

News from the Society of Energy Professionals

**Fossil
units here
to stay**



Biomass towers at OPG's Nanticoke GS

Photo: OPG

Ontario Power Generation has no plan to shut down its coal-fired stations. And in a very welcome development, Energy Minister George Smitherman and Natural Resources Minister Donna Cansfield are enthusiastic about it.

"We have an opportunity to preserve the capital asset and use it for something else that's tremendously sound from an environmental standpoint," Smitherman said on January 20th. "It's pretty exciting, but (there's) a lot of work to do yet to figure out what is our capacity to have a stable, reliable, affordable supply."

If all goes well, Ontario's remaining fossil plants will have been converted to burn biomass by 2014, and will continue in operation. "These assets are owned by the people of Ontario," said Smitherman.

OPG says Atikokan GS will be ready to go by 2012.

"We're elated," said Society President **Rodney Sheppard**. "This is in line with what we've said since before the government announced its 'coal-reduction plan.' The key is reducing emissions, not closing plants."

Smitherman and Cansfield spoke at a "biomass information workshop" at OPG headquarters in Toronto. They appeared with a number of OPG and academic experts called together to discuss the possible conversion of coal-fired stations to biomass. A Ministry of Natural Resources backgrounder called the project "a great opportunity to develop Ontario's green economy while supporting a strong forest manufacturing sector..." as well as "an opportunity for Ontario to be a North American leader in reducing dependence on foreign energy and fossil fuels, and decreasing its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and global warming."

OPG has released a "request for expressions of interest" (RFEI), soliciting proposals from the forestry industry for the supply of biomass products suitable for burning in converted OPG stations. It requires that the source of the products and the facilities that produce them be in Ontario.

In 2006, the Ontario government and OPG established the Atikokan Bio-Energy Research Centre, administered by the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Energy. The research centre is addressing questions such as:

- ◆ The effects of burning biomass on the equipment involved
- ◆ Establishing sustainable supply while minimizing the impact on other users of the resources
- ◆ Processing, storage, and transportation of the fuel, and
- ◆ Pricing, both of the fuel and of the electricity to be produced

The Society has actively promoted biomass as a substitute for coal as fuel. In the Ontario Power Authority's supply-mix consultations of 2005, the Society proposed that the OPA consider biomass as a possible emission-reduction strategy.

At the time, in collaboration with an engineering firm, the Society had undertaken a preliminary analysis of the potential for co-firing wood waste and coal, which showed a great deal of promise. Since then, OPG has successfully burned 100 per cent pelletized wood at Atikokan GS.

Along with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the PWU, the Society co-sponsored some 2007/08 Kinectrics research into co-firing agricultural biomass—specifically, wheat straw and finely ground corn cobs—at a pilot combustion test facility in the U.S. using the coal mix burned at Nanticoke GS. The study showed considerable promise, particularly for the corn cobs.

"We thought the lack of biomass in the [OPA's Integrated Power System Plan] was a glaring omission," said Sheppard. "The Minister's directive last November to the OPA to have another look is a chance to get some more green energy into the mix."

Sheppard said the establishment of a biomass industry in Ontario would have obvious benefits for both the agricultural and forestry sectors. "A made-in-Ontario investment in OPG's publicly owned assets is a smart way to kick-start some important economic activity and also to reduce emissions."

OPG's biomass team has posted RFEI questions, answers and clarifications on the biomass page of their web-site.

Board highlights: January-February, 2009

The Executive Board met on January 6th and February 3rd.

Recognition: The following were recognized for significant contributions:

- ◆ All members of the Ontario Energy Board Local's bargaining team and staff support for their dedication and determination during the process of bargaining their first collective agreement (see NewsFLASH 2008:05)
- ◆ Staff Officer **Cheri Funston**, for the "wonderful job" she does serving as the Board's Secretariat
- ◆ All those involved in the strategic planning process (see article, below)
- ◆ **Jim Bristow**, a training FLM at Pickering NGS and long-serving delegate and unit director, who will retire this month

Financial decisions: The Board authorized the funding required to file and litigate an application to the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The application concerns Kinectrics spinning off a product line to a separate company called Kinects®. The Society will argue that Kinects is not a separate employer, that it's Kinectrics in everything but name, and that the Collective Agreement with Kinectrics applies to employees of Kinects. The number of Society-represented employees involved is not large, but it is likely Kinects will grow.

