

## Riding the bargaining cycle



by Randy Robinson, *In Solidarity*

“We’ve got a deal!”

There’s nothing quite like the feeling that comes when a union bargaining team signs a new tentative collective agreement. The news spreads through the workplace – or the picket line – like an electrical charge. Everyone wants to know, “What did we get?”

Collective bargaining takes place under tense conditions. It should. After all, the stakes are high. Your collective agreement may decide if you can visit the dentist, take a vacation, or buy a house. It can be the difference between working and not working. It can even save your life.

The days leading up to the signing of a new contract are never easy. If you’re on a union bargaining team, you’ve made some tough decisions. It’s not like Homer Simpson choosing between free beer and the dental plan. Real-life bargaining teams have to decide: do we go for that expensive benefit (say, orthodontic care) that is a lifesaver for a small number of people? Or do we try for an extra half-a-per-cent wage hike for everybody?

When the employer isn’t moving, bargaining team members also have to decide whether to take strike action or, in other cases, take a chance that an arbitrator will see things the union’s way. It’s never an easy call. It always means taking a risk.

Bargaining is just as tense for stewards and members in the workplace. Usually, you don’t know exactly what’s going on. “Bargaining continues under a news blackout” is often the only thing you hear from your team for days or even weeks. If a strike deadline is approaching, you’re worried about

going on strike. If you’re on strike, you feel like the strike will never end. Meanwhile, your back is aching from a debt load that’s getting heavier and heavier.

So when you hear “We’ve got a deal,” the first thing you feel is probably relief. “Whew! Finally! After all that stress, I get to take a break for a couple of years until the next round!”

Or so you may think. These days, more and more OPSEU members are realizing that bargaining doesn’t end when members ratify a new contract. Instead, they’re seeing bargaining as a cycle with three main phases: negotiation, enforcement, and demand setting. Each phase grows out of the previous one, and sets the stage for the next.

As one season ends, another begins.

### There is no contract unless it’s enforced

OPSEU members in the Ontario Public Service got a big shock in 2002. After 54 days on the picket line, they were looking forward to the pay raises (including retroactive pay) that their teams had negotiated. But despite agreeing on paper to implement the new contract “expeditiously,” the employer (a.k.a. the Ernie Eves government) didn’t hand over the money. One month went by. Then two. Still no raises.

The union grieved. Members wore “PAY UP NOW” buttons in the workplace and complained directly to their managers. The news media picked up the story. It took a fight, but finally, five months after the strike ended, members got what they’d bargained for.

# Who we are

The elected members of the editorial committee for *In Solidarity* are:

**Len Mason** - Editor, Local 737

**Larry Farr** - Local 559

**Laurie Sabourin** - Local 438

**Ken Palmer** - Local 456

**Suzanne Clancy** - Local 240

Ex-officio members are:

**James Tocker** - Executive Board Liaison

**Katie FitzRandolph** - OPSEU Public Affairs

Please send mail to *In Solidarity*,  
c/o Len Mason, OPSEU Head Office  
100 Lesmill Rd., Toronto, Ontario. M3B 3P8  
Contact at: mason@tbaytel.net

We are also your elected members of Informed Newsletters for OPSEU/Bulletins informés pour le SEFPO. If you require any support, advice or start-up information concerning newsletters, please contact one of the executive members. >

## EDITORIAL POLICY

The content and editing of this newsletter is determined by the committee. We want members to feel ownership of *In Solidarity*, and view it as independent of any particular segment of the union. Content comes from our base of activists, staff and other labour sources.

Where an article has a by-line, the views are those of the author and not necessarily the views of OPSEU.

While we welcome your contributions, we ask that these be constructive. All articles should be signed and include Local number, and should contribute positively to the welfare of this union.

We encourage thoughtful discussion of all related issues and reserve the right to edit for libel, length and clarity, and to reply to those that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of the union and its policies. >



### Authorized for distribution:

Leah Casselman, President  
Ontario Public Service Employees Union

*In Solidarity* is produced for all OPSEU stewards, newsletter editors of Info/Bis and certified Health and Safety Representatives.



Back row: Jamie Tocker, Katie FitzRandolph, Larry Farr.  
Front row: Suzanne Clancy, Laurie Sabourin, Len Mason, Ken Palmer.

## Introductions – please!

**Suzanne Clancy** is a Professor at Mohawk College, Local 240. She is a rookie member of the editorial team but no stranger to writing or newsletters. Suzanne has been in the biz for more than 25 years.

**Larry Farr** works at Centennial College, Local 559. He is entering his third term with *In Solidarity*. Larry is our “Yoda” when it comes to the technical aspects of newsletters. Larry teaches web design and other technical courses at our Editors’ Weekend.

**Len Mason** is a Correctional Officer at the Thunder Bay Jail, Local 737. He is in his fourth term with *In Solidarity* and was elected Editor by the committee. Len has been doing newsletters for 11 years and has won awards at the provincial and national level.

**Ken Palmer** is a Psychologist at Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf, Local 456. Ken is another rookie member of the *In Solidarity* team. Ken is an award-winning newsletter editor.

**Laurie Sabourin** is a Correctional Officer from St. Lawrence Valley Correctional Centre, Local 438. She is in her second term with the team. Laurie is an award-winning editor and is on the Provincial Women’s Committee.

**Jamie Tocker** is an Executive Board Member from Region 7 and is our Board Liaison for a second term. Jamie is a Health and Safety Advisor for the Ministry of Transportation, Local 706.

**Katie FitzRandolph** – see page 10 for feature.

(Continued from page 1)

A collective agreement is a book of rules for the employer, just like the Highway Traffic Act is a book of rules for drivers. And just as it takes the police to enforce the rules of the road, it takes smart stewards, working closely with union members and staff, to enforce a collective agreement. Without enforcement, that contract you worked so hard to win is just a pile of paper.

Sometimes, contract enforcement is all about clarifying what the contract actually says. Last year, for example, the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation hired a handful of people to work on temporary contracts. These workers were OPSEU members that MPAC had laid off from permanent jobs. They came back to work – and grieved. If MPAC needed them, they reasoned (reasonably), then why were they laid off?

It was a good question. Unfortunately, the grievance settlement found that nothing in the contract prevented the employer from bringing those people back, as long as it was for a temporary purpose. This was not good for those temporary workers, who were a) laid off in the first place, and b) denied the benefits permanent workers enjoyed.

Contract enforcement is a great tool for finding out what's missing from your collective agreement. The grievances you lose can lay the groundwork for the next phase of the bargaining cycle. A failed grievance is a new demand for the bargaining table.

### **Get your demands right – and build your bargaining power**

The key to a smooth ride on the bargaining cycle is to use the lessons of one phase to propel you forward in the next. Nowhere is this truer than during demand setting.

In demand setting, ideas that are too general, or too pie-in-the-sky, do not help bargaining teams. The best demands are **specific** and **achievable**. They must be based in experience. This means the union's experience in enforcing the contract, and the members' experience on (and off) the job.

Say you have a group of members who work on short-term contracts or on an "on-call" basis. In bargaining, the union might tell the employer, "We want these jobs converted to full-time, permanent jobs." This may be just what some members want. The employer may even agree to it. On the other hand, the employer may hate the idea of converting

the on-call workers and refuse to do so, even many months into a strike or lockout.

This is where having the right demands is crucial. It could be that what upsets the on-call workers is that sometimes the employer calls them in to work for as little as one hour. What they really want is to be paid for a minimum of four hours each time they are called in. This (cheaper) option may also be something the employer can agree to.

What are the "right" demands? Only the members know. Building participation in demand setting through conversations, surveys, and meetings is one of the most important jobs union stewards have.

### **Back to the table**

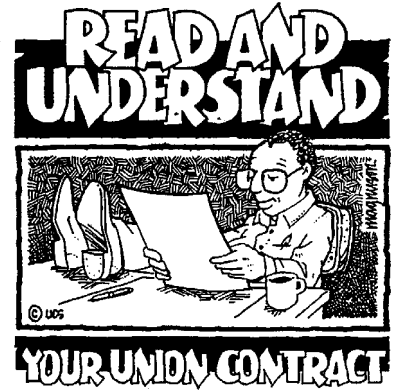
Once you've got strong demands, you're ready for the next phase. It looks an awful lot like the first phase.

Bargaining a new contract is a lot easier if you know everything about your current contract from working with it every week. Building member support for your bargaining team is a lot easier if union stewards have been talking to them regularly about workplace problems and have heard their voice in demand setting. That's what the bargaining cycle is all about.

Seeing bargaining as a cycle, you can also see how a collective agreement is built over many rounds of bargaining. The problem that was solved last time does not have to be solved this time. The problem that you solve this time will give you more to build on next time. And so it continues.

Union activists are volunteers. Union work is hard work. The bargaining cycle never ends, but that doesn't mean stewards and Local Executive Committees have to ride it as hard as they can until they drop. There are times when you have to pedal hard, and there are times when you can coast. Either way, the cycle keeps rolling along. >

***Randy Robinson is an OPSEU Communications Officer and an avid cyclist.***



## Casselman urges government:

# ‘Restore tax levels!’

### *In Solidarity*

**T**he OPSEU Executive Board has authorized a campaign to lobby all 79 Liberal and NDP MPPs while the government is making plans for next year’s budget.

“Ontario has a revenue problem, not an expense problem,” Leah Casselman, OPSEU President, told the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. “If we have to restore tax levels to rebuild our public services, then we should do it.

“It is idiotic to deepen the public service crisis when the problem lies on the revenue side.”

Government revenues for 2003-04 are forecast to be \$13.3 billion lower than they would have been if the Harris-Eves tax cuts had not been implemented, Casselman noted. The government has many options for raising revenues in addition to restoring tax levels, she said, such as:

- collecting unpaid corporate taxes and closing corporate tax loopholes;
- hiring more tax auditors;
- reducing the use of high-priced consultants in the Ontario Public Service;
- reducing staff caseloads at the Family Responsibility Office to help get more families off welfare;
- improving accountability at provincially-funded transfer payment agencies;
- abolishing the Ontario Innovation Trust, a \$500-million slush fund created by former Finance Minister Jim Flaherty; and
- ending exemptions to the Employer Health Tax.

“By adopting these measures, the Liberals could certainly hold any tax increase to a few per cent,” Casselman said. “Most Ontarians wouldn’t even notice the change.

“Chopping public services is simply not an option,” she said. “One thing we know about the



Tories is this: if they didn’t cut it, it couldn’t be cut.”

