

News from the Society of Energy Professionals

Labour Day

2008: Women

Rising and Organizing

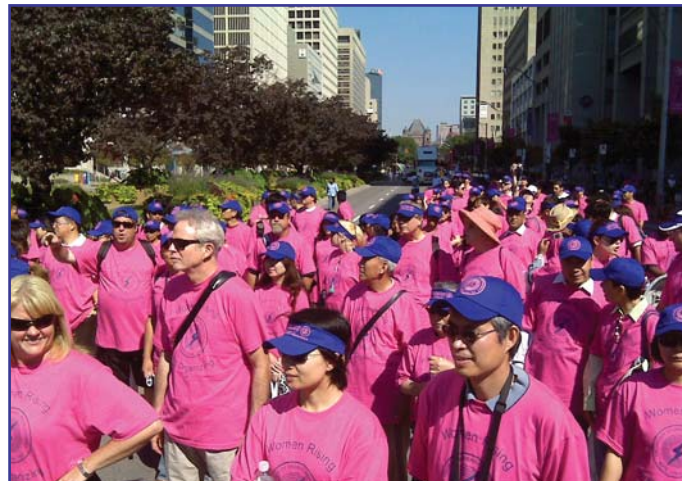


photo: Elaina De Luca

Society members and families on University Avenue, Toronto, on their way to the CNE on Labour Day

by Tracy Miller

Wow! We walked, we rode, we danced, and we sang from the corner of University and Dundas to the Dufferin Arch at the CNE! Over 450 members of the Society of Energy Professionals and families and friends joined in the Toronto and York Region Labour Day Parade and Celebration. It was a sea of pink shirts and blue hats!

We received many compliments from other unions, on the **size** of our contingent, on the **colour** that we brought to the parade and on our **slogan!** We definitely made a statement in the Toronto and York Region Labour Day Parade.

Our participation in this event would not have happened without the hard work, dedication, determination, and lots of extra hours that Society staffers **Cheri Funston** and **Laura Langmaid** contributed to make this day a great success.

We also had lots of extra hands on site at 7 a.m. to get us set up and organized. Thanks to the unofficial Labour Day Committee set-up and tear-down crew of: **Michelle Byck-Johnston** (Hydro One), **John Cameron** (Hydro One), **Elaina De Luca** (Inergi), **Stephi De Luca** (Elaina's daughter), **Cheri Funston** (staff), **Shirley Hayes** (Bruce Power), **Laura Langmaid** (staff), **Matthew Kellway** (staff), **Dianne Mowat** (Inergi), **Keith Rattai** (Hydro One), and Society President **Rod Sheppard**.

In Hamilton, Hydro One unit director **Jim Botari** and delegate **Doug Robertson** were given the honour of carrying the Hamilton and District Labour Council's banner at the head of the parade.

The Society of Energy Professionals' Women's Committee would like to thank everyone who participated in this great event.

We think the Society's efforts can be vastly improved. We've asked that a Labour Day Committee be formed, and that its mandate cover the entire province, so that Society members will be encouraged to participate in their Labour Council's celebration—whether in Toronto, Windsor, Kenora, Thunder Bay, Ottawa, or Kapuskasing, just to name a few.

A few of us have already started making plans for Labour Day 2009.



Doug Robertson (l) and Jim Botari, both Hydro One members, carry the banner in Hamilton

We hope to see even more people out, all over Ontario, next Labour Day!

Board Highlights, July – September

The Executive Board met on Tuesday, July 8th; Wednesday, July 9th; Tuesday, August 4th, and Wednesday, September 3rd.

In the July session, Board members received training on the “Legal duties of Society Board members,” given by Society Staff Officer **Lynda Crichton** and Jo-Anne Pickel, of Cavalluzzo Hayes Shilton McIntyre Cornish. Enhanced training for Board members was one of the recommendations of the Audit Action Plan, which arose out of the governance audits of 2005-06, and was approved by Society Council in April, 2007. Members of the Executive Board were given clear explanations of their standing in Ontario’s legal system, their duties and accountabilities to the Society and its members, and strategies for avoiding liability.