OEB Settlement: The Ontario Energy Board Local's **Edik Zwarenstein** presented a detailed report on the terms of settlement of the OEB Local's new contract (for an outline, see NewsFLASH 2008:05). He thanked everyone on the Board, especially Society President **Rod Sheppard** and EVP Finance **Bill Jones**, and all staff involved for all the effort they'd put into "a very good settlement." At the time of his report, the ratification vote was underway (see article, below).

Solidarity Project: Executive VP **Leslie Forge** presented the Solidarity Project, as endorsed by the Society's Strate-



On February 5th, IESO Local VP Scott Travers conducted a workshop on electricity markets in Ontario. It was attended by Society leaders and staff, members of the Cavalluzzo law firm, and guests from industry stakeholders.

gic Planning Committee. The Board approved the document, and in so doing has completed the process of formulating the Society's strategic plan for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

The Solidarity Project is the outline and rationale for one of the three "priority objectives" set by Society Council in November, 2008. It sets out the basis for the next year's workplans to carry out "internal organizing for the purpose of creating solidarity within and across bargaining unit boundaries." It involves encouraging recognition that Society members share a "community of interests, shared objectives, and standards, and a common sense of responsibility—both within and across locals." The key, says the document, is for the Society to be more involved in issues and programs that are relevant to Society members over and above the matter of collective agreements, grievances, and other working conditions, though those will still be at the core of Society workplans.

While the Solidarity Project crucially involves internal organizing, education, and recruitment activities within mem-

bers' own locals, they must also cross local boundaries, and even go outside the Society, involving partnerships with other communities and social groups that could potentially become Society members. A good example is the Society's budding partnerships with First Nations organizations, which are designed to result in benefits both for them and for the Society.

Representatives of the Policy Committee said that the success of the Solidarity Project is crucial for the survival of the Society, especially given the Society's need in the next five years to recruit new leadership—many current leaders are approaching retirement age. But the Solidarity Project is much more than an exercise in succession planning. It is intended to encourage engagement of the membership in the activities of the Society by aligning the Society's activities with the concerns of the membership, not just as workers but as citizens, too.

Staffing Committee Report: The Board considered the report of the Staffing Committee set up over last spring and summer to make recommendations on the following "strategic needs:"

- ◆ Specialty support for health and safety
- ◆ Senior Labour Relations Officer
- ◆ Human resources officer
- ◆ Executive assistant to the President
- ◆ Exclusions regarding confidential matters
- ◆ Succession planning

The Committee put forward a full set of recommendations dealing with those strategic needs and others. In addition, the Committee proposed that the Society conduct a "Succession Planning/Organizational Review" which might serve as a launching point for some important Society reforms.

While the Board appreciated the work of the Committee, the majority preferred to wait to discuss staffing matters until after the Policy Committee submitted its recommendations for strategic planning in the February Board meeting (see also *Newscast* 2008:05, Board Highlights, Strategic Planning, p. 3).

Workplace Stress Survey: The Board approved a Bruce Local request that their Bruce Equity funds be utilized to fund a workplace stress study and remedial action at that worksite. The study arises out of the Local's efforts to deal with the "overwhelming" occurrence of "critical stress cases" being dealt with by health professionals in the Bruce area. While the Employer refused to conduct a study, "a compromise was reached where the Study was agreed if the parties shared the cost 50-50."

The survey was conducted by Brock University's Workplace Health Research Lab. Remedial activity, should it prove necessary, will be conducted by an industrial psychologist who is also a former Bruce Power employee.

The "Bruce Equity" funds are made up of the distributions arising from the Society's share of Bruce Power, a share extended to the Society in 2001 when Bruce Power came into being. Of those dividends, 20 per cent are reserved for the Bruce Power Local.

CNA Conference: The Board authorized up to \$25,000 for the expenses involved in the Society's delegation to the February conference and trade show of the Canadian Nuclear Association.

