

## **Society Newscast 2004:03**

**This is the Society Newscast for Wednesday, June 30, 2004**



### **Dues reduced, as \$1M transferred to CAR fund**

Society dues will be reduced \$3 per week.

Effective July 1, weekly dues will go to \$16 per week from \$19. The reduction was made possible by the decision of the Board of Directors on June 1<sup>st</sup> (see also Board Highlights, below) to transfer \$1 million from the Society Account (also known as the Training Fund) to the Collective Agreement Renewal (CAR) Fund. Members have been contributing to the CAR Fund in the amount of \$3 per member per week; once the fund reaches \$5 million, the \$3 weekly assessment is suspended. The transfer puts the CAR Fund over that trigger amount.

The CAR fund is used to pay the extraordinary costs (i.e. costs beyond two-party negotiations) involved in collective bargaining, under both the mediation/arbitration and strike/lockout schemes of dispute resolution. Should expenditures from the fund bring it down below \$4 million, the assessment would be re-activated.

Members will see the reduction go into effect when they receive the payment covering the pay period in which it is implemented.

### **Legislative committees back on**

The confusion at the Ontario Legislature over the end of its summer session has ended. Bills were passed, and legislative committees were struck.

Last week, the session appeared to end abruptly, when the NDP, embroiled in a dispute over providing free postage to all MPPs,



*Chris Cragg retires. Story, page 4.*

refused consent to hear third reading of a bill to provide leave to workers with gravely ill family members. A by-product of the action was that the setting up of various legislative committees was blocked. One of those committees was to be responsible for three weeks of consultations over the recently introduced *Electricity Restructuring Act*.

The Society expected to be active in those hearings. Ministry of Energy officials informed the Society that the planned three weeks of consultations would have to be moved to a single eight-hour period during the fall, once the legislature resumed session.

All was resolved in a special session of the legislature held last night. The Government and NDP agreed to meet in session, pass the legislation, and strike the committees. An announcement about the public hearings is expected in the coming week.

### **Board highlights: June 1, 2004**

The Society Board of Directors met on Tuesday, June 1<sup>st</sup>. The meeting was highlighted by presentations on strategic campaigning by Tom O'Brien of the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions; Patty Barrere and Manassas Peterson of the Canadian Labour Congress; Marcel Weider of Arrow Communications; and Gary Nordlinger of Nordlinger Associates. The presentations were made to help the Board decide on a course of action to influence the recently announced *Electricity Restructuring Act*, or Bill 100.

Discussions took place and/or decisions were made in the following areas:

**OHIP:** The Board discussed the impact on Society members of the provincial government's decision to charge a health care "premium." Executive Vice President **Leslie Forge** and Staff Officer **Cheri Funston** are working with legal counsel to determine the Society's legal position. Some Society employers have already announced they will not be covering the premiums.

**Audit:** Vice-President Finance **Chris Cragg** presented the audited financial statements for Fiscal Year 2003-4 to the Board. **Bill Jones** (Local VP, Kinectrics, and Audit Committee Chair) presented the report and recommendations of the Audit Committee. Their major recommendation was that the EVP Finance "lead the charge" to increase adherence to the financial control processes contained in the recently revised Management Control Framework. The Board also approved the appointment of Murray Finkelman as auditor for FY 2004-5.

**CAR Fund:** The Board approved the transfer of enough funds from the Society Account to the Collective Agreement Renewal Fund to bring the Fund to \$5 million (see article, above).

**Office:** The Board approved Vice President Cragg's proposal to renovate the meeting spaces in the Society office, costing up to \$31,000. Doing so will allow for the Board to meet in the Society office rather than at hotels, saving approximately \$20,000 per year.

**EVP Finance:** The Board appointed Bill Jones to the position of Executive Vice President Finance for the period June 2, 2004 to March 31, 2005. The position was about to come vacant due to the resignation and retirement of Mr. Cragg (see article, page 4).