To read the full text of Casselman’s remarks, visit the OPSEU web site at <http://www.opseu.org/actionfax98/remarks.pdf>.

Casselman urged OPSEU members to get the union’s message out by any means possible.

“Talk to your friends and family, write letters to the editor, call in to radio phone-in shows,” she advised. “If you are in the Ontario Public Service, get your ideas in to the government’s ‘Ideas’ campaign. If the Liberals’ ‘citizens’ juries’ come to your town, figure out how to participate.”

### **Board members to coordinate lobby**

OPSEU is asking members to link into a campaign to influence public opinion in favour of restoring tax levels so government can rebuild public services. A new section of the OPSEU website gives members a direct way to write to their MPPs or to write to their local newspapers.

“Public services depend on government revenues,” Casselman said. “If the government doesn’t take action to rebuild revenues, they won’t be rebuilding public services any time soon, and for OPSEU members, the situation at the bargaining table won’t improve. We have had too many years where employers thought that zero, zero and zero was a reasonable wage offer. That has to end, and we have to lobby to end it.”

Talk to your friends and neighbours about rebuilding public services and reinvesting in Ontario. Help generate political climate where this can happen. >

# OPSEU wins an important human rights case in Canada's highest court

## Supreme Court of Canada rules that human rights can override management rights

### *In Solidarity*

In the District of Parry Sound Social Services Administration Board v. Ontario Public Service Employees Union, Local 324, the Supreme Court has ruled that arbitrators can apply human rights legislation to the exercise of management rights, regardless of any language in the collective agreement that tries to limit access to arbitration.

An OPSEU member was fired at the end of her probationary period. OPSEU alleged the firing was motivated by her pregnancy leave. The collective agreement stated that the discharge of a probationer was not subject to the grievance and arbitration procedures and does not constitute a difference between the parties. OPSEU filed a grievance anyway, and argued that the arbitrator always has jurisdiction to apply the Human Rights Code. The union relied in part on s.48 (12)(j) of the Labour Relations Act, which states: An arbitrator has power ... to interpret and apply human rights and other employment-related statutes, despite any conflict between those statutes and the terms of the collective agreement.

The arbitrator found she could hear the grievance. The Divisional Court overruled her and dismissed the grievance. The Court of Appeal reinstated the arbitration award. (By the way, the Court of Appeal also noted that the Employment Standards Act s.44 specifically makes it illegal to fire someone for going on pregnancy leave and s.64.5 deems such protection to form part of collective agreements.)

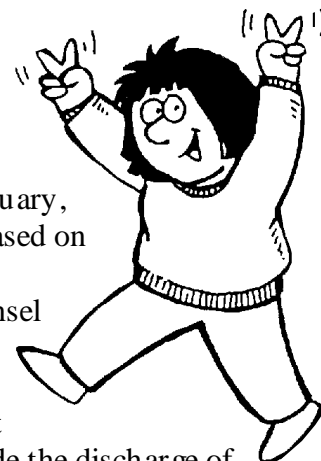
The Supreme Court of Canada heard the case in January, 2003. The decision was released on Sept. 18, 2003. OPSEU was represented by General Counsel Tim Hadwen and Peggy Smith of Elliot Smith.

The employer argued that the collective agreement made the discharge of the probationer inarbitrable and that the worker's human rights argument had to be made to the human rights commission not to the arbitrator. The Supreme Court of Canada rejected that argument and confirmed that the worker's complaint could go to the arbitrator. The Court stated:

*The obligation of an employer to manage the enterprise and direct the workforce is subject not only to express provisions of the collective agreement, but also to the statutory rights of its employees, including the right to equal treatment in employment without discrimination .... An arbitrator must have the power to implement and enforce those rights .... The availability of an accessible and inexpensive forum for the resolution of human rights disputes will increase the ability of aggrieved employees to assert their right to equal treatment without discrimination and this, in turn, will encourage compliance with the Human Rights Code.*

This means that regardless of an employer's attempts to bargain language putting the exercise of the management rights beyond the review of arbitrators, it will not work where human rights and employment standards rights are violated, even for probationary employees.

Now arbitrators will always be able to hear grievances alleging that human rights and employment standards were violated in the exercise of a management right. >



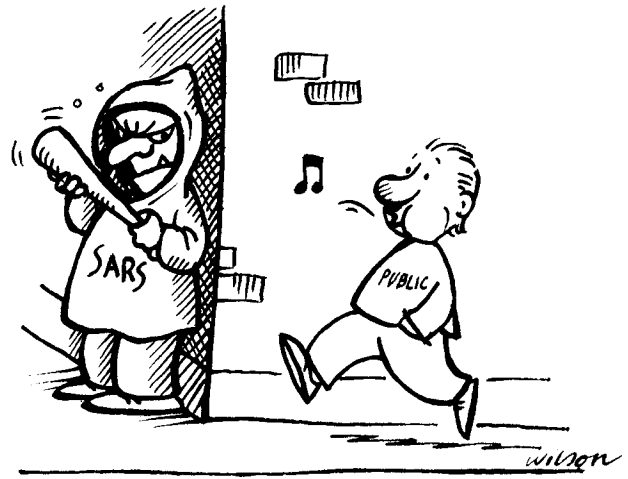
# SARS – A wake-up call for Health and Safety in Ontario

by Lisa McCaskell, OPSEU Health & Safety

Last year's crisis with Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) dramatically highlighted serious weaknesses in occupational health and safety systems in the health care sector, particularly in acute care facilities. The crisis also presented OPSEU with an unusual and powerful opportunity to work to effect improvements in health and safety in this sector. From the earliest days of the SARS emergency, OPSEU attempted to communicate with members in the health care sector by email, telephone and regular SARS Hazard Alerts posted on the OPSEU website. A critical message throughout the crisis was to strongly encourage Local Joint Health and Safety Committees (JHSCs) to meet to ensure that employers were taking all reasonable precautions to protect workers' health and safety.

It was almost immediately apparent that employers and sometimes even workers did not see the value of meeting in their JHSCs. Some employers simply refused to allow their JHSCs to meet. In many cases, it seemed to us in OPSEU's Health and Safety Unit, as if employers believed that their responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act could be set aside during the crisis.

It continues to be OPSEU's position that JHSCs in each facility should have been charged with the responsibility of reviewing the Directives being issued from the Provincial Operations Centre, to determine how best to implement them to meet the specific conditions in their workplaces. The Directives dealt not only with infection control measures for patients; they specifically addressed



JUST AROUND THE CORNER?

health and safety measures to protect workers caring for those patients. Worker members of the JHSCs have practical knowledge of how work is performed in their facility. They also have knowledge about how to communicate complex health and safety information to other workers with a wide range of knowledge, training and English-language skills. Yet for the most part the expertise of worker members of JHSCs was not used.

Three other serious weaknesses of health and safety systems in the health care sector were revealed during the SARS crisis. OPSEU members and Health and Safety Unit staff are now aware that in many cases, acute health care sector employers have never fully implemented the *Health Care and Residential Facilities Regulation* under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHS)*. Specifically, workers who may be required to wear respirators as a means of reducing exposures to biological hazards had never been properly fitted or trained. We also learned that employers and even workers have failed to make the connection between good infection control policies/

(Continued on page 7)

## SARS — A wake-up call for Health and Safety in Ontario

*(Continued from page 6)*

procedures and the health and safety of workers. By law, infection control measures have to make up part of a health care facility's occupational health and safety policies and procedures. Additionally, it became clear through the crisis that the Ministry of Labour has historically not been active in enforcing the OHSA in the acute health care sector.

Early last June, just as the second SARS outbreak was winding down in Toronto, the provincial government announced that it would establish a Commission under the leadership of Judge Archie Campbell to investigate the introduction and spread of SARS. While the mandate of the SARS Commission was quite broad, OPSEU took greatest interest in areas of the mandate dealing with how SARS-related information was communicated among health care workers and institutions, whether health care workers were adequately protected from SARS and the role that existing legislation, specifically the OHSA, played throughout the crisis.

OPSEU's efforts to offer critical input to the SARS Commission were aided immeasurably by an unusual decision – OPSEU decided to work collaboratively with the Ontario Nurses' Association to gather data and present findings and recommendations to Justice Campbell. This decision followed their positive experiences during the SARS crisis when the health and safety officers of each union worked closely together sharing information, expertise and insights that resulted in richer and more complete information being shared with the members of both unions. While each union had part of the story of how SARS affected health care workers in the acute care sector, together the two unions could put together a much fuller, more effective chronicle of events and problems for the Commission.

The results of this collaborative effort have been impressive. The two unions represent between them more than 76,000 health care workers. Jointly, we represent health care workers from almost every area within the health care system. It is difficult to ignore the wealth of experience that our memberships bring to the table. Consequently, OPSEU and ONA were received very positively by the Commission

Our first major joint effort was a 35-page brief to the Commission that was presented privately to Commission staff during a series of four private interviews from September to December with ONA and OPSEU health and safety officers. We believe that the wealth of material, much of it highly critical of the way SARS was handled, led to the Commission deciding to hold a second set of public hearings in November devoted solely to Occupational Health and Safety matters.

OPSEU and ONA allowed their brief to be distributed by the Commission to interested parties such as the Ministry of Labour and the Ontario Hospital Association prior to the public hearings in order to allow those parties to respond to our analysis. The Ministry of Labour vehemently denied some of the allegations in our brief at the hearing. However, we did not find their arguments and explanations to be convincing. The OPSEU/ONA public presentation to the Commission was well-covered by the media.

In November, the Commission announced to the two unions that it had decided to appoint another investigator who would focus his work solely on occupational health and safety matters. We believe that the volume and depth of material we presented to the Commission is at least partly responsible for this decision. The final two private interviews held at the Commission with us were led by the new investigator.

Currently, the two unions are working together to finalize the preliminary recommendations that were made in our brief to the Commission. (The brief, including the preliminary recommendations can be found on the OPSEU website on the Health and Safety information page.) Both unions consider this unusual collaborative effort to have been a success that has furthered our efforts at improving health and safety conditions for all workers in the health care sector. >

# Unclassified OPS employees can join the pension plan and buy back past service

*Hidden Treasures, Local 340*

**F**or most OPS members, joining the OPSEU Pension Plan is mandatory. However, some people – including contract/unclassified and seasonal employees with the Ontario Public Service (OPS) or another employer that participates in the OPSEU Pension Trust – have the option of enrolling voluntarily and starting to earn pension benefits.