External Relations: President Sheppard reported on the following:

- ◆ Staff Officer **Richard Long** and he attended the 2009 convention of the Canadian Federation of Engineering Students in Ottawa in January. More than 250 students from across Canada were in attendance, and the great majority of them were women. "It was gratifying," he said, "that there was a high level of interest in the Society, and what the Society could do for them in their careers." Bruce Power, Hydro One, and OPG were well recognized as potential employers for engineers, and the students were pleased to find out about opportunities with the other Society employers as well.
- ◆ The Society sponsored delegations to attend a luncheon address by Hon. Lisa Raitt, new Minister of Natural Resources for the federal government, on

January 9th, and a speech by Hon. George Smitherman, Ontario's Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, on January 14th. Minister Smitherman noted that Ontario's plans for the electricity industry were plans for *infrastructure*, a welcome nod to the role electricity plants will play in stimulating the economy.

- ◆ The Society was an intervenor in the Ontario Energy Board hearings into IESO rates. We were able to ensure that the Board received accurate benchmarking information regarding Society salaries at other Society employers.

Membership: EVP Member Services **Dennis Minello** reported that participation in the Society's demographic survey had been terminated on December 12th (i.e. the survey is no longer available on the Society web-site), with a 37 per cent participation rate.

Minello noted that the indemnification referendum was underway, with a deadline for ballots of January 29th.

He further reported that there will be elections for VPs for the Ontario Energy Board Local and the newly created Nuclear Waste Management Organization Local (see Newscast 2008:04).

Elections, Executive Committee: Elections will be held at the March Board meeting for the three non-Principal Officer positions on the Executive Board. The Executive Committee is made up of the four Principal Officers (the President and the three Vice Presidents), three Executive Board members elected by the Board, and the Staff Manager (non-voting).

Employee Health/Dental Benefits Plan: The Board approved a proposal to extend membership in the Society's health benefits plan to the IFPTE's Ontario staff, with the IFPTE picking up the cost. The three individuals involved will benefit from a more provident plan at no cost to the Society. The Board agreed that there would also be no risk—among the provisions of the agreement with the IFPTE is that either party could cancel the agreement on three months' notice.

Society gets behind anti-poverty doc

The Society's Executive Board has decided to back an anti-poverty documentary. "Poor No More," currently in production in Canada, Norway, and Sweden, will premier this May.

The Board heard presentations from David Langille, Executive Producer, and Suzanne Babin, the film's Producer. "Poor No More" will feature Mary Walsh (This Hour has 22 Minutes, and much, much more) and some ordinary Canadians struggling with unemployment in an examination of how being poor differs in the three countries. Most important will be the matter of how Canada can do better—especially for its working poor.

"Five years ago, the Society committed itself to the broader labour movement and its agenda, and we've really only dabbled in it to this point," said Society President **Rod Sheppard**. "This project is an opportunity for the Society to commit itself to being in the thick of positive change."

It certainly won't hurt the Society's profile, he added, to share the stage with an established star like Walsh.

Any funding, he said, would come from the Society's special events funding, not from dues.

"The current economic slowdown is broadening the appeal for this message," said Langille. "The number of poor is growing every day, and the Society is in a unique position to help." They asked for assistance in production costs. "We want to 're-brand' poverty, so people realize that, 'there but for the grace of God go I.'"

One of the important elements in the movie will be an examination of the role unions and unionized jobs play in making societies better places to live, including for the poor. Unions have always been at the forefront of advocacy for the unemployed, and in creating welfare systems that don't rob recipients of their dignity.

"Poor No More" has received over \$300,000 in funding from labour—including the Ontario Federation of



In December, Society President Rod Sheppard presented Mary Walsh with a "Women Rising and Organizing" t-shirt

Labour—student, church, and community groups all over Canada, said Sheppard. They have not asked for, nor received, any money from political parties.

Most Board members were excited by the idea that the Society would associate itself with efforts for "positive change." They voted to extend funding to the documentary, with only one vote against.

Indemnification of Executive Board approved

Members have approved a change to the Society Constitution that will indemnify members of the Executive Board for actions performed in carrying out their duties.