The Society has an insurance policy that indemnifies Board members in case of successful lawsuits, covering the first

\$1 million in damages, leaving individual Board members personally liable for any damages over that amount.

The Executive Board also began the Strategic Planning Process. This process was devised by the Society’s Policy Committee, and was designed to produce fiscal-year workplans and budgets in a more strategic manner than the Society has utilized in the past. It was approved by Society Council last November. In July, Society Staff Officers **Matthew Kellway** and **Frank White** made presentations on progress to that date, including an analysis of the external and internal environments in which fiscal year 2008-9 will take place, and the beginnings of a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis. In the August meeting, the Executive Board approved a final SWOT analysis. In its September meeting, the Board approved a draft strategic framework, advocating the pursuit of the following three programs:

- ◆ a significant external organizing initiative
- ◆ implementation of strategic and coordinated collective bargaining
- ◆ internal organizing for the purpose of creating solidarity within and across bargaining unit boundaries, that is, a “solidarity project”

Recognition: The following were recognized for significant contributions to the Society since the June Board meeting:

- ◆ All administrative staff who assisted the Hydro One Local in putting on their Local Council meeting in May. **Rod Sheppard**, **Bill Jones**, **Dennis Minello**, and **Paul Shearon** (IFPTE Secretary-Treasurer) were recognized for their attendance and participation.
- ◆ Society staffer **Elena Medina** and EVP Policy **Leslie Forge** for their work on the Blackberry proposal (see below)
- ◆ **Al McMurtrie**, former VP of the IESO Local, for his contribution to the Society in many capacities during his career
- ◆ **Rod Sheppard**, for his outstanding contribution to recent bargaining with OPG around security personnel

- ◆ **Bill Jones**, for covering for Rod Sheppard on the latter's vacation
- ◆ Staff Officer **Matthew Kellway**, for his work on the IPSP (Integrated Power Supply Plan) file
- ◆ The Hydro One Local's **Keith Rattai, John Cameron, Michelle Byck-Johnston**, and **Jim Botari** for the very valuable work they'd done, unasked, on research into codes of conduct
- ◆ The Bruce Power Local's **Rob Stanley** and Society Staff Officer **Matthew Kellway** for the work they've done on strategic planning (see above)
- ◆ The members of the Training Committee—**Rod Sheppard, Dennis Minello, Tracy Miller**, and staff officers **Lynda Crichton** and **Joe Lesperance**—for the very successful negotiating training session held as a pilot for a group of Board members

External Relations: Society President **Rod Sheppard** reported on activities.

- ◆ He and OPG unit director **Joseph Fierro** had attended an event in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the in-service date of R.H. Saunders GS near Cornwall
- ◆ OPG unit director **Tony Kokus**, Society Staff Officers **Matthew Kellway** and **Brian Robinson**, and he attended a conference at Queen's University on bio-mass fuel initiatives and the Great Lakes economy. Natural Resources Minister Donna Cansfield was in attendance
- ◆ Hydro One unit director **John Cameron**, Society Staff Officers **Matthew Kellway** and **Brian Robinson**, and he set up a booth at, and attended portions of, the Ontario Liberal Party's Annual General Meeting in Ottawa
- ◆ President Sheppard had participated in the inaugural meeting of Energy Minister Gerry Phillips's industry advisory committee
- ◆ New Energy and Infrastructure Minister George Smitherman had contacted Sheppard two days after

being appointed, and arrangements are being made for a meeting

Change to the CAR (Strike) Fund policy: The Board approved a proposal from Executive VP Finance **Bill Jones** for a change to the Collective Agreement Renewal Fund (CAR) policy. (The CAR Fund is the Society's strike fund.) In current market conditions, interest generated by the CAR Fund (in the amount of \$600,000 per year at its current, maximum level) is credited to the fund itself. If the proposal were to be accepted, the clause in question would read, "Interest from the fund will be credited to the fund to the extent required to maintain the fund at its maximum level; excess interest may be applied where needed by Executive Board decision."