**Organizing:** The Board voted to recommend to the fall Society Council that all duties associated with the Organizing work program be transferred from the EVP Finance to the EVP Membership Services. Meanwhile, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers has hired two new organizers for the Canadian Region, who will be starting on July 5th. See the next *Newscast* for more details.

## Happy Canada Day!

The officers and staff of the Society wish all Society-represented employees a splendid Canada Day.

While the weather in Ontario appears to be quite mixed over the next four days, there does appear to be a good chance of some sun just about everywhere, so don't forget the sunscreen.

Please note that the Society office will be closed on Friday, July 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## Hydro One Local Council meets

The Society Hydro One Local Council held its first meeting Monday, June 14<sup>th</sup>.

The Local Council is a new feature of the Society governance structure in Hydro One. It consists of the members of the Local Committee (the Local Vice-President and the two Unit Directors) and Hydro One Local Delegates. It's the body in the Hydro One Local that sets policy, including determining broad bargaining objectives and priorities and making collective agreement recommendations to members of the bargaining unit.

The meeting was chaired by Hydro One Local Vice President **Keith Rattai**. Also in attendance were Society President **Andrew Müller**; Society EVP-Finance Bill Jones; Chris Cragg, former EVP-Finance (see article, page 4); Society EVP-Membership Services **Rod Sheppard**, and **Brian Lawson**, an IFPTE staff representative, all of whom made presentations to the delegates present

Council elected representatives to the fall Society Council, and a Deputy Returning Officer for the local. Most of the meeting was spent on preparation for bargaining. The Society-Hydro One contract expires next March, and bargaining is expected to take place in the strike/lockout format.

## **Cragg retires**

Long-serving Society official Chris Cragg resigned as EVP Finance at the June 1<sup>st</sup> Board meeting.

He will retire from his employment as a Principal Research Engineer, Energy Consulting, Kinectrics on August 1<sup>st</sup>. He's currently using up his banked vacation, splitting his time between his cottage in Muskoka and ensuring an orderly transfer of his responsibilities in the Society office.

Chris served in a variety of Society positions, beginning in 1980 when he became the Delegate for Ontario Hydro's Civil Research department. He served in numerous executive capacities from 1988 to 1995, including a two-year stint as Society President from 1993-95. In 2000, he returned to the Executive as Vice President Finance—he'd previously been Treasurer—and remained in that position through the transition to the new Society structure.

"Chris made an incredibly important contribution to the Society," said President Müller. "He was heavily involved in the certification of the Society as a union and the negotiation of our first Collective Agreement. That agreement is the foundation of all but one of our current agreements, and set a new standard in joint processes and worker involvement."

Chris has been actively involved in several voluntary organizations, including the Granite Club, the Antique and Classic Boating Society, and Leaside Church in Toronto. He was recently elected Vice-Chair of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

## **UDs elected**

Several elections have been held recently in various locals for the position of unit director. Here are the results:

### **Unit 1 (Pickering NGS):**

Dennis Minello	81
Maher Ghannam	70

**Unit 5 (Darlington NGS):**

Bhupinder Bajwa	123
Darek Kulczynski	85

**Unit 12 (Inergi):**

Elaina De Luca	61
Dave Arnold	22

**Unit 17 (Inergi):**

Wolfgang Brandt	30
Hermes Iordanous	28

**Unit 26 (Darlington NGS):**

Mike Lohse	117
Deo Somaru	25

**Unit 27 (Pickering NGS):**

Adam Habayeb	79
John Dejong	17

The following unit directors have been acclaimed to their positions:

**OPGN:** Victor Chetcuti (Unit 2), Jose Freire Canosa (22), Peter Tien (8)

**Hydro One:** Carolyn Coney (13), John Cameron (14)

**Poll: Ontarians most pro-nuclear**

A poll conducted recently by Ipsos-Reid has found that Ontarians are the Canadians most supportive of nuclear energy.