Balloting was closed at 5 p.m. on January 29th, and Chief Returning Officer Paul Czuczman (Bruce Power) oversaw

the counting of ballots in the Society office. In all, 1,963 ballots were cast, with 1,612 members voting in favour, a majority of 82 per cent.

The referendum gives final effect to a change approved by Society Council last November. It adds a new article to the Constitution that provides that, should any member of the Executive Board be assessed liabilities, damages, costs, etc. out of reasonable actions taken in the course of her/his duties, s/he will be "saved harmless" from those damages by the Society.

Also approved were indemnification agreements that Executive Board members must sign as part of the duties of office.

Huang elected New Horizon Local VP

Simon Huang has been elected Vice President of the New Horizon System Services Local.



New Horizon Local's Simon Huang

An election for Local VP was made necessary by the retirement of **Joseph Sarick**, who had been VP since 2004.

New Horizon Deputy Returning Officer **Jack Lichaczewski** presided over the counting of ballots on the afternoon of February 6th. The results were:

Karen Gower: 40

Simon Huang: 183

Mazen Ja'afar: 27

Turnout for the vote was heavy, at 80 per cent.

Huang has been acting LVP for almost a year, having taken over for Sarick when the previous LVP had to take leave to attend to family matters. In his election materials Huang undertook that if elected he would run again in 2010, the next round of pan-Society Local VP elections.

OEB Local settlement ratified

Members of the Ontario Energy Board Local have ratified their first collective agreement.

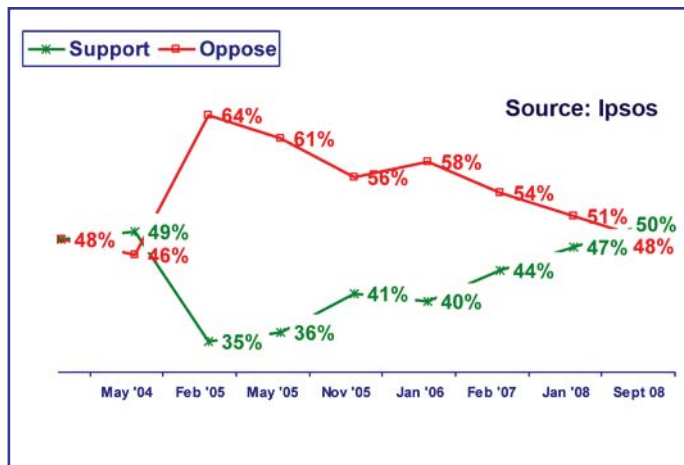
Votes cast in the ratification referendum were counted in the afternoon of January 12th. Interest in the ballot was high; turnout was 90 per cent on the nose. Of those, 94.5 per cent voted to ratify the agreement.

"After all the effort that went into the organizing and bargaining campaigns," said bargaining team member **Edik Zwarenstein**, "it's pretty gratifying to see our members stand by the bargaining team."

Local member **Paul Gasparatto** assisted Deputy Returning Officer **Alison Cazalet** and Society staffperson **Elena Medina** in the count.

Nuclear support still growing in Ontario

Public support for nuclear electricity generation continues to grow steadily in Ontario. While support for building



new nuclear facilities continues to grow, it's still behind support for refurbishing existing ones.

Support for nuclear in Ontario is stronger than anywhere else in Canada. According to recent polling, fully two-thirds of Ontario residents support nuclear power, up from 48 per cent in 2005.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the same number of Ontarians support replacing or refurbishing the current nuclear fleet when they reach the ends of their working lives. Almost half (49 per cent) support building new nuclear.

The latest figures on public support for nuclear were gathered by Ipsos Public Affairs last September, on behalf of the Canadian Nuclear Association (CNA). Ipsos interviewed more than 1,200 Canadians, of whom 400+ reside in Ontario.

Support for nuclear is growing in all provinces except Quebec and Saskatchewan (where it remains at more than 50 per cent), and is growing especially quickly in Alberta and New Brunswick, where nuclear power has lately been in the news. (Quebeckers apparently have no concerns over their supply of electricity, perhaps explaining why only one in five supports nuclear.)

Public support continues to recover from an abrupt and dramatic dip in 2004-2005 (see chart), when the CNA discontinued its public education programs.