Before this change can come into effect, Society Council must approve it at its November meeting.

Society Council: The Executive Board is also preparing for Society Council. In its September meeting, the Board approved a draft agenda for Council Representatives to consider.

Blackberrys: The Executive Board approved a proposal to replace a significant number of Society staff and officials' cell-phones with Blackberrys. Currently there are 20 users of Society cell-phones or cell-phone allowances. Under the Blackberry proposal, 23 staff and officers will be issued Blackberrys, vastly increasing their communicability and flexibility when outside the office, at a cost of a further \$11,000 per year (from \$31,000+). Blackberrys will be distributed based on work and travel patterns.

Audit: The Board accepted the audited financial statements as recommended by the Audit Committee based on a clean report by the Society's external auditors. Production of the 2007-8 statements was delayed somewhat by the implementation of several changes to accounting methods required by the Society's new auditors.

The audited financial statements will be posted to the Society web-site, available to members only (i.e. users will have to log on to access them), by the end of September.

The Executive Board re-appointed Grant Thornton the Society's auditors for the 2008-9 fiscal year.

Financial Reporting: The Board passed a motion authorizing the Editorial Board (the Executive Committee plus the Communications Officer) to "fully report financial information," including the amounts involved, arising out of Executive Board deliberations and decisions.

Standing Finance Committee: The Executive Board appointed OPG Local unit director **Alex Saba** to the SFC. He joins EVP Finance **Bill Jones**, OPG unit director **Joseph Fierro**, Hydro One member **Frank Lenarduzzi**, and the Society's Senior Financial Officer, **Joan Florence**.

Building Needs: A sub-committee of the Standing Finance Committee has been examining the options for the Society once the current lease at 425 Bloor Street East in Toronto expires, in 2012. The options under consideration include leasing space, buying an existing space, or building a new one. The sub-committee recommended the Board authorize the expenditure of up to \$25,000 for production of a professional needs analysis. The Board approved it.

Women's Committee: Members of the Society's Women's Committee took the lead in organizing for the Labour Day parade in Toronto on September 1st (see article, above). The theme for the Society contingent was "Women rising and organizing," which appeared on t-shirts, caps and visors, and the tractor-trailer that accompanied the marchers. Vertex Local VP **Tracy Miller** reported that more than 450 Society and family members participated.

Training: EVP Member Services **Dennis Minello** reported that 19 OPG delegates had received basic delegates' training over two days in June.

Society President **Rod Sheppard** was to attend an invitation-only conference at Harvard Law School on September 9th and 10th, "Representing Professionals in science, engineering and technology." (See article, below.) On the recommendation of the Women's Caucus, **Shirley Hayes**, **Tracy Miller**, and **Michelle Byck Johnston** attended the CLC summer school in Cornwall, Ontario in August, tak-

ing courses including "Activism and leadership for union women" (see article, below).

Staffing Committee: **Joseph Fierro** (OPG), **Tracy Miller** (Vertex), and **Scott Travers** (IESO) were appointed to the Society's Staffing Committee. Society President **Rod Sheppard**, Society Staff Manager **Dan Kellar**, Staff Officer **Cheri Funston**, and Society Staff Union Representative **André Kolompar** also sit on the Committee. The mission of the Staffing Committee is to make recommendations to the Board on strategic staffing needs, so that the highest quality of service can continue to be provided. The terms of reference foresee the Committee submitting a final report to the Board in January, 2009. The Society's staff union will also have a representative on the Committee.

Elections Sub-committee: The Executive Board approved the final report of the Elections Sub-committee of the Board set up in December, 2007. The Committee was given the task of considering a number of concerns raised by candidates in the Principal Officers election of fall, 2006, and formulating recommendations for the Board to consider. (See article, below.)