You can join the OPSEU Pension Plan if you work in an unclassified or nonpermanent position that is part of the OPSEU bargaining unit in the OPS, or at an agency, board, commission, foundation or organization that contributes to the OPSEU Pension Plan.

Like any other member, those who join voluntarily can apply to buy back credit for eligible past service – including any unclassified service before they enrolled in the Plan. Once enrolled, members cannot leave the Plan unless they terminate their employment.

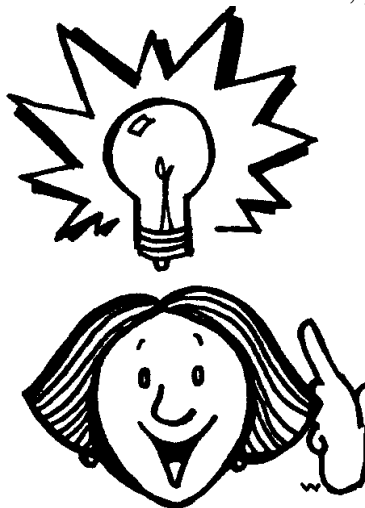
Many contract/unclassified/seasonal employees later get permanent positions. When this happens, they are required to join the Plan – and have the option of buying back credit for their previous non-contributory service. By enrolling voluntarily while in an unclassified position, employees start to earn credit immediately. This eliminates the need to buy back this service if they later get a permanent job. It is often less expensive, since the cost of buying back

the service at a later date will be based on the member's salary at the time OPTrust receives the complete buyback application. The cost is also affected by the dates of the service being bought and the amount of credit being bought.

The OPSEU Pension Trust Plan sets out strict time limits for submitting a buyback application. As a member, you are responsible for ensuring that OPSEU Pension Plan receives your complete *Application for Past Service Credit* form by the Plan's deadline. Since the OPT cannot process your application until they have received all of the required documents, it is in your interest to ensure the OPT receives them as soon as possible. To be eligible, you must submit your application within 24 months of the later of: the date you first become and continuously remain a member of the OPSEU Pension Plan (or the Public Service Pension Plan if you were transferred from it) or the last day of leave of absence you are applying to buy back. If OPTrust does not receive your *Application for Past Service Credit* within the 24-month time limit, you will not be able to buy back the pension credit.

OPTrust has an excellent booklet titled, "Your Pension and Buying Back Credit," which provides detailed information on how to purchase credit for eligible periods of past service. All information in this article has been extracted from this publication.

To find out more about the benefits of joining the OPSEU Pension Trust Plan, please visit their website at [www.optrust.com](http://www.optrust.com), or call them directly at: 416-681-6100 or 1-800-637-0024. >



# P3s = Big Problems

by Virginia Lafond, *Union Talking, Local 479*

Public-Private Partnership (P3), the building arrangement for the new Royal Ottawa Hospital (ROH), is not the stuff of lunch table conversation. I think it should be. Why? For at least three reasons:

## 1. The P3 experience has turned out badly.

According to a primer (No. 2) on economic and social issues from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, in 1994, the building of 30 Nova Scotia schools was contracted P3-style to a local consortium. Believe it or not, the consortium was exempted *by contract* from liability for problems involving construction. Thus, the builder felt no compulsion to use high or even medium grade materials.

Schools in wealthy neighbourhoods were built to the standard of those neighbourhoods (their descriptions read like those for spa resort ads) but the picture was much different in low-income areas. In one case a new water-filtration system had been installed, and when arsenic (!) was found in the school's drinking water, the school board and the builder could not come to an agreement on just which body – the board or the builder – was responsible for repairs to the filtration system.

A year later the students were still drinking bottled water. The long and the short of the Nova Scotia P3 experience is that it was so bad that all future P3 projects have been cancelled.

The government of Nova Scotia remains responsible for P3 contracts for up to 35 years. Estimates are that the now defunct Nova Scotia P3 experiment will end up costing \$32 million more than what the traditional way of building would have.

## 2. Because P3s end up costing more.

It's almost trite to say that the 'Private part' of any P3 arrangement is in it 'for the money.' Inevitably, Privates borrow money to make money.

Over the life of a new hospital for example,

Private is going to exact its profit. No problem, you and I might glibly say, until we catch sight of the fact that governments can borrow money at 2 – 4 per cent less than Private. This means that over the life of a hospital like the new ROH, the cost is going to be much greater than if the government was providing the funding for the building.

The Ontario Health Coalition refers us to the Australian experience: "The Australian experience with P3 hospitals showed that in the long run, P3 hospitals could cost twice as much as publicly financed hospitals."

It's also important for us to note that the government will get off touting that it did not add to the public debt for the new ROH. What it doesn't tell you or me is that this is thanks to the fact that leasing arrangements, though costing more, are entered into a different column (not the debt column) on an accountant's spreadsheet.

## 3. Accountability is, and will be a problem.

We've just gotten through a gargantuan power outage. In the aftermath, we've noticed the tardiness of some elected officials to step to the podium and give us information about what went wrong and what we can expect.

Why the tardiness? The answer lies in privatization. No longer can we hold the government accountable for power supply to the citizens of Ontario as we once did. They do not have information at the ready about any formerly government-supplied service now privatized. They have to wait for the private company to supply it. Wait we did, on Thursday, Aug. 14, 2003. Waiting is but one important who-is-accountable problem.

Getting problems actually fixed properly – whether they be huge power-outages, black-mold clean-up or arsenic in school water-supply – is another.

The ROH P3 arrangement poses major challenges not only in the realm of ROH working conditions but also its delivery of quality patient services. We'd better talk. Anyone going to lunch? @

# The End of an Era:

## *Katie FitzRandolph*

by Larry Farr, *In Solidarity*

**A**n OPSEU icon is retiring. Katie FitzRandolph, Communications Officer, will clock out once and for all on July 30, 2004. Although she's been thinking about it for the past five years, "now the time seems right."

The most senior of three Communication Officers, Katie has become a bit of an OPSEU legend, with the knack of being able to quickly summarize an issue. "She's the mentor to all of us in the department," says supervisor Paul Bilodeau (Administrator, Communications Division.) "She's the one we go to for advice."

Katie started work at OPSEU 25 years ago on July 28, 1979 in the Communications Department "I don't think I could have done this job for so long if I wasn't working for an organization that I believed in," she says.

After John Ward retired, Katie also took on the role of vetting local and divisional bylaws. A task she obviously relishes. Bilodeau calls her "the Bylaw Mistress."

Pre-OPSEU days were spent in Vancouver, Regina, Ottawa and Winnipeg – where Katie worked as reporter and editor.

Her union career began on the organizing committee at the Winnipeg Free Press, followed by a stint with the Ottawa Newspaper Guild where she was president of a local that included the Ottawa Citizen, CJOH TV and the Ottawa Journal.

She's also been a member of the Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) Executive Council for 24 years, eight of them as president. Rosemarie Bahr is CALM Editor. "We're sorry Katie's going but happy for her", she says. "She's been great for CALM and has played a key role in labour relations, especially around newsletters. Not



**Katie FitzRandolph, in her OPSEU office, surrounded by her paintings.**

only has she nurtured the growth of OPSEU newsletters, she's done the same through CALM for the rest of the country."

"She's also probably taught more local editors than anyone else. And she's consistently good. Some people get stale when they've taught for so long. Not her. She always gets good evaluations," she says.

Will Katie be invited back to teach at upcoming CALM conferences? Most definitely, maybe the next conference will have to be in New Brunswick.

On her wall amongst her numerous paintings, editorial cartoons, and a comic award for "most noted for finding the most creative parking spot" are photos of her with her son, Jamie Ogden, born in 1967 in Mexico City. Although given up for adoption, Katie and he got together again 10 years ago. They have been close ever since. And, if you can imagine, his wife and he are OPSEU members. "OPSEU's everywhere, you know," Katie says (another of those one-liner observations she's known for.)

*(Continued on page 11)*

# Katie FitzRandolph

(Continued from page 10)

One of her most famous phrases came out of the horrific air ambulance crashes in 1988. The government was contracting out the services and OPSEU had launched a campaign to protest the action. That June, a chartered air ambulance crashed into the waters off Pelee Island killing pilot Fred Lewis, ambulance officer Charles Ransome, and the patient's husband, Ken Fraser.

That November, another chartered air ambulance crashed outside of Chapleau while on a flight to pick up a patient. Four people – pilot David Townsend, co-pilot Bryon Bewart and paramedics Ian Harris and Donald Contant – were killed.

OPSEU laid a charge against then Health Minister Elinor Caplan under the provincial Health and Safety Act. The charge was lifted only after Caplan agreed to order an inquiry.

When the *Toronto Sun* called OPSEU looking for a reaction to the Minister's decision, Katie's response was, "she's seven deaths too late." That Katieism turned into the Sun's headline. "She can come up with the right quote right off the top of her head," Bilodeau emphasizes." The other thing about Katie," he says, "is that she gives you a straight answer. That's refreshing these days."

While Katie acknowledges the importance of electronic media, "there's something important about written communication that goes to our members," she says. Much to her chagrin, *Our Ontario*, OPSEU's premier, bilingual publication (another one of Katie's projects) has been cut down to being produced once per year. "I think we've dropped that at our peril," she says. "It was one publication that most OPSEU members saw from their union. Call me a stick-in-the-mud, but I really believe in written communication." The next *Our Ontario* will be coming out after convention. "As an annual publication, it limits what you can do with it," she says.

She'll also be remembered for the work she's done on the Editors' Weekend, an annual event Katie has helped develop and worked on over the years with the members of *In Solidarity*. "Will Presley, as a new board member, wanted to do something on local communications," Katie recalls, "and we were

doing some weekend courses on newsletters." A system of training, the Weekend and awards was developed with a different outside judge every year to judge the newsletters. "We've made it an honest and credible system," Katie asserts. "I think our local publications are strong. One of OPSEU's strengths," she says.

Katie and her three cats will be moving back to her roots in New Brunswick "to a pretty old house in Fredericton." Will she sit around with her feet up on the porch? Possibly, but it will have to come between the painting, writing a book, and doing contract work for other unions down in the Maritimes. She'd also like to continue doing workshops and teaching.

