

# IN SOLIDARITY



Informed Newsletters for OPSEU  
Bulletins informés pour le SEFPO

APRIL 6, 2001

CONVENTION

DAY 2

## Casselman addresses convention

“Convention is the time when we look at the bigger picture, when we look at how OPSEU works for all its members and how we fit into the broader labour movement. This convention is also about looking toward the future and how we’re going to move forward together,” Leah Casselman told the convention.

Leah thanked the more than 4,600 members who chose to stay with OPSEU and the 1,300 new members from the BPS.

She noted that OPSEU commits more than \$2 million each year to organizing, 80 per cent of which goes to *reorganizing* divested members and those affected by privatization. She pointed out that we face not only problems with the divestment and privatization of our members but also, in the case of the Solicitor General staff, of having them legislated out of OPSEU and into the Ontario Provincial Police Association.

Rather than cut services and representation, Leah told the convention that we are obligated to put more resources into serving our francophone members.

She used the Walkerton crisis as an example of what happens when there aren’t enough resources to do the job right. “OPSEU was instrumental in forcing the government to hold a public inquiry and protect whistle blowers,” said Casselman

At convention Friday a special presentation will honour those members directly affected by the Walkerton tragedy.



Rather than blame the tragedy on individual mistakes, Leah stressed that any solid system of public services should be able to withstand individual mistakes. It is important to mobilize for a well-funded public services system, which can prevent disasters like Walkerton.

“Our central pool of resources continues to fight grievances, bargain new collective agreements, and support strikes but with double the number of contracts we had 15 years ago and about the same number of staff. We need better workplace strategies,” she said.

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# Convention OKs 'security bylaw'

With only a couple of questions asked, Convention '01 approved the audited financial statements and reappointed the auditors Thursday morning.

A constitutional amendment to allow use of the Strike Fund – with strict limits – to back indebtedness generated more debate.

The amendment lets the Board use the fund as security for mortgages and loans. The union's head office (and the mortgage on it) have been attributed to the Strike Fund for years. Delegates were assured the amendment would not jeopardize the Strike Fund. As long as the union meets its debt obligations, there would be no reason for a lender to call in its loans.

Failure to pass the amendment might make lenders nervous, and could cause them to call in the loan, with only the Strike Fund to repay with in any event.

David Rapaport, Local 503, expressed concern it would lead to a withering of the Strike Fund – which is designed to back up members at the bargaining table and convince employers that the union was resolved in its bargaining demands. Joan Gates of Local 331 was also concerned it might siphon off of money from the Strike Fund.

Isabelle Mercier of Local 720 said the union was living on a \$5 million line of credit because it was putting 10 per cent of revenues into the Strike Fund. Since the Strike Fund is the cause of the monthly shortfall, it should back up the operating loan.

EBM Dave Calvert, Local 454, said the change does nothing to the Strike Fund. Lenders know we pay interest on our line of credit each month, and they know we have \$25 million in the Strike Fund to back it up. "If they think our finances are wonky, they'll demand their money either from the Strike Fund or from the services we provide," Calvert said.

Convention also passed a companion "Security Bylaw" which gives financial effect to the constitutional change.

## Brought to you by INFO/BIS

This is the eighth year that the executive of INFO/BIS is producing these daily updates. We will provide a record of Convention events and happenings.

We welcome your help over the next three days. Come and see us in the Norfolk Room or drop us a note at the Media Table on Convention floor at the front next to the head table.

## Who we are:

Laurie Chapman, Local 323

Len Mason, Local 737

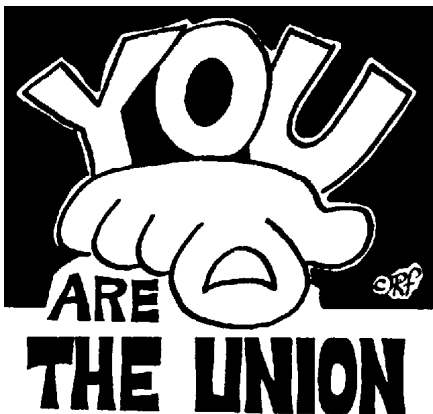
Larry Farr, Local 559

Vern Silver, Local 670

Katie FitzRandolph, Staff Support

David Calvert, Board Liaison

We are the proud producers of *IN SOLIDARITY*.