Bargaining Team: The Board appointed the final two members to its Bargaining Team for the next round of bargaining with the Society's Staff Union. (The Collective Agreement with the SSU expires on March 31st, 2009.) They are **Rob Stanley** (Bruce Power Local VP) and **Keith Rattai** (Hydro One Local VP). Also on the team are EVP Finance **Bill Jones**, Society Staff Manager **Dan Kellar**, and Society President **Rod Sheppard**.

Alternate EVPs: In its June meeting, the Board required the Executive VPs to select alternates to act for them in case of significant absences. EVP Policy **Leslie Forge** has appointed **Rob Stanley** (Bruce Power), and EVP Finance **Bill Jones** has appointed **Joe Fierro** (OPG). EVP Member Services **Dennis Minello** will announce his appointment at the next Board meeting.

Pensioners' Chapter bylaws: The Executive Board approved changes to the by-laws of the Pensioners' Chapter. (Before the Chapter can submit changes to their members

for ratification, the Board must approve them.) The most significant changes were to add clauses that add two at-large positions to their Executive, and some clarifications regarding eligibility for membership. The Chapter's by-laws can be found on their Local web-site, hosted on the Society web-site.

SPEA: EVP Finance **Bill Jones** reported that the Society has received \$193,000 in compensation from the Society of Professional Engineers and Associates for moneys owing in accordance with the agreement around their disaffiliation (see *Newscast* 2007:06). The Board now considers the matter closed.

Female activists back from school

by Tracy Miller

Three female Society leaders attended a course on "Activism and Leadership for Union Women," given by the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) at its Ontario Region Summer School. The School took place in Cornwall, Ontario from July 13th to 18th.

Representing the Society were **Michelle Byck-Johnston** (Hydro One), **Shirley Hayes** (Bruce Power), and myself (Vertex).

Close to 150 union members attended the week-long courses, kicked off on Sunday evening with a welcome from Kelly Hayes, Director of the Ontario Region Office of the CLC, and Marie Clarke Walker, EVP of the CLC. We were also welcomed to the city by Elaine MacDonald, the President of the Cornwall District Labour Council. We then met our instructors for the week and it was off to class on Sunday night!

The course on Activism and Leadership for Union Women was led by Carol Hughes from the CLC in the Sudbury area (formerly of OPSEU) and by Jane Ste. Marie from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF). Fifteen women participated in the course from all areas of the province. They were members of the Communica-

tions, Energy, and Paperworkers Union (CEP), the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), OSSTF, the Steelworkers, and our members from the Society.

During the week-long course we reviewed the following topics:

- ◆ The various obstacles and barriers that prevent women from being involved in their unions. These barriers involved balancing family responsibilities, support at home, sexism and racism.
- ◆ Reviewed the Constitution and By-Laws from OPSEU and OSSTF focusing on the structures of these unions, including the executive positions, the election process, length of terms for the various elected positions, the various committees of each union, their affiliations and ideas around succession planning.
- ◆ The tools that can be used to effectively promote union activities and how to break down the legalistic terminology of the various documents and Policies/Procedures that govern our organizations.
- ◆ A role play was used to demonstrate the importance of understanding the Rules of Order that govern the meetings of your union. The exercise demonstrated how quickly meetings can become dysfunctional or inefficient and ineffective if those in attendance are not fully aware of the Rules of Order.
- ◆ We discussed Life Management Skills and the struggle to find a working balance between work/family/union. We discussed the various coping mechanisms used to assist in managing this balance.
- ◆ We identified goals and strategies for our respective unions and developed timelines with activities to promote these priorities. The SEP contingent has a great head start on some events that will be coming to you shortly!

Participation was encouraged. It was during these discussions that valuable nuggets of information were shared. We had an opportunity to learn from others' successes and a chance to understand why other activities were not as successful.

It was a great experience where we had the opportunity to network with other unions and to truly understand that no matter the size of your union, we are all member-driven organizations. Big or small, we all are experiencing difficulties with member engagement when there is not a crisis looming. We are all looking for ways to promote ideas of succession planning and the difficulties for this within elected positions. We all experience geographical issues when we are forming committees and looking at planning member events.