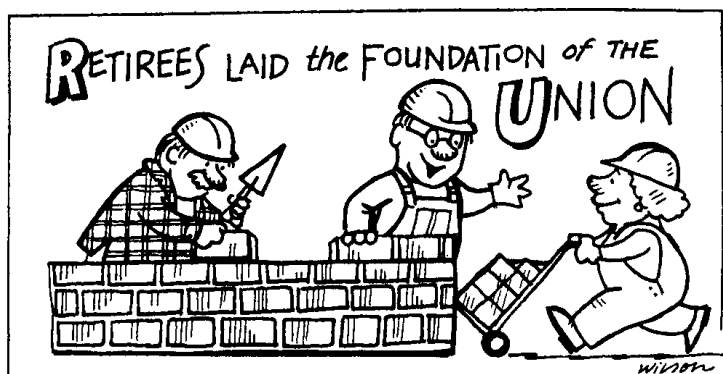
Her new/old home is a five-minute walk from the legislature so she'll also be able to "get out for protests on a regular basis."

What will Katie miss most? Without hesitation she says, "The people. There are some really great people here."

Does she have some words of advice for her replacement? A gain, no hesitation, "Enjoy it. It's an interesting job with a lot of challenges. You can really make a difference in peoples' lives, and that's important. There aren't many jobs that give you that. I've been lucky."

"I believe in the union movement and OPSEU. We've gotten better and stronger as the years go by. A union is an organization of people. Like people, they make mistakes. We have a lot of strengths and a lot of fine people or I wouldn't have stayed 25 years."

And we're thankful you did Katie. Don't forget to visit. >



# Advocating for workers who support children and families

by Deborah Gordon, Chair, Child Treatment Sector

Children's Mental Health Services (CMHS) have existed in the Ontario since the early 1970s. Many agencies grew out of their respective communities' desire to have mental health services that would specifically address the clinical issues of children and their families. Out of this desire have evolved programs that include: in-home support, residential treatment, assessment and treatment services, and prevention and outreach programs. OPSEU represents workers in 27 Children's Treatment Centres.

CMHS, previously funded under the Ministry of Community, Family and Social Services, has recently been transferred to the newly-created Ministry of Children's Services. (In 1997, the Tories downloaded funding responsibilities for Day Nursery Integration Programs to the municipalities.) While we hope that the new Ministry will more clearly profile and address the needs of children in this province, the Child Treatment Sector of OPSEU is acutely aware that our services have never been *mandated* under the *Child and Family Service Act* and remain glaringly vulnerable to the cutting eye of those determined to find ways to balance the budget.

Recent changes to the *Child and Family Service Act* and the newly implemented *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, have significantly increased referrals to programs and services in children's mental health at a time when our agencies have not seen an increase to their base budgets for more than a decade. While our mandated counterparts in Children's Aid Societies and young offender custody facilities are struggling with similar funding crises, they remain more clearly 'linked' in the eyes of the Ministry because of their mandated status. The children's mental health link is in danger of snapping under the strain of the increased demands for service placed upon it. At last count, Children's Mental Health Ontario (the Employer Association) reported that

12,000 children were waiting anywhere from 6-12 months for services, a 50 per cent increase from the previous year. The Tory government liked to boast that they had funded new programs such as the Early Years Initiative and Wrap Around. In reality, what has been experienced at an agency level is the move towards a competitive Request For Proposal model. Fiscally funded projects are often not annualized when the fine print of the contract cannot be honoured. This has created a system that makes the game of hoop jumping a new art form. These are critical times for children's mental health and Children's Treatment Services. The Child Treatment Sector of OPSEU is committed to advocating for workers who support children and families through providing education to the members and lobbying on behalf of the members and the public both at a local and provincial level. Our priority issues at this time are to address the following:

- Obtaining revitalization dollars to address recruitment and retention issues (CMH workers are paid 24 to 36 per cent less than their counterparts in Health, Education and Children's Aid Societies),
- Pay equity funding,
- The larger political issue of defining who is the Employer in a transfer payment world, and
- Promoting within the Sector a more coordinated approach to bargaining.

On a more global level, addressing child poverty and mental health services are areas of importance in the work of the sector. >

Please check out the Child Treatment Sector website at [opseu.org](http://opseu.org) for updates and information. Advocate for Children's Mental Health Services to be *mandated* by sending a postcard to Premier McGuinty which can be found under the "Parents for Children's Mental Health" website at [ParentsforChildrensMentalHealth.org](http://ParentsforChildrensMentalHealth.org). Our children's health and future depends on your activism and energy to speak for those who cannot yet speak for themselves. <sup>3</sup>

## Letter to the Editor



# How do we get young members involved in the union?

**A**t the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) it was identified as crucial for us to get young people (identified as under 30 years of age) involved in the union movement. Despite the fact that this same issue was addressed at the previous OFL Convention two years ago, the numbers of actual youth delegates went down. I am sad to report that OPSEU did not have any youth delegates at the convention.

I contemplated why this was the case and while I cannot speak for other unions, I can present what I believe would be a solution of OPSEU.

We need to follow the example that we have set for the Provincial Women's Committee and the Provincial Human Rights Committee – we need to have a Provincial Youth Committee. We need to elect one member per region from the designated group of youth. That way they are assured of attending future OPSEU regional meetings, OPSEU convention and the other conventions: the OFL, the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) and National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE). They would be going in their own right and not having to try to be elected from amongst the rest of us old-timers. We may need to accept nominations from locals who have found members under 30 years of age willing to run, even if they are not in attendance at the Regional meeting. Until we put a process in place to make sure that they are included it will be unlikely that they will be at the regional meeting to get elected.

There is no way that we will get youth involved unless we make sure we make room for them.

I am requesting that locals put forward a constitutional amendment to have a Provincial Youth Committee (PYC), one member to be elected for each region, for the upcoming OPSEU convention in April.

We need to get moving on this now. Just think

how proud we will be when we can say at future conventions that we have seven members from youth. If other public service unions follow our example, we will be influential in encouraging young people into the labour movement, something we must do if unions are to survive.

In solidarity,  
*Jean Fordyce*  
*President, OPSEU Local 109*  
*Support Staff at Fanshawe College*

## Occupational Disability Response Team

*Ontario Federation of Labour*

The Ontario Disability Response Team (ODRT) is a not-for-profit project set up by the Ontario Federation of Labour in 1990 to provide workers and their representatives with workplace insurance training and support. The ODRT mission is to ensure the well-being of Ontario workers and their entitlement to workplace insurance benefits. The ODRT offers multi-level training on WSIB Rights and Obligations (Level 1), Benefits and Representation (Level II), Appeals and Dispute Resolution (Level III), Return to Work, Medical Orientation and Occupational Disease. It also offers ongoing information updates through its website ([www.odrt.ca](http://www.odrt.ca)) and its quarterly publication, The Advocate.

Contact Colin Argyle at 416-443-7682.

# Dealing with difficult workers



**D**oes it sometimes seem that five per cent of your co-workers give you 95 per cent of your problems? Many stewards report that dealing with difficult workers is the most frustrating part of their job, consuming time and energy they'd rather use working on other workplace issues.

Dealing effectively with difficult workers requires both skill and focus. You can't ignore them because they have a way of infecting others around them. But neither can you let their bad behaviour eat up big portions of your time.

Here are some general tips to use in dealing with difficult workers.

## What's the Nature of the Beast?

Difficult workers come in many categories – the whiner, the malcontent, the loose cannon, the critic, the snitch.

To find out the “nature of the beast” – why they behave as they do – hear out the worker. Set a time limit for this meeting. For example, “Sally, I see you getting into arguments over and over again with others in your unit. Let's get together on break and you tell me what's going on.”

Really listen and get the worker to talk about his or her own behaviour – not just blame others. Ask challenging questions like, “What do you think yelling at Kathy accomplishes?”

Sometimes workers “act out” because they feel no one has ever heard their views. When they actually get a chance to talk it out, they may be satisfied that they have received the attention they deserve.

## Truth and Consequences

How does the worker's behaviour affect others in the union? It may be perfectly obvious to everyone except the person.

Confront the person about his or her behaviour by describing it and the effect you see it having on others.

“Jack, I hear you telling workers it's hopeless to get things changed here. I don't think it's hopeless, but if workers keep hearing it from you, they'll lose interest in working to make things better.”

The key here is describing the behaviour – not labelling the person (“Jack, you are hopeless.”) Your goal is to give Jack a chance to consider how his behaviour makes others feel. Once realizing that, Jack may think twice before throwing cold water on the union's efforts.

## Busy Hands are Happy Hands

The good news is that difficult workers have energy. The bad news is that they use most of it unproductively. How can you channel that energy into positive activity?

“Katerina, you've been complaining that the union never does anything for the office workers. Would you help organize a lunch time discussion with them so we could identify their concerns?”

Choose an activity that fits the person's talents and work closely with them.

For whiners and critics, this is the “put up or shut up” move. If they do not participate, you've exposed their belly-aching and undermined them in the eyes of others.

*(Continued on page 15)*

## Dealing with difficult workers

(Continued from page 14)

### Stress the Positive

Show difficult workers that there is a way to deal with situations more constructively. Give examples and enlist others to tell difficult workers their stories.

“Mary used to not get involved, but when the supervisor in her unit started to cut hours, she organized the whole unit to walk into his office together and he backed off. Let Mary tell you about it.”

When difficult workers do act responsibly, be quick to recognize and praise them. Be ready with a suggestion of something else constructive they could do.

### Only the Lonely

Accept that there are difficult workers whose problems are so deep-seated, no technique a steward could use would help. Remember that such workers cannot sustain a “following,” even if sometimes it seems they have everyone’s ear. Workers are more willing to join movements that are constructive and fun as opposed to those that are dour and built on discontent.

If you have to endure difficult workers, you can isolate their effect by making sure the union is always offering an active agenda in the workplace.

### The 95 % Solution

Most workers you represent work hard and do their best to get along with others. Keep your sanity by focusing on them and working with them to keep the union strong. >

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# 15 Signs Showing You Might be Canadian



1. You know that BC Bud is not a weak beer brewed on the West Coast.
2. You understand the phrase “Could you pass me a serviette, I just dropped my poutine on the chesterfield.”
3. You eat chocolate bars, not candy bars.
4. You drink Pop, not Soda.
5. You know what a Mickey and 2/4 mean
6. You know that a pike is a type of fish, not part of a highway.
7. You drive on a highway, not a freeway.
8. You know that Casey and Finnegan were not part of a Celtic musical group.
9. You get excited whenever an American television show mentions Canada.
10. You know what a toque is.
11. You design your Halloween costume to fit over a snowsuit.
12. You know that the four seasons mean: almost winter, winter, still winter, and road work.
13. You understand the Labatt Blue commercials.
14. You perk up when you hear the theme song from ‘Hockey Night in Canada.’
15. “Eh?” is a very important part of your vocabulary, and is more polite than, “Huh?”