Labour: Federal budget hardly stimulates

(with research by Matthew Kellway)

The media's concentration on future deficits is masking the federal government's failure to provide enough stimulus to a staggering economy, according to Canadian organized labour.

"The federal government is going into deficit mainly because tax revenues are slumping along with the economy," says the Canadian Labour Congress in their analysis of the proposed budget. "This does not inject new purchasing power into the economy." They note that almost half those deficits are the natural outcome of reduced taxation revenues due to the slumping economy—in no way are they the result of "stimulus."

In world terms, says the CLC, the proposed budget is a weakening.

The Budget claims its stimulus package comes close to the two per cent target but this counts induced



On February 12th, members of the Ontario Energy Board Local gathered at Alleykatz, a Yonge Street jazz pub, to celebrate their new collective agreement. Karen Cormier (with mic) said it had been a long haul, but unity had made the difference.



In January, the Bruce Power Local donated \$10,000 each to the Paisley and Area Health Clinic and the Cargill Community Fund. The Local's Ken Martin and Evelyn Martin delivered to Dave Barrett (l) and Carman Lippert.

provincial spending and also loans to cities and the auto sector which do not count as part of government program spending. Part of the stimulus package goes to permanent personal income tax cuts which even the Budget says are not very effective.

The Ontario Federation of Labour was less complementary. "It's pretty clear ... that the Harper Conservatives are just not up to the job," says an OFL release. "This budget should be defeated."

Labour had called on the Feds to loosen the eligibility requirements for collecting Employment Insurance (EI) benefits, and were almost entirely disappointed. The budget simply adds five weeks to the length of time those lucky enough to qualify can collect, but adds no one to the list of those who qualify.

"We needed to help people who have already lost their jobs and to spend stimulus dollars in ways that get us the biggest bang for the buck," said Wayne Samuelson, OFL President. Only 30 per cent of unemployed Ontarians received regular EI benefits, the OFL says, compared to an average of 58 per cent in other provinces. "Ontarians need increased benefits and better access. The measures

in today's budget won't make one more unemployed Ontarian eligible for benefits," they said.

Armine Yalnizyan, of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, said it was "totally inexplicable that the government forgot 'Job One,' which was to fix unemployment insurance benefits for the jobless."

Labour, along with many other sectors of Canadian society, including especially the municipal governments that are supposed to be the beneficiaries, don't trust that the infrastructure spending announced by the Finance Minister will actually result in shovels in the ground. The CLC observes:

We said the federal government should, in partnership with the provinces, territories and cities, launch a major multi-year public investment program which would create jobs now, promote our environmental goals, and build new industries for the future. It should cover roads, sewers, and basic municipal infrastructure; First Nations community improvements; health and educational facilities; mass transit; passenger rail; affordable housing; energy conservation through building retrofits; and renewable energy; and

should be twinned to a Made in Canada procurement policy that would help support new jobs in manufacturing and services.

At most, says the CLC, the infrastructure funding, if it's all spent—and they're not confident of that—will create only 50,000 short-term jobs. Further, one of the conditions is that those in charge of the infrastructure projects involved are required "to actively consider P3s" (public-private partnerships) in applying for the funding—a "costly and time-wasting" requirement.

Energy

AECL has been extended a \$351 million cash infusion:

- ◆ \$72 million for decommissioning the failed Maple reactors
- ◆ \$144 million to shore up the operation of the reactor that provides more than half the world's medical isotopes, and
- ◆ \$135 million to go to developing the Advanced CANDU Reactor 1000

According to AECL CEO Hugh McDiarmid, more money will be needed for the ACR in future, but not in as large amounts.

In January, Minister of Natural Resources Lisa Raitt announced that the federal government is "reviewing AECL's structure to ensure that it is appropriate in a changing marketplace." The review, she said, will include the possibility of private sector participation in the commercial operations of the corporation, "in order to position Canada's nuclear industry to take maximum advantage of future opportunities at home and abroad." The feds are widely thought to be preparing to sell part or all of Canada's flagship nuclear technology company.

