfolio, including union educational courses, at the touch of a key. After lengthy debate the 2009 Budget was passed without change.

Clarification

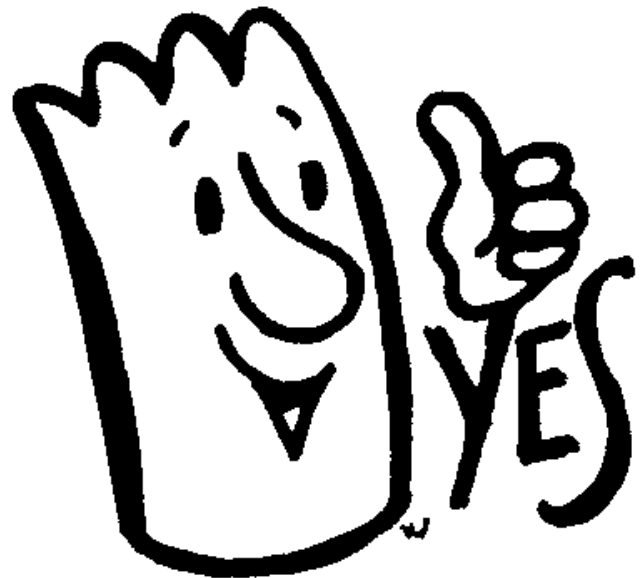
The OPSEU policy for local book off is available for composite and multi-unit locals. In yesterday's update, under the title "650 the magic number" (back page), this information may not have been clear. Our apologies for any confusion.

Community forums coming to a town hall near you

Larry Brown, NUPGE Treasurer-Secretary, presented the resolution on economic development. Brown spoke to members on the tough conditions facing Canadians today; he spoke of job loss, tax cuts and privatization. "We are not about to turn the corner, we cannot even see the corner; we don't even know where the corner is," said Brown. "We are being told it is not going to get any better in 2009 or 2010. We have to go back to what Ontario was years ago; we are in a mess across the country and across the world." Brown gave an empowered presentation on why OPSEU members should take on the proposed resolution. "Cuts to public services and wages would be economic stupidity. Fights for your job, your wages, and your benefits should be a fight entered into with nobility, because it is the right thing for the health of the province and the right thing for your country," he said. He ended with a great quote he heard from the past, "Another world is possible." He would like to amend it to be, "A better world is possible...and within reach."

Under the Executive Board resolution, OPSEU will work with its allies to fight back against service cuts and layoffs and help develop a plan for sustainable economy and fair society. OPSEU will organize community forums, and people are invited to share their experiences, develop ideas to restart the local/regional economy and mobilize for community action. It will promote the coming together of labour,

business and government to develop strategies. The province will take the lead role in planning and promoting the economic recovery as well as redesigning a green economy. OPSEU will create an educational program to assist members to be knowledgeable workplace and community leaders on the political economy of public services, progressive taxation, privatization and quality jobs. OPSEU will use the political energy generated in the aforementioned campaigns to initiate a 2011 campaign, a grassroots mobilizing effort for the next provincial election built on countering an increasingly right wing tilt in Ontario politics. The resolution was unanimously carried.



Brought to you by ***IN SOLIDARITY***.

This is the sixteenth 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, Edwin Mercurio, Local 526, Felicia Fahey, Local 681 and Jim Ziolkowski, Local 137. Ex-officio members are: James Tocker, Executive Board Liaison, and Don Ford, OPSEU Communications.