**Proposition:  
Local Restructuring will  
help OPSEU**

# Point

## *Restructuring makes sense*

**O**PSEU's recent commitment to local restructuring is long overdue and should be applauded.

While the erosion of public service jobs over the past two decades has been a very difficult pill to swallow, let us remember that we are still 100,000 members strong and the strength of that membership comes from our unity.

Currently, we have many locals with fewer than 50 members and some as low as two. Many of those locals don't have full executives, never have general membership meetings and are not very cost effective.

Democracy is defined as a form of government exercised either directly by the people or through their elected representatives; rule by majority. (Webster's, 1997) While most can live by this governing process, few realize how unequally balanced this is for large locals. Locals with 1,500 members now have a delegate entitlement of six delegates, while all locals with less than 100 members have one to our annual Convention. For example, if we have 6 locals with 10 members, this equals 6 delegates representing 60 members on Convention floor as opposed to the same number of delegates representing 1,500. This gives a whole new meaning to majority rule.

Whether you are a member of the Ontario Public Service, the Broader Public Service, or the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, we all fight for the same type of issues in negotiations, grievances and in our Employer-Employee Relations Committees. The size of your local or which local you belong to really has little relevance.

I can appreciate peoples' fears of losing local

**Lynne Easter-Froats** is the president of Local 116 and the Children's Aid Society Sector Chair.



autonomy, but believe that if this is done respecting geographical challenges and common working conditions, it can only empower some of those small locals with significantly more bargaining power. The geographical challenges are huge mitigating factors making it impossible to merge locals particularly in the northern region. In other regions, however, we have many of these small locals often within the same city.

We have shown across the province we can maintain and administer collective agreements with our employers. As a president of a fairly large local, meeting the needs of members in a number of work classifications with very different jobs can be a difficult task. However, as an elected representative under the oath of office, it is a duty to represent all members in all classifications. Remember, if elected representatives fail to fulfill this duty, the democratic process allows for people to be held accountable.

# Counterpoint

## *Local Restructuring. A waste of time!*



**Jamie Tocker**  
*is an Executive Board Member from Region 7 and president of Local 706.*

if it is not in the Collective Agreement? What if that president could not be released to the union because of their employer? What about the president's benefits or seniority? Would they lose that too? If local restructuring became part of the Constitution, could we be in violation of it in some cases just because we could not honour it?

Hypothetically speaking, if three individual locals each had 40 members, they are entitled to one delegate to Convention each. If the intent was to merge these locals into one so locals would not be smaller than 100, then they could be forced to merge into one local of 120 members. Where that region had 3 delegates from those locals before, it now only has one. What does this do to regional representation? It reduces it!

Over my years as an activist, I have had the opportunity to attend many a Convention, and am well aware of how things can change once a motion hits the floor for debate. In this case, one problem that could come up would be that someone puts a motion on the floor to reduce the number for a full-time president from 750 to 500. This could be an extremely costly issue. It is my understanding that something like that could have the effect of adding \$1.5 million dollars to a budget that is already tight. We cannot afford that type of an added cost. Where would the money come from? Which budget line do we make the cut from?

We rely on our active members to drive the cogs of the union wheel. Will members still volunteer the time to do the work if they can now dump it on their full-time president? I know a few who have already brought this up. This could result in a declining activist base.

For all of these reasons and more, I just don't see the point!

**T**o me, the idea of "Local Restructuring" as it is laid out right now, is completely wrong and a waste of time. From what I have seen so far with respect to this issue, we stand to lose a lot.

This package, should it pass at Convention, would give the Executive Board the power to force locals to merge, without their consent. This is wrong. I do not believe the Board should have that type of power. As it is right now, should locals desire to merge, they can do it with a fair amount of ease, so why force it? Is that not the type of thing some of our employers do to us now?

The promise of giving a local that has 750 or more members a full-time president will only serve a few. It does nothing for the smaller locals that cannot meet the number of 750 because they are in a more remote area, not to mention the fact that it may not even be legal. Can we as a union grant this to a local

# On April 28, we mourn workers killed and injured on the job

by Len Mason, *In Solidarity*

## What is the Day of Mourning?

April 28 is observed across Canada as the Day of Mourning, a day to honour those who have died, suffered injury or experienced illness due to work-related causes.

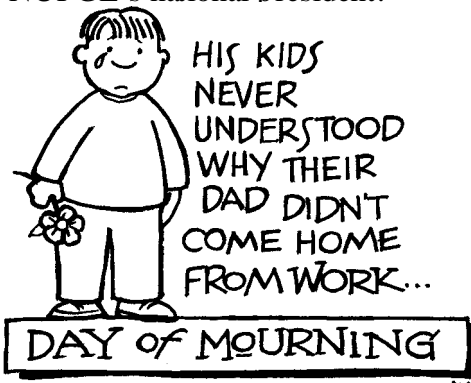
## Why April 28th?

On that day in 1914, the *Workmen's Compensation Act* was given third reading in the Ontario Legislature.

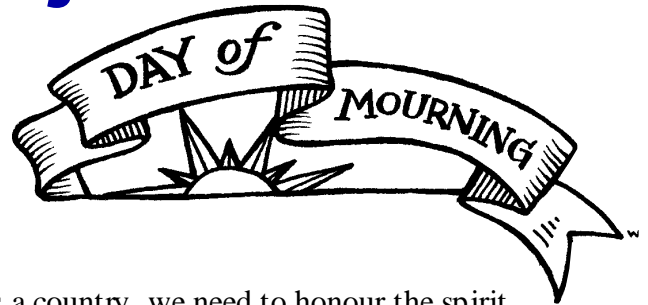
The Day of Mourning is officially recognized in many provinces across the country, and in many municipalities throughout Ontario.

James Clancy is marking April 28, the International Day of Mourning for Killed and Injured Workers, by asking the 337,000 members of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) to join him in honouring those who have suffered death and an injury at work.

"Too many of our sisters and brothers have been injured or even killed on the job," said Clancy, NUPGE's national president.



"Every day a Canadian dies as a result of workplace related injuries – this is a deplorable state of affairs.



As a country, we need to honour the spirit of April 28 every day of the year."

OPSEU President Leah Casselman urges all locals to organize some event to recognize the importance of the day. She suggests lowering flags to half staff, wearing black armbands, or gathering members together for 15 minutes for a few words about the importance of safe and healthy workplaces and a minute's silence in respect for those who have lost their lives at work.

"If you can't get your employer's co-operation for an event, try to do something over the lunch break. We will never stop this human sacrifice if we don't make a conscious effort to remember it," Casselman said. OPSEU is a component of NUPGE.

Here are some suggestions to commemorate the Day of Mourning:

- Observe a moment of silence at 11:00 a.m.
- Inform people in your workplace about the Day of Mourning and its significance.
- Share your health and safety knowledge with other workplaces.
- Build health and safety into your operations to control potential hazards.

**Check with your labour council to find out if something is planned in your community. >**

# Workers' rights are citizenship rights

*Canadian Labour Congress*

**O**n the eve of the fifty-fifth anniversary of the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Canada's reputation as a defender of those basic rights is embarrassingly tarnished. Canadian Labour Congress president Ken Georgetti says it's time the federal government got serious about defending the rights of its citizens.

"Despite Canada's pledge to uphold the *UN Declaration of Human Rights*, despite the guarantees of our own *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, and despite a growing volume of Supreme Court decisions, working people in this country continue to face oppression when they practise their right to belong to a trade union," says Georgetti.

Earlier this year, Canada came under harsh criticism from the U.N.'s own International Labour Organization for what it saw as deliberate attacks on the rights of workers by some provincial governments.

"Provincial governments, in particular those of Ontario, British Columbia and now Quebec, have thrown up legal barriers that make it less secure for workers to organize themselves into unions. They have arbitrarily passed laws to destroy unions, cancel collective agreements, facilitate employer-driven campaigns to have unions decertified, and even deny entire classes of workers access to union representation," says Georgetti.

According to Georgetti, these actions aren't just serious violations of our right to freedom of assembly, they are a deliberate attack on our society's efforts to promote equality.



"The workers who suffer the brunt of these dirty laws are often the most vulnerable members of society. They are the health care workers targeted by laws in B.C. and Quebec. They are the agricultural workers in Ontario and Alberta who are unable to freely engage in union activities. They are the textile workers whose employment standards were being abolished in Quebec. They are disproportionately women, new immigrants and members of visible minorities. So much for equality," he says.

Georgetti warns that workers' rights, like any other rights we have, don't stand a chance unless they are upheld by us as citizens and firmly defended by the governments we elect – both inside Canada and abroad.

"They are our rights as citizens. When rights are ignored, for whatever alleged reason – efficiency, competitiveness, security – our citizenship is eroded. At what point will we find our citizenship so eroded that we are no longer recognized as Canadians? The sad truth is that for some of us, this has already happened. It's time for the federal government to get serious about protecting our rights—all of them," says Georgetti. >

# Preparing Digital Camera files for printing

by Larry Farr, *In Solidarity*

Digital cameras, like scanners, capture images as pixels (picture elements.) A pixel is a tiny square – the smallest element in a computer image. Someone has compared pixels to the tiles in a mosaic that combine to make up a picture. The more tiles you have, the more detail you get in the mosaic. It’s the same thing with pixels in a digital image. The more pixels you have, the better quality the image (within reason of course.)

Digital cameras are judged by their resolution. This is usually expressed as **pixel dimensions** of the image that can be **captured** by the camera, such as 1024 pixels by 768 pixels. Most consumer cameras have a choice of at least two capture resolutions: a low ‘res’ of 640x480 and a high ‘res’ of, for example, 1024x768 or 1600x1200, etc. The ‘norm’ is to now have three or more resolution choices on cameras.

The pixel dimensions of a digital image are, as you would expect, the number of pixels in the **width** of the image by the number of pixels in its **height**. Multiply the width by the height to get the size of the image in **megapixels**.

**NOTE:** A megapixel means one million pixels. The resolution of digital cameras is often measured in megapixels.

For example, a digital camera that “captures” an image at 1600 pixels x 1200 pixels, gives a total of 1,920,000 pixels. Divide this by 1,000,000 and you get 1.92 megapixels. This is usually rounded off to 2.0 So, if you purchase a 2 megapixel camera, you know the biggest image it’s going to be able to capture is 1600x1200.

