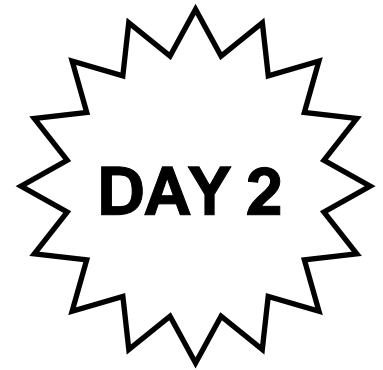


# *IN SOLIDARITY*

*April 16, 2004*



## *Convention*

# *Update 2004*

## **'Make change' says Casselman**

*By Veronica Weir*

"Making change is what we do, and we're going to keep doing it," OPSEU President Leah Casselman said in her opening address to the 2004 Convention yesterday. This year's theme is "make change," an amendment to the Liberal's recent election slogan "choose change." As Casselman pointed out, you cannot just pick out change at the store; you make choices, and then take action to make those choices a reality.

Last fall, OPSEU made change by mobilizing members in the provincial election campaign. We also put issues on the agenda "in a strategic way," a way that helped defeat the Tory government. As Casselman predicted six years ago, Mike Harris and his Conservatives are gone and OPSEU is still here.

The new Liberal majority government, however, has not made much change in the past six months, saying the deficit limits choices. Casselman said the Liberals do not appear to have a clear, bold vision for how to do what they were elected to do.

"Privatization has not gone away just because the Tories are out," she said "We are not giving up on rebuilding public services just because there is a provincial deficit." The cost of rebuilding public

services must be shared by all 8.2 million Ontarians, "not just dumped on the shoulders of public employees like us."

To rebuild public services, we must fight as hard as ever to make progress at the bargaining table and not be afraid to strike whenever needed.

As long as Premier Dalton McGuinty is still stuck in the past with Tory ideas, the Tories are still in charge, and public services will "keep right on begging for pennies while the companies that want to build P3s (Public-Private Partnerships) are sucking up dollars by the bushel."

In fact, said Casselman, "we can afford public services and we can definitely afford to pay public employees well."

Casselman reminded Convention that OPSEU members provide services that are among the most valuable in Ontario, saying "there is

more value in treating a person with a mental illness than there is in running a small business."

Casselman suggests OPSEU members can make change because the McGuinty Liberals are more sensitive to pressure than the Tories ever were and will listen if we make them. Our immediate goal, said Casselman, is to influence the next budget.



# What happened Thursday?

## Local restructuring Convention adds given thumbs down \$1.12 million to 2004 budget

The much-anticipated constitutional amendment that would have given OPSEU's executive board authority to merge smaller locals was soundly defeated by the 2004 convention.

In 2002, delegates directed the board to look at the union's local structure, including the financial and geographical feasibility of merging some locals. The board struck a committee which presented a discussion paper to Convention 2003 and then followed up with broader province-wide consultation.

The proposed amendment would have given the executive board authority to reorganize locals of under 100 members, "according to servicing needs and/or community of interest." After a couple of referral motions, the number was dropped to 25.

Supporters of the proposed amendment cited "representation by population" — which led to unfair delegate numbers — as a key issue, as well as financial savings.

Opponents, especially those in the northern regions, argued that for small locals spread over a large geographic area, merging would make it more difficult to keep members involved.

The constitution committee originally had recommended defeat of the amendment, calling it "heavy-handed." When it was referred back to the committee and then brought back to the Convention floor, the committee made no recommendation.

In the end, the delegates defeated the motion by a vast majority.



Delegates passed only three of seven proposed amendments to the 2004 budget. They voted to increase the budget for Grievance Legal Expenses by \$1 million to \$4,636,000 and to use the Contingency Fund to increase funding for the Workers of Colour Caucus to \$12,000 from \$5,000.



Delegates also voted to increase the Local Time-off fund in 2004 to \$300,000 from \$180,000, despite the fact that the budget line was under-spent in 2003. First Vice-President/Treasurer Smokey Thomas said that locals have not been taking advantage of those funds.

The increases change a balanced budget in the General Operating Fund to a deficit of \$1,120,000.