While Canadians in all provinces except in British Columbia and Québec support nuclear energy, that support is by and large evenly divided with opposition. In Ontario, *64 per cent* support nuclear energy, while *30 per cent* oppose it. (In B.C. and Québec, nuclear energy is quite unpopular, with 55 to 41 support versus opposition, and 68 and 27 respectively.)

Ipsos-Reid conducted the poll in May and June on behalf of the Canadian Nuclear Association. In all, more than 2,200 Canadians were included in the poll, with 800 from Ontario. The results from Ontario are considered to be accurate within  $\pm 3.5$  per cent.

Other key findings of the survey:

- ◆ Environmental considerations are key to the viewpoints of both those who support nuclear energy and those who oppose it—those who support it regard it as a clean source of energy, while those who oppose it tend to think of it as unsafe, and therefore environmentally risky
- ◆ Acceptance of nuclear power is driven by an acceptance of risk along with knowledge of nuclear's environmental and practical (efficiency, low cost) benefits
- ◆ Individuals who are more "engaged" in civic affairs—those more likely to speak in public, write letters to editors, etc.—tend to be more knowledgeable about nuclear power, *and* more strongly divided in support or opposition
- ◆ Ontarians line up with the rest of the country with regard to their support of *other* forms of energy, vastly preferring "green" sources of power—solar, wind, etc.—and hydroelectric to either nuclear or fossil.

Ipsos-Reid suggests the nuclear industry should do more to claim the environmental as its "own turf."

## New CEO appointed for Toronto Hydro

The Board of Directors of Toronto Hydro Corporation have appointed Mr. David O'Brien its new President and CEO.

O'Brien replaces Mr. Courtney Pratt, who left Toronto Hydro last December to take up the helm at Stelco.

Mr. O'Brien has been Mississauga's City Manager since 1995; this February he was seconded to the Ministry of Energy as Associate Deputy Minister to assist the government in formulating new direction and legislation for the energy sector, including energy conservation strategies. He has also served as CEO of Enersource Corporation.

Mr. O'Brien is Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors at Sheridan College, and serves on the boards of several charities.

Toronto Hydro's Board Chair, Clare Copeland, said Mr. O'Brien's "understanding of the business, and his involvement in policy development at the Province, will further reinforce the successful management strategies that Toronto Hydro Corporation has launched."

## Meet Denise Coombs

The Society's newest Staff Officer is Denise Coombs.

Until recently, Denise worked for the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE) as their Counsel.

A lifelong resident of Toronto, she took a law degree at Osgoode Hall at York University, and articulated at Caley Wray. Earlier, she took a Bachelor's in political science and economics at the University of Toronto, and a Master's in political science at York University.



*Society Staff Officer Denise Coombs.*

She got her trade unionism, she says, from her father, who had a factory job. "I always knew he was a union member, and that that was why we had a decent standard of living."

Denise lives in the east end of Toronto with husband Rob, children Jasper and Jessie, and two cats. She likes bicycling, camping, beer on sidewalk patios, and hanging out in the playgrounds with her kids.

## The heroes stay at home

U.S. workers have been advised stay at home when they are sick, and to stop coming into work.

A study by Cornell University, reported by the *New York Times*, shows that workers who come in sick, find it difficult to concentrate, work more slowly, and cost their employers an average of US\$255 each per year. Such "presenteeism" -- slack productivity from ailing workers-- is thought to cost U.S. businesses US\$180B a year in lost productivity.

## Low level of aid "unacceptable"

The low level of aid from rich countries is unacceptable and contributes to international instability, says World Bank President James Wolfensohn.

He said that stepping up aid to the world's poorest countries remains too slow, reports the *Financial Times* (U.K.). "We spend \$900B on defence globally ... and we spend between \$50B and \$60B on development," he said. Only five countries have so far hit the Development Goal of spending 0.7% of national wealth on development aid—Denmark, Luxembourg, Holland, Norway, and Sweden.

*And that is the Society Newscast for Wednesday, May June 30 2004.*

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*Members can hear the current Newscast by calling (416) 979-2709 x.2035.*

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