We also learned that there are a number of organizations we can partner with when events are being planned. We discussed the benefits of being members of local labour councils and to tap into regional United Way Labour Representatives. A great way to engage members is to become actively involved in their local communities and the issues that matter to them!

To summarize, a great deal of learning took place, friendships were formed, a lot of laughter occurred and a few tears. Some of us have made plans to reconnect at future events as early as the end of August and in October of this year. Michelle, Shirley, and I are looking forward to sharing the course material with the other members of our Women's Committee that were not able to attend, and anyone else that is interested.

Inergi, Society both found in breach of confidentiality

Damages not "sensible": Arbitrator

Both the Society and Inergi LP breached a confidentiality agreement they'd agreed to, Arbitrator Owen Gray has found.



Society women Shirley Hayes (second from top left), Michelle Byck-Johnston (middle, black jacket with white piping), and Tracy Miller (middle, black top) with their "activism and leadership" classmates.

Mr. Gray decided a somewhat unusual case: Inergi LP had filed a grievance against the Society. The overwhelming majority of grievances involve unions filing grievances against employers. After hearing six days of evidence, Mr. Gray ruled that there were confidentiality violations on both sides. He declined, however, to award damages.

Inergi's grievance arose out of a "non-committal" bargaining process entered into in February, 2007, almost two years before the end of the current collective agreement (December 31st, 2008). The Society had become aware that, though just a year before the two parties had agreed to wording protecting Society positions against offshoring, Inergi owner Capgemini had concrete plans to implement the offshoring schemes they are well-known for. The Society approached Inergi management, suggesting the two parties attempt to find a "win-win" solution to their concerns.

Bargaining broke down when the Society bargaining team determined that Inergi management had no intention of meeting Society concerns—their sole interest was freedom to offshore. Since the process was "non-committal," nothing in the collective agreement was changed in any way.

Prior to beginning, the two sides agreed to keep things confidential: that "all discussions, proposals, documents and data ... provided and/or exchanged during this process or associated with this process shall be strictly confidential and shall not be disclosed to anyone not directly involved..." Upon the process's failure, however, the Society exercised its right to inform the members of the Inergi Local that the process had failed, and that it had failed because the Employer insisted on implementing its offshoring schemes.

Foull cried Inergi. They filed a management grievance, alleging a breach of the confidentiality agreement, and demanding damages for "bad-faith bargaining," defamation, "interference with [Inergi's] economic and contractual relations," and "causing insecurity and anxiety" among Inergi's employees. Inergi also sought personal damages

from Local VP **Elaina De Luca** and Society Staff Officer **André Kolompar**.

While Arbitrator Gray ruled that there had been technical violations of the confidentiality agreement on both sides, he found there was no bad faith involved, and that there was entirely no evidence that Inergi had been harmed or interfered with in any way by the breach involved. And even if no damage had been found, he stressed that the two parties had to continue to operate with each other. Awarding damages, he said, would not be "sensible."

Inergi's case was damaged somewhat when it emerged that members of the Inergi LP management team had also relayed the results of bargaining to some not "directly" involved in bargaining, and clearly believed they had the right to do so.

Appearing for the Society were Local VP Elaina De Luca; Inergi unit directors **Dianne Mowat** and **Andre Ram-saroop**; Society EVP (and, subsequently President) **Rod Sheppard**; and Society Staff Officers **André Kolompar** and **Raymond Wong**.

The case was argued by Society counsel Kate Hughes, of Cavaluzzo Hayes Shilton McIntyre & Cornish.

Society / Inergi grievance marathon

The Society and Inergi management have been resolving grievances at breakneck speed.

"This is great for our members," said Inergi Local VP **Elaina De Luca**. "We've been stone-walled on most of these grievances for a very long time, but now we're getting some reasonable and responsive settlements."