Don’t confuse megapixels with megabytes. A megabyte (MB) is 1,048,576 bytes (1,024 kilobytes) of information or data. The 1600x1200 file translates into 5.49 MB of data. This image is compressed and stored on the camera’s memory card in the **jpeg format** at a size of 725 kilobytes (KB) of data.

**NOTE:** JPEG compression will fluctuate, depending on the quality setting and detail in the image.



Figure 1

This photo was taken with a digital camera set at a high resolution of 1024x768 pixels. At 300 ppi, this created an image of 3.413 x 2.56 inches.



Figure 2

The same photo at the “standard” resolution of 640x480 produced a 300 ppi image of only 2.133 x 1.6 inches.

(Continued on page 21)

## A little background

Computer monitors **display** images at low resolutions (Macintosh - 72 pixels per inch (ppi), PC - 96 ppi.) Printers, on the other hand, **print** images at a high resolution.

Cameras capture files at a default screen setting of 72 pixels per inch, which is fine for viewing on the screen, but not suitable for print publications. Once the pixel dimensions have been captured in the camera, you'll need to **resize** the image for a good quality output.

A typical printer requires an image to have a resolution of 300 pixels per inch. Therefore, digital images in their raw state (of 72 ppi) won't print properly. They'll look "jagged" or have what is known as "the jaggies."

Our original 1600x1200 file would appear quite large at a 1:1 ratio (actual size) on a computer screen.

**Note:** How images are displayed on computer monitors depends on the resolution setting of the **monitor**. Monitors are typically set at 800x600 pixels or 1024x768 pixels.

This same digital image would have default **print dimensions** of 22.222" x 16.667" at 72 pixels per inch (ppi).

There are two reasons why these default settings aren't suitable for printers. Firstly, the resolution of 72 ppi isn't adequate for printers to produce good quality output (as a rule they need 300 ppi) and, secondly, the dimensions of the image are too big.

## Resizing Images for printing

You need to change the image resolution to 300 pixels per inch before printing. This is easily done with an image-editing application such as Adobe Photoshop, PaintShop Pro, Corel DRAW, etc.

### Resizing images using Adobe Photoshop Elements

Photoshop Elements is a relatively inexpensive (\$150 Cdn) cousin of the industry-standard imaging software, Adobe Photoshop (\$860 Cdn) and has many of Photoshop's features. A critical feature is the ability to **resize** images. Resizing is different from **scaling** images.

Resizing can include **resampling** (changing the **pixel dimensions** of the image) which can make the file larger (not recommended) or smaller. Resizing **without** resampling, is simply a matter of changing

the resolution. The **document size** will automatically change when the resolution is changed. The actual pixel **dimensions** will not change, the pixels are just jammed together more.

On the menu bar, choose **Image>Resize>Image Size**. A dialogue box will open. Uncheck the Resample Image box and change the **resolution** to 300. When the resolution is changed, the **document size** will change automatically to 4 x 5.333 inches.

For images that will be placed in a non-colour newsletter the **file size** of the image can be reduced by changing the **mode** of the file (from **RGB**- Red, green, blue – the default mode for digital cameras) to **Grayscale** mode.

**NOTE:** RGB has three channels of information while Grayscale has only one. Changing the original example file from RGB to Gray scale reduces the file size to 1.83 MB.

To change the mode, go to Image > Mode > Grayscale.

## Resizing images using PaintShop Pro 8

PaintShop Pro 8 is another reasonably inexpensive (\$160 CDN), yet powerful image-editing application. To resize, go to **Image>Resize**. Uncheck the resampling box and change the **resolution** to 300. When the resolution is changed, the **document size** will change automatically.

## Saving Images

Digital image files are stored in the memory card as jpegs (Joint Photographic Experts Group.) JPEG is a compression technique for colour images and photographs that balances compression against loss of detail in the image. The greater the compression, the more information is lost. Most cameras let you choose the amount of compression: fine, normal, basic or good, better, best – are some examples of choices. With "fine" or "best", you'll get better quality but you can store fewer images on your memory card.

It's not a good idea to keep saving and resaving in the jpeg format because every time you do, the image loses some data. The best way to work with digital camera files is to open the original image and save it as a Photoshop file, or a PaintShop pro file, or whatever other native file-format for the imaging program you're using. Then, when you're finished you can save it as a TIFF file for print publications or back as a jpeg file for emailing or web purposes (you'll have to resize the image if you want to post it on a website – more about that in future articles.) >

# What am I doing here?

by Kerry Ouchas, Local 340

I'm sitting in Java Joe's on Bay Street, eating a bagel and sipping on coffee and I find myself wondering, "What am I doing here?" Now, this is not as profound a question as it may seem. I'm not talking about the meaning of or my purpose in life. What I'm trying to figure out is how I've become so involved with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

Java Joe's is on the main level of the building where the Grievance Settlement Board is located. I was asked to attend to provide witness to a certain situation in my work environment. I accepted without hesitation. My surprise comes from the fact that 10 months ago I would have sat by, silent and uninvolved, and let someone else take the heat.

I don't exactly come from a union supporting family. Even while in the private sector, I was not involved with the union body. So, what has changed? Why am I so interested now?

I began working in the Public Service in 2001 as an unclassified member. I was made aware of OPSEU by the Human Resource Department and dutifully signed my union card. I paid my union dues and that's where my involvement ended.

Call it fate or divine intervention or whatever you will. During the strike of 2002, I suffered a knee injury. As a result, I was taken off the picket line and was assigned to a job in the local strike office. That's where my attitudes towards unions in general and OPSEU in particular began to change.

Being inside allowed me to see behind the scenes and what I saw inspired me. I met a group of dynamic individuals who represented our local. They displayed an unwavering commitment and loyalty to OPSEU and its causes. They were empathetic to the needs of our local members during a time of great adversity. They were patient in explaining the protocol, policies and positions of the Union. They were knowledgeable and eager to learn. They were

courageous in standing up for what they believed in, for what the local members demanded and for fighting the good fight.

Even as inspirational as they were in their actions, I still hesitated in becoming involved. I was a contract unclassified employee. I was afraid that I would be released from my contract if I "rocked the boat."

Then a second issue arose. Under the new collective agreement, I became eligible for conversion to a permanent classified position. Again, my local president stepped up to act on my behalf. Even when I was practically harassing her about the issue, she never criticized me or turned away. She was patient and understanding and I was converted.

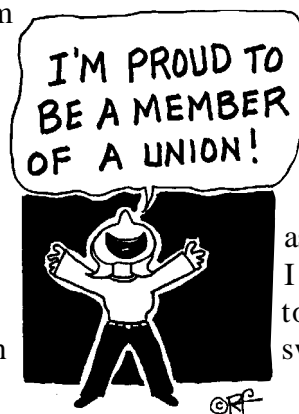
I realized then that I knew very little about the collective agreement and even less about OPSEU. I was almost embarrassed by this ignorance. So, I began asking questions of my vice-president. Soon, I decided that the only way I could learn was to become involved. In October 2002, I was sworn in as a union steward.

Thank goodness they've taken it easy on me over the past nine months. I've been to convention, the regional meeting, educationals and have sat before the Grievance Settlement Board. I've also been elected as editor to our local newsletter.

I still have a million questions and have a lot to learn. Here is what I do know:

- OPSEU is an organization that values its members and its province.
- In addition to defending the collective agreements, OPSEU stands up for social issues, such as poverty and AIDS.
- My local executive is committed to ensuring a safer and more equitable work place.
- I am not alone and will never be alone with my OPSEU brothers and sisters by my side.

Together, we can make a difference. One voice singing alone may be but a whisper; add more and you soon have a choir that becomes easily heard and difficult to quiet. >



# How do you spell respect?

*News and Views/IAM 2330/CALM*

A high school teacher injured his back and had to wear a plaster cast around the upper part of his body. The cast fit under his shirt and wasn't noticeable.

On his first day back to work, he found himself assigned to the class with the toughest students in the school.

When the students started to misbehave, he asked them to stop, but they ignored him.

Suddenly, a strong breeze from an open window started to make his tie flap. He kept pushing it down but it kept getting flying up.

Finally, out of frustration, he stood up, took a big stapler off the desk and stapled the tie to his chest. Since then, he's hasn't had any problems with rowdy students. >

# STOP



## WORKER ABUSE

### DAY OF MOURNING APRIL 28

## A Labour Minute



### The Great Organizer

There is no more important job in the labour movement than organizing workers into unions. One of the best organizers who ever lived was a Canadian named John Flett.

Flett worked as a carpenter in Hamilton, Ontario in the early 1900s.

Because most of the unions at the time were international craft brotherhoods it was American Federation of Labor president Sam Gompers who enlisted the services of John Flett to enrol new members in Canada.

It wasn't working class solidarity that motivated Gompers. The AFL was also organizing in the U.S. and didn't want a low-wage ghetto north of the border.

Flett eagerly went to work and was astonishingly successful. He established 57 new locals in 1901 and another the following year. That is an almost unbelievable pace of more than one new local set up every week over a two year period.

In 1902, Flett was elected president of the Trades and Labour Congress, the forerunner of the Canadian Labour Congress, a fitting tribute to his great achievements as an organizer.

*Labour Minutes recount the history of working people and take just a minute to read.*

*-Dishaw-Roy*

# Welcome new employees into the union

*Adapted from the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America*

*When researchers examine what's different about local unions that have high levels of membership participation and those that don't, one of the most important factors is that members have had "positive personal contacts" with the union during their first year of employment. It's not rocket science: we all feel good about those who help us feel comfortable in a new situation. If it's someone from the union, then those feelings will generally transfer to the union. Here are some tips on things that we can do to welcome new workers into our union:*

## **First impressions are the lasting impressions.**

This saying certainly holds true for how new employees feel about the union in their workplace. Employees who only hear about the union from the boss, will not feel inclined to join the union and be an active member. However if they get a good impression from the union steward, they will be more inclined to join and take part.

## **When should stewards welcome new members?**

Start by welcoming them on their first day on the job. The department stewards should introduce themselves and give the new worker a brief run down on the union and the workers' rights. Most workers starting a new job will be thankful to see a friendly face and to have someone to talk to about the union and the job.