The budget provides \$1 billion for a "Green Infrastructure Fund," for the creation of "sustainable energy," including "modern energy transmission lines." There is another \$1 billion to be directed to carbon capture and storage (CCS), as well as special tax treatment for CCS investments (though Goldman Sachs has estimated \$10 billion will be needed to bring CCS into commercial viability).

Finally, the budget earmarks \$170 million for the forest industry, nearly half of which is targeted to "the development of emerging and breakthrough technologies related to forest biomass utilization, nanotechnology and next generation forest products." Presumably some of this will be available for start-up biomass operations.

Pensions

Finance Minister Jim Flaherty's November economic statement is now remembered mostly for its negative aspects. However, he did announce that temporary solvency funding relief would be provided for federally regulated pension plans. The government promised permanent improvements by the end of the year.

As part of the budget announcement, a consultation document (<http://www.fin.gc.ca/activity/consult/pensions-eng.pdf>) was released seeking views on the legislative and regulatory framework for federally regulated pension plans. The process requires written feedback by March 16th. In addition, a number of public consultation meetings will be held. It follows on the heels of pension reviews in Ontario, Nova Scotia, and a joint review between B.C. and Alberta.

For the 2008 tax year, the government will reduce the amount that seniors are required to withdraw from their RRIFs by 25 per cent.

"Great Glasses" not so great

If you buy glasses at Great Glasses, you might find they're not so great after all.

In a case that's been in litigation since 2003, optician Bruce Bergez has been ordered to comply with the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, and has been assessed fines amounting to \$38 million. On January 14th, the Ontario Court of Appeal dismissed his appeals of those orders.

"The brazen nature of the appellants' contempt, its lengthy and ongoing nature, and the risk to the public health and safety posed by the appellants' conduct

demanded a substantial fine that would act as a strong disincentive to the continuation of this kind of conduct," said the judges that heard Mr. Bergez's appeal.

Under Bergez's "business model," he is the only optician listed for his 27 outlets. Under the *Act*, eyeglasses and contact lenses must be dispensed by a registered optician based on a prescription supplied either by an optometrist or a physician. Great Glasses has repeatedly been ordered to stop dispensing eye correction based on eye tests conducted by a computer, without a prescription.

Members are advised that the documentation they need to ensure their reimbursement is the original prescription from an ophthalmologist or optometrist, and a receipt.

However, those who seek the most qualified dispensers should note that members of the Ontario College of Opticians usually have their badges displayed prominently in their offices.

Bergez also operates SHS Optical, Dundurn Optical, and Plains Road Optical in southern Ontario. They are currently still in business throughout the GTA and southwestern Ontario, and are known to run attractive "specials."

Disputes over claims for reimbursement should be taken up with the member's delegate.

Freedom of Information: Ontario tied for last

Ontario is in dead last place in openness to freedom of information requests, according to the Canadian Newspaper Association. It's got company, though: apparently B.C. is just as bad.

Access to official records is a powerful tool for the media, stakeholder organizations, and ordinary citizens to hold governments accountable. It helps to ensure that governments are as transparent as they like to say they are.

So the Newspaper Association sets out each year to measure how various levels of government stack up. For provincial governments, the Association submitted written requests for the following information:

- ◆ A list of vehicles available for transportation of members of cabinet and senior public servants
- ◆ An analyzeable electronic list of highway construction contracts of \$100,000 or more awarded 2007-2008
- ◆ Guidelines or rules on the use of Tasers or any similar electronic control devices by police in the province
- ◆ Briefing notes prepared for the provincial minister of finance on the issue of a carbon tax
- ◆ Internal audits of the system in the last two fiscal years of paying physicians for services covered by the provincial Medicare plan

Ontario asked for \$32 for the list of vehicles; was judged "least responsive" on the request for highway contracts, asking for \$220 for computer programming time; did not issue a decision on the taser request; released no physician records; and required a fee of more than \$700 for the briefing notes.

The Association gave Ontario a C- in its freedom of information report card. Only the province of Saskatchewan got an A, sharing top honours with the City of Saskatoon.

The publication *Inside Queen's Park* notes that though the study got some media coverage, no member of the opposition raised the matter in the legislature.

Society Newscast 2008:06

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