At management's invitation, the two sides met on September 4th and 5th, and are meeting for two days this week as well, dealing with a line-up of almost 60 grievances, some of which were filed as early as 2004. In the two days in early September, 29 were dealt with.



Elaina De Luca, Inergi Local VP: “We all want Inergi to succeed, but we’re determined the Company will succeed with us...”

De Luca says her members hope this is a sign that the two parties are working out a better bargaining relationship, a relationship that has seen its challenges in the last two years (see past *Newscasts*). “The proof of the pudding will be when we try to bargain a renewal agreement,” said De Luca. “We all want Inergi to succeed, but we’re determined the Company will succeed **with** us, not without us.”

Society talks labour at Harvard

Society President **Rod Sheppard** recently attended an invitation-only conference of professional organizations held at Harvard University Law School.

“It was an eye-opener for me,” said Sheppard. “Most of the associations there advocate for their profession, not for their members and their working lives.”

The subject matter of the conference at the hallowed law school was “Representing professionals in science,

engineering, and technology.” About 40 representatives of organizations representing professionals were in attendance, as well as around a dozen academics. President Sheppard had been invited to share his views as a leader of a trade union representing professional employees, and also specifically as someone outside the U.S. context.

He discussed the stabilizing aspects of Canada’s labour laws: certification processes that require employers to recognize bargaining agents (unions); the Rand formula, which regulates and regularizes the matter of union dues and revenues; and so on. He also described the Society’s relationships with industry stakeholders, lobbying activities, and the professional pride and occasional militancy of professional employees, as in the Hydro One strike of 2005.

Canada, he said, is also more accepting of unions and their place in society. “[U.S. professional associations’] ability to represent their members, to speak freely about advocating for them, unions, and so forth—they’re not allowed to do that, because it stymies their careers, and can get them fired, Sheppard noted.”

Of the representatives in attendance, only four were leaders of trade unions. Of those four, three were from outside the U.S. Besides Sheppard, there was Walter Belyea, of the Professional Institute of the Public Service in Canada (PIPSC: 50,000 scientists and engineers employed at the federal and some provincial and territorial levels of government), and Dario Tomat, of the Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers of Australia (APESMA: more than 25,000 professional employees in the public and private sectors).

“The organizing that’s going on in the U.S. is because they’re putting more regulation together,” Sheppard said. “The regulatory body is becoming the organizer. The associations are growing because more professionals are required to join them.”

Sheppard says many conference participants said they’d initially been very accepting of globalization—they were told there’d be more work, and more interesting work, for

their members as a result. "They all admit now that five years into that plan they're all diminishing, a lot of their work is being done elsewhere, and multi-nationals are gaining as a result. They've sucked the knowledge out of the U.S. worker, and now it's too late, it's a *fait accompli*."

A pleasant outcome of the conference, Sheppard said, was making some good contacts on offshoring issues, especially a group of Microsoft employees who are associated with the Communications Workers of America. "We'll be contacting them to see what we can do together."

Executive Board preparing demographic survey of members

In November, the Society will ask its members to participate in a survey to determine their demographic make-up.

"This is our first attempt to drill down further than the information we get from management," said Executive Vice President **Leslie Forge**. "Our strategic planning process, passed by Society Council last fall, emphasizes that we must know more about what our members do and need, not only for collective bargaining, but in order to respond to external challenges."

The survey will be conducted through the Society's website, using a module being developed not only to conduct surveys, such as for bargaining preparation, but to make voting in elections and referenda easier and cheaper.

The survey will be launched in November, shortly after the fall meeting of Society Council.

In order to participate, members will need to log on to the Society web-site. Members who have misplaced their login info can obtain it by following the "forget your password" procedure on "my Society." It would be a good idea to do so before the survey is launched.

New elections guidelines

The Society's principal officer elections could be run more fairly, says a committee of the Executive Board. Also, the Executive Board needs to provide the Chief Returning Officer with more support and resources to ensure fairness.