## **Sign up the worker on a union card right away.**

Although most workplaces have a probationary period before the worker becomes permanent, nothing prevents them from signing a union card on their first day. Explain that while they may not be entitled to all the benefits of belonging to the union until after completing their probationary period, they

In addition to "positive contacts" during an employee's first year on the job, the other key factors influencing employee attitudes about the union are:

- The effectiveness of the steward system (including the skill and availability of stewards);
- The amount of information presented to the members about the contract *and* the union.

are already entitled to union representation and are benefiting from the rewards of working in a union workplace. If the worker fears retaliation by the boss, tell them you won't turn the card in until after they pass their probationary period.

## **The union should always sign up a new worker.**

The worst situation occurs when the employer has the new worker sign the union membership and dues authorization card. New workers will automatically assume the company runs the union. If the person doesn't meet a union representative immediately, they may assume the union is only there to collect their dues. Unfortunately, with some unions this is the truth.

## **Explain about union dues.**

They need to know how much they are and what they are for. Most workers, especially young people have never belonged to a union. All they know is the bad propaganda that they read in the newspapers. Some workers may have belonged to a corrupt or do-nothing union, so it is important to explain how OPSEU is different. You can mention that OPSEU has an annual Convention and regional meetings and educationals.

*(Continued on page 25)*

### **Develop a short history of your Local.**

Write about the union's accomplishments in improving the wages, benefits and working conditions at the workplace. Many new workers won't think that "Social Services Inc." is a good place to work because the union made it a good place to work. They think that there must be "good bosses" who made "Social Services Inc." a good job. It's up to us to educate them. It is not too hard to put together a brief outline of union gains. What were the wages, health insurance, and vacations like? Contrast this with the current wages and benefits, and list some problems solved using the grievance procedure.

### **Let the new worker know what improvements the union wants to see in the future.**

There is always something that needs improvement. Especially in a newly-organized workplace where many things could not be fixed during the first contract. The new employee needs to know the union is still concerned about workplace problems.

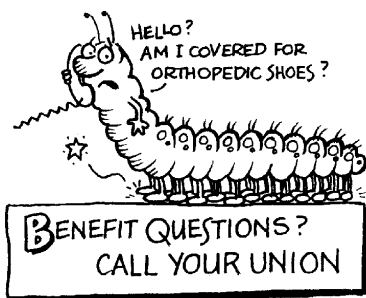
### **Explain union language.**

"Seniority," "grievances," "union contract" may be confusing words to a new employee. Don't take it for granted that the new employee understands union terms. The union steward must take the time to explain what these and other terms mean. The worker may not even know what a union steward is, and maybe surprised and confused when someone introduces themselves as: "Hi, I'm your Steward."

### **Present the 'Collective Agreement' to new employees.**

Make sure the workers gets all the union material they need. This should include a copy of the union contract and the union constitution.

Let new members know the schedule for union meetings and be sure to invite them to the next meeting. >



# Conditions grim for Iraqi workers

## *Labour Notes/CALM*

**C**onditions for much of Iraq's workforce have stayed the same or worsened since the invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein's government.

The U.S. – led Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq decreed a base wage of \$60 a month for all workers, the same as received under Saddam Hussein. However, in recent months, Iraqi workers' buying power has been reduced by the introduction of imported goods, as well as the fact that they no longer receive profit-sharing bonuses in state-run firms or subsidies for food and housing.

In 1987, Saddam Hussein forbade unions in Iraq's publicly-owned enterprises. This law is still in effect. In fact, a new law says that any action that might threaten the economy could lead to the arrest of individuals and their imprisonment as "prisoners of war."

Another new piece of legislation has opened the door to privatization of state enterprises, set a 15-per cent tax rate for corporations, and placed no restrictions on foreign ownership of the repatriation of capital. Workers were concerned that with privatization, half would be let go.

Since the spring, the independently organized Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) has organized shops in more than a dozen industries: oil and gas, rail, vegetable oil and food, transport, textiles, leather products, construction, electrical and municipalities, printers, mechanics, service industry, and agriculture and irrigation.

With 70 per cent of the work force unemployed, occupied Iraq provides no unemployment benefits. Demonstrations of the unemployed have broken out spontaneously, and others have been organized by the newly-formed Union of the Unemployed in Iraq.



# Learning about equity can be a lot of fun

by Laurie Sabourin, *In Solidarity*

All work and no play makes Jill a dull girl, but that doesn't mean play can't involve hard work or that a work-related conference can't be fun.

That was certainly the case at the 10<sup>th</sup> biannual OPSEU Provincial Women's Conference, held Nov. 7 to 9, 2003 at the Kempenfelt Centre in Barrie.

Spirits were high from the outset with the opening remarks by OPSEU President Leah Casselman. The Ontario election, which saw the end of eight years of Tory rule, was still fresh in everyone's minds. It was a definite cause for celebration for the more than 100 women at the conference, many of whom had suffered from cuts to the public sector. Casselman reminded them of challenges ahead in dealing with the new Liberal government; and for those disheartened at the New Democratic Party (NDP) losing official party status she had some cheery news: MPP Marilyn Churley was changing her surname to Churley-NDP to call attention to her party's plight.

Churley-NDP, and of course Casselman herself, are what Provincial Women's Committee (PWC) chairperson Libby Simpson might describe as an igneous rocks, those who get their strength from an inner fire. In her welcome speech, Simpson compared women's strength to that of rocks. Alluding to one of the core themes of the conference – diversity – she explained that igneous, sedimentary and metamorphic rocks are all strong, even if they are formed in different ways. A bit of a riddle perhaps, but one whose full meaning would be revealed over the course of the weekend.

PWC organizers decided to do things a little differently this year so they hired labour educators Bev Burke and Barb Thomas to design the



The infamous "Wall."

workshop. "Her story: Bridging Communities," as the conference was called, had multiple aims. The first was to teach women about how they got to where they are today. The second was to make them aware of various factors which affect their lives, particularly the lives of diverse women; and the third was to help the PWC come up with an agenda to help forward equity within OPSEU. Burke and Thomas adhere to the theory that people learn best through doing, and judging from the activities they planned, fun was also a key ingredient.

The first evening's workshop may have induced a few flash backs to primary school. Participants had to use all their cutting, pasting and colouring skills to create collages showing different periods from women's history. On the second day the women had to build walls (albeit ones made of paper with cardboard circles representing rocks...the rocks again!) as part of an exercise in gender economic analysis. They were asked to identify various stresses and supports they experience in their life, and put

*(Continued on page 27)*

## Learning about equity can be a lot of fun

(Continued from page 26)

these on the wall. Words like “privatization” “cuts to social services” and “no equity” stood in contrast to “solidarity,” “family” and “friends.” In addition, they discussed how international trade agreements like NAFTA and the unregulated practices of multinational corporations affect women worldwide.

According to Burke, women have a better understanding of issues like globalization and free trade when they can see where they fit into the big picture. “It starts with women’s experience. Many women feel ‘disappeared’ by traditional economic analysis,” she said, explaining her hands-on approach to education.

Those who took part in the workshops were really impressed by the format and by what they learned. “It’s a real eye-opener”, said Tourell Harris, (Local 213) a first-timer at the women’s conferences. “I didn’t want to believe this stuff was still happening to women, but it is.”

It was the third such conference for Tina Faibish (Local 552) and by far the best she said. “There was a lot of improv and involvement. And it’s important to talk about diversity. We got to recognize that even in a group of women we have different equity issues.”

By the final day of the conference, PWC members had several pages of recommendations to give to OPSEU. Among them was making bargaining for equity a priority, and making it easier for women to get involved, such as providing a new member’s orientation package and daycare at meetings.

PWC Vice-Chair Yvonne Bobb called attention to one recommendation in particular in her closing remarks. For her, reflecting the diversity of OPSEU in its leadership is of prime importance. Bobb was at the first Provincial Women’s Conference in 1984 and said as a woman of colour she felt lonely and isolated. Things have changed quite a bit since then, and the PWC has women of different races, economic standings, and sexual orientations. For Bobb though it’s just the beginning: “I can safely say we’ve become a great union, but we have a little ways to go yet.” >

# Urgent call to stop health care injuries

## SEIU/CALM

The Service Employees International Union Canada is calling on provincial governments to introduce legislation mandating the use of safety-engineered medical devices in all health care settings.

There are more than 70,000 injuries a year from needles and other devices in Canada, with 22,000 needlesticks in Ontario alone.

Every day, health care workers risk serious and sometimes fatal injury that can result in the transmission of 33 blood-borne diseases, including HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and West Nile Virus. The vast majority of these injuries are preventable.

In the past decade, our understanding of the dangers posed from blood-borne pathogens has increased dramatically. So has the technology to prevent injury. But occupational health and safety legislation has not kept up.

Canada lags far behind the U.S., where the SEIU initiated and led a successful campaign to change health and safety legislation. The union's efforts resulted in the *Needlestick Safety and Prevention Act* in 2000.



# What CEOs can learn at daycare

by Jim Stanford, (with permission)  
first appeared in the *Globe and Mail*

*Daycare teaches the essentials of compassion and co-operation: Share, be gentle, take only what you can use. These are lessons we all could profit from, says economist Jim Stanford from the Canadian Auto Workers Union.*

The smartest parenting decision my spouse and I ever made was to send our two daughters to non-profit group daycare. They started early, they received care vastly superior to what we could have provided at home, and their early experience with classroom routines will give them a huge head start in school.

But the most important lessons our girls learned were about how to treat other people. Just imagine two dozen toddlers beavering away in a big, busy room. The only way to avoid utter chaos is by establishing and enforcing clear rules about sharing, non-violence, co-operation and respect. As a result, a well-run daycare is one of the most egalitarian, inspiring places on Earth.

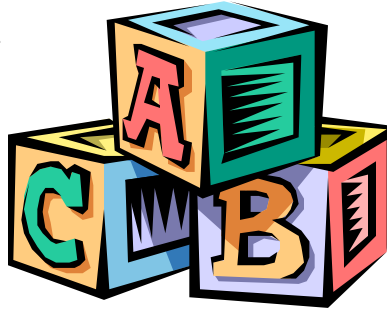
In fact, my only disappointment was the gradual realization that this nurturing and generally peaceful environment was completely different from the real world that my daughters were destined to inhabit. At daycare, they learn to be compassionate and co-operative human beings. But capitalism does not reward compassion and co-operation; it is driven by acquisitiveness and individualism. The rules of the game change once you leave daycare, and so do the teachers who enforce them.