Who's Here?	
Delegates	729
Alternates	350
Observers	139
Executive Board	21
Committees	35
Retirees	7
Solidarity Guests	8
Guests	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>1305</b>

# Resolutions

## Delegates say no to non-unionized goods

Delegates sent a clear message OPSEU Enterprises should refrain from endorsing or promoting goods and services from non-unionized workplaces. A motion was also presented that OPSEU should take steps either to nullify the contract between OPSEU and the Bank of Montreal or not to renew the contract on expiry. Both the Bank of Montreal and Agilon Financial are non-unionized, and delegates felt that



our relationship with these two firms tainted the union movement. Others said we need to take a principled position and promote who we are, what we are, and what we stand for.

## Treat part-timers equally

Convention supported a motion to have OPSEU call on the provincial government to treat CAAT Academic and Support part-timers equally by giving them the right to unionize. OPSEU must lobby for changes to the Colleges' Collective Bargaining Act, which currently prevents part-timers from unionizing.

## Region 3 Loses It (And Gets it Back Again)

Within an hour of Region 3 introducing their new flag mascot, "Jelani Justice", an undercover operative of Region 2 removed it from their possession.

An unassuming individual, this operative flew under the radar of the real guardians of the flag by spending an excessive amount of time in Region 3's



## Convention passes health-related resolutions

OPSEU will lobby the provincial government to mandate the use of engineered safety devices in all health care settings in order to prevent needle sticks. Another resolution was passed to have OPSEU lobby the government and employers to provide overall protection for workers who may be adversely affected by "code orange" and "new normal initiatives".



## Some resolutions didn't fly

Delegates defeated a motion to force Executive Board Members to relinquish other union offices (except Local Steward).

The resolution to have OPSEU guarantee the hotel room of any activist on union business who is not able to reserve or pay for that room with a credit card was turned down.

Delegates also defeated a motion that BPS meetings be held regionally in the year when the BPS conference is not held.

hospitality suite, then volunteering to act as a guard. The moment the true guardians were preoccupied, she made away with the flag to Regions 2's hospitality suite. It was quickly returned.

"Jelani" is Swahili for mighty. The idea represents OPSEU's dedication to workers all across the province, our belief in global solidarity, and our commitment to international causes. T-shirts are available in the hospitality suite at \$15 each. All proceeds will go to the Live and Let Live Fund.

# First Impressions

By Karrie Ouchas

In Solidarity asked a series of new delegates for their first impressions of Convention:



“I’m overwhelmed for sure. I hope to meet new people and learn the structure and how all the locals work together.”

*Tammy McGregor, Local 369*

“This is my first time at Convention. I’m feeling pretty good, optimistic. The package that was sent out before Convention wasn’t what I would say overwhelming, but a little difficult to understand.

*Brian Dunham, Local 453*

“This is my first time as a delegate. I hope to gain experience and something positive to take back to the Local.”

*Merline Mitchell, Local 593*

“I had no idea what to expect as this is my first Convention. It’s amazing to see the number of people attending and how friendly everyone is towards each other. I am looking forward to see how the rest of the Convention plays out.”

*Shannon McDaniel, Local 241*

“I’m overwhelmed. It was tough finding a room. I hope to gain knowledge and experience. I’ve never dealt with a union governing body before (outside of the local).”

*Nat Lafontaine, Local 111*

# Casselman addresses new delegates

By Karrie Ouchas

President Leah Casselman reassured new delegates and urged them to speak out on issues that come to the floor. “I save all my harsh comments and demeanour for the employer, so relax,” she joked.

Casselman thanked a group of approximately 50 members attending the Wednesday evening New Delegate Seminar.

She said, “This is the first new government I will be facing since I was elected. I hope this government will be different.” Casselman has spent the last nine years defending her members under the oppressive Tories.

She encouraged everyone to enjoy Convention and attend the banquet Friday evening. It’s an opportunity to “celebrate achievements of members.”



## Provincial Women’s Committee

### Colours of Hope Fundraiser

**Total donated on Day 1**

**\$1300.00**

## Brought to you by *IN SOLIDARITY*

This is the eleventh 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:** Len Mason, Local 737; Laurie Sabourin, Local 438; Larry Farr, Local 559; Suzanne Clancy, Local 240; Ken Palmer, Local 456; Katie FitzRandolph, OPSEU Public Affairs; and Jamie Tocker, Executive Board Liaison.