The Committee's report said that the Society's elections need to meet the following goals:

- ◆ they must be conducted fairly, and be perceived to be conducted fairly
- ◆ no candidate shall have access to Society funding or resources for campaign purposes
- ◆ the Chief Returning Officer (CRO) must provide the necessary oversight and control to ensure that elections are conducted fairly, and be enabled to do so

The Committee was struck in December, 2007, and given the mandate to "carry out fact finding" regarding a series of complaints arising out of the 2006 election for principal officers. The Board also asked the Committee to formulate recommendations for the conduct of future elections.

The report on elections contains the following key recommendations:

- ◆ The CRO must be given sufficient release time to fulfill her/his duties
- ◆ The CRO will be given the power to deal with irregularities as they arise, so as to "preserve the integrity of the elections process"
- ◆ While Locals are encouraged to hold all-candidates meetings, all candidates must be given sufficient opportunity to attend, including, if necessary, sufficient release time
- ◆ There will be no restrictions on Locals' rights to endorse candidates, except that the expenses for any Local meetings or events held to endorse or promote specific candidates will not be covered by the Society
- ◆ The Society will not provide voter contact information
- ◆ Only the CRO can authorize replacement ballots

In its meeting of September 3rd, the Executive Board accepted the Committee's report.

The Committee noted that the web-based elections forum currently in development will certainly be ready for the next principal officer election. Implementation of the forum will go a long way to help non-incumbent candidates reach out to potential voters, without mass e-mailing.

Committee members were **Dennis Minello** (OPG), **Joseph Fierro** (OPG), **Joseph Sarick** (New Horizon), and **Brian Robinson** (Society Staff Union Board Representative).

Labour Council:

Low wages, disappearing jobs no good for anyone:

Voters in the upcoming federal election should vote for candidates who promise more jobs and better wages, says the Toronto and York Region Labour Council.



Toronto & York Region Labour Council President John Cartwright, Labour Day, 2008



“With ... record job losses in July, it is no wonder that Mr. Harper [called] an election as soon as possible,” says a Labour Council statement. “Ontario and Quebec are being devastated by a jobs crisis that is far deeper than the auto industry woes. The current economic model is failing central Canada—with blind loyalty to bad trade deals, deregulation, outsourcing, and export of raw resources.”

At the same time as good manufacturing jobs are disappearing, T&YR Labour Council President John Cartwright said in an opinion piece for the *Toronto Star*, “the dominant economic model has created both a massive concentration of capital at the top and a growing number of poverty level jobs at the bottom.... [T]hree years ago more than one million workers in Greater Toronto earned less than \$29,800 a year.”

Hospital workers being displaced by contractors paying just above minimum wage; home-care delivery being taken over by companies that classify everyone as “independent contractors” to avoid paying good wages, holiday or sick time. The list goes on. The historic BCE buyout was preceded by massive outsourcing of operator and information work, and Enbridge has done the same thing.

Society benefits from good jobs paying living wages, says Cartwright, but the current Prime Minister doesn't seem interested. "A Prime Minister whose true allegiance is to Alberta's oil barons seems to have no interest in defending Canadian manufacturing. As plants shut down and move to Mexico or China, all Harper and Flaherty can offer is more tax cuts."

Canadians should demand that the federal government should put Canadians first, with policies that provide for "decent jobs in a sustainable economy."

From procurement of local goods and services, to fair labour laws, to investment in social infrastructure and green industry, there are many opportunities to shape a healthy economy with good jobs as its key feature. Some will be different jobs, of course, as the imperative of sustainability transforms our society... Deliberately choosing a good jobs strategy will require a rethinking of the directions we have been taking in recent years.

Those interested in reading more on the Labour Council's stances on behalf of working people can visit its web-site, especially its policy pages.



New Society Staff Officer Laura Brownell

Meet Laura Brownell

The Society's newest labour relations officer started her working life as a classical violinist.

