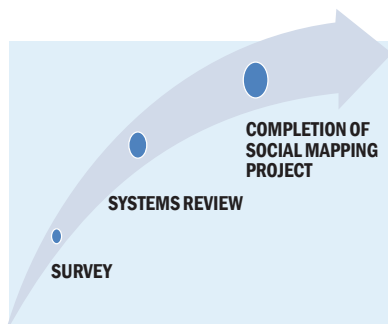


Phase II Recommendations Ready!



In 2004, the Workers of Colour Caucus initiated “The Living Wall”. This work created the foundation for the Social Mapping Project. After years of lobbying, in 2008, the Convention resolution passed.

Completed in early 2010, Phase I of the project was a demographic survey of the membership. Data

from close to 27,000 members provided OPSEU with a comprehensive view of the membership.

OPSEU retained Barbara Herring and Associates Inc. to conduct the systems review. The study focused on two membership systems: Elections and Education.

The objectives of the review were to:

- Identify systemic barriers,
- Explore areas of under-representation found in the survey, and
- Make recommendations for improvement.

In terms of the process, membership policies and documents were reviewed. Also, interviews and focus groups with relevant staff and members were conducted. Finally, best practices from other public sector unions related to education and election were reviewed in order to create a set of recommendations for implementation.



Assessing where barriers exist

A barrier to participation and access is found where:

- the policies suggest a basis for a barrier,
- the interviewees indicated knowledge of the barrier,
- the survey findings from Phase I indicated a gap or drop in participation from members of this group, and
- past experience confirms that the barrier exists in many other organizations and contexts.

Where barriers are confirmed by these multiple sources, one can confidently conclude that a barrier exists.



Key Findings

The final report is now ready. Containing a list of forty-five (45) recommendations,

the report is designed to help OPSEU build a stronger union that understands and responds to the membership in its full diversity.

Here are some key findings:

- Good Equity Policies on the books but few mechanisms in place to monitor enforcement.
- A lack of equity structures at the local level and in the regions reduces the ability to attract new members into union activism.
- Little focus on equity issues in the workplace.
- Difficult for members to participate in education and meetings where long distances were involved.
- OPSEU website is difficult to navigate; important messaging opportunities are lost.
- Activism in the locals is rewarded yet equity activism is not.
- Leadership does not reflect the general membership, particularly youth, racialized members and women.

Highlights of the Recommendations

The Membership Committee met with the consultant to review the draft report in February 2011. The Committee believes it is essential that OPSEU implement as many of the recommendations as possible given how connected they are to one another. However, they reached a consensus on the importance of five priority areas. They are:

- 1. Provide Leadership:** Encourage Board Members to show visible support for diversity and inclusion issues. For instance, appoint Board Members as “Diversity Champions” for both the Caucuses and the Committees.
- 2. Build in accountability:** Develop systems for accountability with respect to equity, diversity and inclusion. For instance, develop an “Inclusion Plan for Action” based on the recommendations from the Systems Review report.
- 3. Strengthen the mechanisms for equitable representation:** Establish demographic-based Board seats voted by members of equity groups.
- 4. Build from the Ground Up:** Build a local and regional structure for all equity groups. For instance, hold annual Equity Meetings in each region organized by each Caucus and Committee.
- 5. Promote Important Messages:** Upgrade the OPSEU website to attract activists from the equity groups. For instance, design Equity pages to be more informative and attractive in ways that help the average member understand how the union operates, what issues the union is advancing and how to get involved.

The Membership Committee will be making a timed presentation at Convention 2011 on the results of Phase II.

What's Next?

The “Report on Selected Membership Systems” has been sent to the Executive Board. The Board will review the recommendations and create an implementation plan.

Typically, an implementation plan has four key components:

- Overall Objectives
- Specific Tasks
- Clear Timelines
- Progress indicators

Reports on the results of any planning and implementation will be published as soon as that information becomes available.

In addition, the Membership Committee hopes to continue with the Membership Systems Review. Since the current review was limited to the Education and Election systems, the Communications, Bargaining and Organizing Systems still require a review. Finally, the Employment Systems Review for Staff has yet to be conducted.

Further funding is required to move ahead. OPSEU’s budget will be discussed at Convention 2011. Check the website for more information and updates on this innovative project.



Membership Committee

Richard Belleau (Colleges - Support); Cindy Haynes (Provincial Women’s Committee); Joanne Sheehan (Provincial Human Rights Committee); Paddy Musson (Colleges - Academic); Helen Riehl (Disability Rights Caucus); Pauline Saulnier (Aboriginal Circle); Philip Shearer (Rainbow Alliance); Peter Thompson (Workers of Colour Caucus); Ryan Walker (Provincial Young Workers Committee); Debbie Tungatt (Executive Board Liaison); Archana Mathew (Equity Staff)

Any questions about the project? Contact Archana Mathew (Equity Staff) at amathew@opseu.org.

This Newsletter is authorized for distribution by Warren (Smokey) Thomas, OPSEU President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Thomas".