In short, it will be all downhill for my girls once they hit the world of supply and demand, competition and survival. Too bad we don't enforce

some of the same rules, and teach some of the same lessons, as prevail inside a daycare.

Here are the ones I would choose:

- **You must share.** In daycare, sharing is not simply a nice or polite thing to do. It is an essential social skill. A child who refuses to share is demonstrating antisocial behaviour, and will be consistently coached to change. We used to do that in broader society, too — it was called paying your taxes. But the tax-cutters ruling Ottawa and most provinces are doing their best to make us forget this lesson.



- **Be gentle.** The professional response when a child hurts another is to take her hand and stroke the cheek or shoulder of the person she was hurting, quietly whispering, “Be gentle.” We should try the same technique on the next CEO who wants to lay off a few hundred employees to fatten up the bottom line. If he had to stroke the cheeks of the people whose lives he was about to devastate, he might make another decision.

- **If you're not using something, someone else gets it.** Daycare children learn this rule very quickly: put it down, and it's fair game for others. I could imagine an entire national housing policy based on this logical and efficient premise. There's more than enough unused space in the mansions of the Bridle Path, Coach Hill, and the other luxury suburbs of the land to house every Canadian without a home.

Abundance makes it easier. A good daycare

(Continued on page 29)

## What CEOs can learn at daycare

(Continued from page 28)

supplies multiple copies of the most popular playthings, making it infinitely easier to take turns. Even two-year-olds quickly learn they'll get a fair chance to join the fun. Want to see the opposite emotion? Go to any Canadian emergency department, where frightened people get more panicked and pushy with each hour that goes by without seeing a doctor. Building in a little redundancy brings out the better side of our personalities.

•**Everybody is safe.** Daycares invest incredible attention and energy to ensuring a safe, secure and inclusive environment where each child does well. Everyone gets a hot meal and three snacks, dry clothes as needed, a meticulously safe physical environment, and emotional support to get through the tough spots. Outside those walls, however, individual risk and failure is celebrated as a necessary dimension of the process of creative destruction. You don't want to care too well for society's losers, lest we all lose the hunger to survive.

•**Displays of conspicuous consumption are strictly discouraged.** Nothing is more disruptive than a shiny new toy that everyone wants to get their hands on, so personal toys are prohibited at daycare. That kind of thinking would drive BMW out of business in a month.

A few readers will take the foregoing as evidence for long-standing suspicions that group daycare is a breeding ground for rampant communism. But from observing hundreds of parents at neighbourhood playgrounds across the country, I think most children, even those from traditional stay-at-home families, are raised to follow similar rules.

How ironic that we train our children first to be good, social human beings, only to later demand that they act like acquisitive, hard-hearted machines. Personally, I prefer the approach that rewards co-operation and compassion, and that produces an environment in which everyone succeeds. If toddlers can learn to do it, why can't the rest of us?

Perhaps it's time we all went back to daycare. >

# Linking Health and Safety issues

by Terri Aversa, OPSEU Health & Safety

OPSEU has a new 45-minute module health and safety workshop that reinforces the importance of making health and safety issues the local's business. It's essential that worker health and safety joint committee members liaise with local representatives so that health and safety issues can be addressed using full participation and through all possible local efforts.



In the module, participants identify their rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and examine the OPSEU Health and Safety Policy to identify strategies to solidify links between their local health and safety structures and local executive. At 45 minutes long, it's perfect for a lunch-time or to add to a General Membership meeting.

Along with knowledge of their rights under the Act and OPSEU policy on health and safety, participants leave the session with tools to identify the type of health and safety system in their workplace and to begin to identify hazards in their workplace.

Course materials are available in OPSEU's Training and Development Unit. Contact Betty Stevens at 416-443-8888 or 1-800-268-7376 extension 299.



# Newsletter politics



## Who ‘owns’ the union newsletter anyway?

The editor?

The union president?

The members?

**D**efining the relationship between the newsletter editor, the union leadership, and union members is no easy task. Which of them “owns” the newsletter? Who has ultimate say over what can or can’t appear in the newsletter? These are thorny questions.

## The union as publisher

The starting point is that the union is the newsletter’s publisher. After all, that’s what makes it a union newsletter. The union pays the bills, union members are the audience, and the union takes responsibility for what appears in the newsletter.

The union’s elected leadership will have to play a role in the newsletter. It can’t function without their approval and help. A good relationship between the editor and the elected leaders is essential. (In some cases, however, the union editor is actually elected along with the other leaders, so they have a mandate separate from that of other leaders.)

On the other hand, the union newsletter can’t just be a vehicle for the political aspirations of a particular union leadership. If it is, it may lose

credibility in the eyes of the members. Ultimately, the newsletter is paid for and read by the members. Their interests should be paramount.

## What’s the editor’s role?

The editor stands in the middle of all this. Editors should strive to be non-partisan when it comes to union politics. And they should be granted a certain degree of independence by the political leadership, to judge what is in the interest of the member-readers. On a day-to-day basis, editors should have control over what appears in the newsletter. However, they should be accountable to the union’s political leadership (some newsletters do this through an editorial board, which includes the editor, some leaders, and some rank-and-file members.)

When it comes to union elections, the newsletter should be strictly neutral. Equal space should be granted for all candidates to state their platforms and publish their photos.

## An editorial ideal

To conclude, the editor should be responsible to the union – both to the members and to the leaders. But editors need to be granted a degree of independence from union politics, so that the newsletter can publish a diversity of views and interests. In practise, things may not always be this simple. But editorial independence is a worthy ideal for any union publication. >



# Labour Day salute to unions



*by Helen Connell, Executive Director of the United Way of London and Middlesex.*

This is one of those touchy columns to write. Not because writing about labour unions is such a hot tamale, but it makes some of my associates at the United Way nervous for very different reasons. One worried that, by discussing unions, I would annoy supporters who don't like organized labour. Another worried I'd forget to include something or someone important and annoy labour. I don't blame them for their conflicting concerns: I blame the media and newspapers in particular. Newspapers continue to be opinion leaders and their opinion of labour has never been high.

Every respectable daily newspaper has a business section, but none of them have labour sections. Few bother to even commit a reporter to the labour beat. As a result, when labour stories do appear, they almost invariably focus on strikes or other unrest. Spokespeople for organized labour are referred to as "labour leaders" – when they're lucky – and "labour bosses," which for some readers is code for "labour bullies." What readers aren't informed about is what labour unions and their membership do every day to strengthen the fabric of our community on a local, national and international basis. The importance of giving back because it's the right thing to do is entrenched in the values of labour. For organizations with a reputation for being very hard-headed at times, they have very big hearts. Whether it's members of Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Local 27 picking corn at five in the morning for a barbecue in support of the United Way, or Teamsters Local 141's annual Christmas toy drive for the Salvation Army, union people are working for others. When a children's camp that catered to youngsters from low-income homes found itself facing major repairs and no money to pay for them, tradespeople with the Labourers' Union Local 1059 and other unions,

including the Bricklayers, invested their energy to save the camp. Members of Local 112 of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union provided assistance to the London Food Bank and Women's Community House. On a provincial level, a portion of every member's dues goes to support people in Africa and in Canada with HIV/AIDS and those pennies add up, considering there are 100,000 OPSEU members.

Members of Cami CAW Local 88 are strong supporters of Make a Wish and the Unity Project, a unique effort to assist the homeless. While many organizations call on labour dollars and workers, too few draw on labour leadership, sometimes out of the notion labour and business leaders won't work well together on a board of directors. I know from experience that smart, accomplished people enjoy working together — especially when what they are working for is greater than what divides them.

We approach Labour Day at a time when unions face serious challenges, including retirement issues, plant closures and attacks from right-of-centre governments. So few Canadians stop to realize how much of our quality of life results from the work of labour unions — made up of average working people who know firsthand the pressures people face in their daily lives. They fought hard first for maternity leaves, then parental and family leave days because they understand that many working people care for children and elderly relatives. They won battles over minimum wages, vacations, working hours and pensions. Many of the improved working conditions taken for granted today in union and non-union workplaces were victories that came at great cost to the union members who fought for them.

So here's a small salute to the men and women in Canada's labour unions, even though many of them work shifts and can't be with their families. Happy Labour Day and thank you for all you do. >

*Reprinted from United Times, Local 116, and originally appeared in the London Free Press.*

# Who gets to attend OPSEU's 'Big Show?'

*by Greg Snider, Provincial Human Rights  
Committee, Region 7*

Who runs this union? Who decides the direction the union should follow each year?

If you have ever attended Convention, you would have heard the answer to those questions, "Convention is the ultimate decision maker in this Union."

Indeed, the resolutions and constitutional amendments passed at Convention cannot be overturned by any board or committee in OPSEU and all members must follow them. One could easily argue that there is no member in OPSEU more powerful than a delegate to Convention. The votes of these delegates could decide anything from a dues increase to electing the president of the union. These delegates are truly powerful people.

So who gets to be a delegate at Convention? Every Executive Board member gets to be a delegate, each member of the Resolutions, Credentials, Constitution committees and the Provincial Women's Committee and the Provincial Human Rights Committee will be delegates. You may even find some now retired members attending Convention as delegates since up to seven members of the Executive Committee of the Retired Members Division may attend as delegates. The majority of members however come from the locals.

The size of the local will determine the number of members that each local is entitled to. Locals with 150 or less will send one delegate. Locals with 151 to 300 send two delegates, 301 to 500 send 3 delegates. 501 to 800 send 4 delegates, 801 to 1100 send 5 delegates and if your local has more than 1,101 you will send 6 delegates.

The president of every local is the first delegate selected for that local. Any additional delegates are elected by the local. Should the president not be able to attend, then all delegates from the local are elected.

Locals may also elect alternates for each delegate that is attending convention. Should one of the delegates not be able to attend, then the first alternate would take their place as a delegate. However, even if the delegates are able to fulfill their duties, the alternates can still attend Convention. They will have no vote and cannot sit on the main floor of convention with the delegates unless they exchange badges with a delegate from their own local.

Unlike delegates however, the cost of alternates to attend convention is paid by the local. Locals who have alternates attending Convention should remember that OPSEU's Accommodation Fund can pay any extra costs incurred by a member due to a disability or other accommodation need.

Remember, you are the union and therefore it is your responsibility to ensure the proper process is followed when electing members to attend. >

**Ontario Public Service Employees Union**  
100 Lesmill Road, Toronto, Ontario. M3B 3P8  
[www.opseu.org](http://www.opseu.org) / [www.sefpo.org](http://www.sefpo.org)

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