Shortly after graduating from the University of Michigan with a B.A. in music, Laura Brownell landed a position with the Toledo (Ohio) Symphony. After a year, she moved over to the Hamilton Philharmonic, and Canada has had her ever since. She was with the Hamilton orchestra for over 12 years, and also performed with the Toronto Symphony, the Canadian Opera Company, and in many instances as a session musician.

As a performing member of the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), Laura had always participated actively in the union's affairs; in 1992, "bitten by the bug," she says, she pursued and won a Master's degree in industrial relations. In 1994, partly due to a repetitive strain injury that's a hazard of her trade, she gave up performing and took on the position of the director of the Symphonic Services Division of the Canadian office of the AFM. She headed that office for ten years, then spent four years in the AFM's New York office, as director of the Symphonic Services Division for the U.S. and Canada.

She and her staff of eight professionals negotiated and administered the working conditions of the symphonic musicians in our two countries, provided educational services to the union's representatives and members, and represented the AFM at external functions. Most notably, she represented the AFM on a group that planned and carried out the first international meeting of symphonic musicians' unions, in Berlin last April.

Laura was a leader in the AFM in responding to the rapidly changing electronic media world, in which musicians were being encouraged to give up many of the media rights to their work. She was very much involved in establishing a national recording contract that deals with those rights.

She's excited to be working for the Society. "There's something very gratifying about transferring a set of analytical

skills, collective bargaining knowledge and understanding to another industry, particularly one that's in innovative flux and evolution." She mentions specifically the trend among orchestras of having certain "core" performers, and filling out the rest with contract employees.

The cash-strapped employer will always say, "Well I know it says 93 in the agreement, but we'd like to reduce that to 84 and hire some freelancers from the city (we're performing in) to fill it out. Sound familiar? It's outsourcing.

Laura has a son and a daughter, currently both at university, and lives in Oakville. She has a cat named Chloe. Now that she's not commuting between Oakville and New York, and flying all over North America at the drop of a hat, she'll have some new-found spare time. She's planning to take up the violin again.

Meet Greg Spencer

Since July, former CAW staffer Greg Spencer can be found at the Society, working as a labour relations officer.



New Society Staff Officer Greg Spencer

Greg grew up in Windsor. Before graduating from that city's Vincent Massey Secondary School he went to work on the night shift for Air Canada in customer service at the Windsor airport. After a couple of years, staff reductions in Windsor resulted in his transfer to a Toronto office, where his fellow workers encouraged him to become active in the workplace union committee. The union he belonged to was the Canadian Airline Employees Association (CALEA), which later merged with CAW Canada.

In 1980 a position came open working for CALEA, and he won it.

I did a little bit of everything. I dealt with small and large airlines from coast to coast as well as non-airline employers, everything from a candy factory, Rowntree McIntosh to auto parts factories to Brampton Hydro, where we represented a group of technical and trades workers. A real mix of small and large groups. Then, another fellow retired, and Air Canada became my main assignment.

The auto workers split with the United Autoworkers Union (UAW) sticks out in his mind as a memorable time, he says.

To be involved in the meetings and conventions that were held, it was a pretty amazing time. We didn't really know where we'd be going, but at the same time there was a sense of optimism that we'd finally be able to control our own destiny.

He worked for the autoworkers for 25 years, retiring in 2005. He needed a break, he says; he had been through all the work and turmoil that was the Air Canada-Canadian Airlines merger, and then Air Canada's bankruptcy, and thought it was time for a break – and a change. Earlier this year, he saw an ad for a Society position, and it appealed to him: "the idea of working for a smaller organization in a different sector really caught my attention."

Greg lives in Etobicoke with Tanja, his wife and partner of 32 years, and has been active in several community groups, and volunteers at the Toronto International

and Hot Docs film festivals. They love to travel—they've recently been to Tanzania to climb Mount Kilimanjaro,

and Argentina and Chile for hiking in the mountains of Patagonia.

Society Newscast 2008:03

Copyright © 2008 [Society of Energy Professionals]. All rights reserved.