# Region 3 picks their Board

The members in Region 3 were spared an additional Regional meeting today when convention approved an emergency resolution.

On March 17<sup>th</sup> the delegates in Region 3 elected their three Board members — or so they thought. Apparently not even Region 3 can overturn the constitution. The Board upheld a challenge issued by a member in the Region, which meant that there needed to be another election.

The resolution asked convention to allow Region 3 to reconvene their Regional meeting at the close of Thursday's sessions to conclude the election process. The delegates supported the resolution.

As a result of the election, David Chew completes the team of three with Doris Middleton and Pauline Tapping. Pauline also retains her position as Regional Vice President and Doris as alternate. A further motion allowed for the elections to committees and conventions to stand as elected in March.

## Thursday's Report

Automatic delegates include all EBMs (outgoing and incoming), Convention committees, a maximum of seven members from each of the Retirees' Committee, Provincial Women's Committee, and Provincial Human Rights Committee.

Here are the numbers for the second day of *Convention 2001*.

Delegates	686
Alternates	343
Observers	109
Executive Board Members	21
Committees	35
Retirees	7
Solidarity Guests	7
Guests	<u>20</u>
	1, 228

# Sick child emphasizes importance of contract

Richard Larcher from Local 629, rose on a point of privilege Thursday to read a letter of thanks from Claude and Nicole Giroux. Their son, Serge, diagnosed with osteogenic sarcoma, the same cancer that Terry Fox had, was the recipient of a donation from the 2000 Convention.

In a moving letter, Giroux brought the delegates up to date on Serge's progress and how this illness has affected their family. Claude, a probation and parole officer and member of Local 629, wrote about the importance of the OPS Collective agreement in helping them through their ordeal. Article 25, which allows for special leave for compassionate purposes, gave Claude the time he needed to deal with the proper care of their son.

Serge's response to chemotherapy has not been favourable and he may require more intense treatment. Richard is asking once again that the floor consider Serge when donations are made this year.



## Casselman addresses convention

(Continued from page 1)

That's where the *Network for Better Contracts* comes in. These are tough times and members need support more than ever.

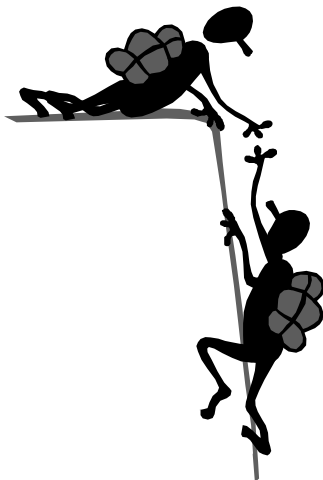
Leah supports the creation of a new local time off fund for local activists, and a Solidarity Fund for members who face lawsuits and professional discipline. She also supports a dues increase.

"We need the money because our challenges aren't going away," she said.

## Help Wanted

Reporters needed to write on days events for "*In Solidarity*" Update.

If you are interested, please contact one of the members of the INFO/BIS Committee



# Bearpit sidetracks dues debate

Delegates were just getting warmed up to a debate on a dues increase when they were diverted by bear-baiting.

Before the bearpit for candidates for the two full-time union offices, the Convention had agreed – with the overwhelming mandate of an avalanche – to cut the links between a dues increase and spending it all on organizing.

First Vice-President/Treasurer Len Hupet, who received a standing ovation for his budget address, told delegates that a dues increase is essential. "When you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is to stop digging," he said. OPSEU struggles by on a \$5 million line of credit, used to the maximum each month, he said.

When debate closed for electoral politics, delegates were debating a .15 per cent dues increase, with an amendment to raise that to .2 per cent and another amendment to drop from .2 to .15 when the line of credit is paid off.

The budget discussion will continue Friday.

