

News from the Society of Energy Professionals

AMEC NSS Local settles in two-party bargaining



More than 200 members and retirees of the Bruce Power Local line up for the fixins at the Local's annual BeefFest on March 26th.

The AMEC NSS Local has reached a new agreement in two-party bargaining. While subject to ratification, the Local's bargaining team has recommended unanimously that the Local's members support it.

"I think members will be pleased," said Local VP **Keith Weaver**. "We were bargaining during an economic downturn, and we needed to maintain competitiveness on salary. In my view, we did."

Settlement was reached at 4 a.m., Saturday, March 21st.

"There was a great deal of pressure on the AMEC NSS bargaining team," said Society President **Rod Sheppard**. "NSS

operates in the private sector, and their clients are looking for cost containment. My personal congratulations go out to the bargaining team and AMEC NSS members."

The new agreement will cover a three-year period: April 1st, 2009 to March 31st, 2012. Following are the highlights:

- ◆ Increases in base pay of three per cent per year, with cost-of-living adjustments in the second and third years if inflation equals or exceeds 3.55 per cent
- ◆ Performance (merit) pay pot of 1.75 per cent of payroll per year
- ◆ Increase in employee contribution to pension plan to seven per cent (Employer contributes proportionately more to the fund, but an employer contribution holiday is possible only if employees also get one)
- ◆ Improvements to health and dental benefits and to the discipline language, and Family Day included as a statutory holiday
- ◆ Employees with 10 years or more continuous service, and are at age 65, or who have met the rule of 82, or who have been in the pension plan for 35 years get one month's pay as a bonus on retirement or termination, regardless of whether a commuted value pension is taken
- ◆ Employees such as the above who have 15 years or more continuous service will receive post-retirement health and dental benefits, regardless of whether a commuted value pension is taken

The mediation/arbitration agreement has been extended to cover the next round of bargaining. While there will be no change to the "purchased services" (contracting out) agree-



Mike Armstrong (Inergi) and wife Crissy, with greeting card Crissy designed to thank Energy Minister George Smitherman for his stance against offshoring Inergi work. Smitherman wrote the Society to say he was “very touched” by the card and its more than 140 signatures.

ment, the Parties will strike a joint team to “make improvements where appropriate.”

All in all, noted the bargaining team, when all increases and improvements are taken into account the agreement is worth an average of 4.75 per cent per year to members.

“This was a very valuable experience, I think, for both sides,” said Weaver. “The Society did better than we thought we would in this economic climate, and it appears Management now recognizes the Society can be an ally in growing the business.”

Originally called Nuclear Safety Solutions, AMEC NSS was spun off from Ontario Power Generation’s nuclear safety analysis division in 2002. While much of their work is with OPG and Bruce Power, the company has succeeded in gaining business with about 70 other clients. Expansion of both its client base and services offered has resulted in Society-represented NSS employees almost doubling (155 to almost 280) since 2002.

The AMEC NSS bargaining team consisted of Weaver, delegates **Aaron Klassen** and **Rodolfo Monteforte**, and member **Sophia Fung**. Staff support was provided by Society Staff Officers **Blaine Donais**, **Cheri Funston**, and **Frank White**. President Sheppard also participated in bargaining.

Board highlights: March, 2009

The Executive Board met on March 3rd, and discussed the following items.

Recognition: The Board recognized the following for outstanding contributions to the Society since the last meeting:

- ◆ Inergi Local delegate **Mike Armstrong** and wife Crissy for their design and production work on a thank-you card for Energy and Infrastructure Minister George Smitherman, and all Inergi delegates for organizing signatures on the card from their members (see photo)
- ◆ **Alex Saba** and **Joseph Fierro** (OPG Local) for their outstanding work on the budget as members of the Standing Finance Committee
- ◆ Society President **Rod Sheppard** and all those who made up the Society’s “very strong” contingent at the Canadian Nuclear Association conference and trade show from February 25th to 27th

Election: The Board conducts an election before April of each year for three positions on the Executive Committee. In addition to the four Principal Officers and the Staff



Joseph Fierro (OPG Local), elected to Executive Committee

Manager (non-voting), three “representatives” are elected from among the members of the Board.

In addition to those presently serving—**Tracy Miller** (Vertex), **Keith Rattai** (Hydro One), and **Rob Stanley** (Bruce Power)—**Joseph Fierro** (OPG) was nominated. Mr. Fierro, Mr. Rattai, and Mr. Stanley were elected. Their terms on the Executive Committee are from April 1st, 2009 to March 31st, 2010.

Local VPs: Two new Local Vice Presidents were announced to the Board. Mr. **Edik Zwarenstein** was elected by acclamation to the Vice Presidency of the Ontario Energy Board Local, and Mr. **Jose Freire-Canosa** was elected by acclamation to the Vice Presidency of the Nuclear Waste Management Organization Local. They will take their seats as official members of the Board at the April Board meeting.

External Relations: Society President **Rod Sheppard** reported that he’d attended an event on February 18th sponsored by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. The theme of the event was “Corporate Social Responsibility and Aboriginal Relations.” He also attended the invitation-only “technical briefing,” a private workshop

conducted by Energy and Infrastructure Minister George Smitherman on February 23rd, the day the **Green Energy Act** was announced.

Canadian Nuclear Association: President **Sheppard** attended the 2009 CNA seminar and trade show in Ottawa from February 25th to 27th. Sheppard said he and the 11 other Society reps that had attended had spent their networking time well: “People want to talk to the Society now—we don’t have to go look them up.”

Society reps met the Hon. Lisa Raitt, federal Minister of Natural Resources; Society participants presented the Minister with a gift to thank her for her speech at the Women in Nuclear Conference (see below).

Mr. Sheppard was also a guest panelist at the “CEO student briefing,” an event held in association with the conference. Of the 127 students from across Canada that were registered at the CNA conference, the Society had sponsored 35, paying for their transportation and lodging so they could attend. “It’s a great way to introduce up and coming energy professionals to the industry, and to us as a union,” he said. Sheppard participated with fellow panelists Jim Rippon, President, AMEC NCL; Roger Alexander, VP, Areva NP Canada; Tracy Edwards, Senior System Engineer, Bruce Power; Albert Sweetnam, Executive VP Darlington New Nuclear Project, OPG; and Shayne Smith, CEO, Wardrop Engineering.

Training: VP Member Services Dennis Minello reported that on February 21st and 22nd the Society conducted a course in “basic Society representation” attended by representatives from four locals. On February 25th and 26th a negotiations training session was held for the AMEC NSS Local. On March 25th and 26th the Society will run another one, which representatives of the OPG and IESO locals are expected to attend.

Nuclear women on a roll

February’s Women in Nuclear-Canada conference was the biggest ever.

Canada's nuclear women met the day before the start of the Canadian Nuclear Association conference. Over 140 women (and a few men) participated, with presentations given by 24 WiN-Canada members on covered topics such as 'Splitting the Atom;' 'Regulatory affairs for the mining industry;' 'Handling used fuel after the reactor;' 'Emergency planning,' and more.

Attending for the Society were Shirley Hayes (Bruce Power), Tracy Miller (Vertex), Dianne Mowat (Inergi), and Society Staff Officer Elizabeth Traicus.

In their report to the Executive Board, the Society women noted, "It was great to see women from all aspects of the industry, including a few students who are currently completing their schooling in the areas of the nuclear industry."

In addition to technical information about the industry, some speakers noted upcoming challenges regarding recruitment in the nuclear industry. Several speakers said the members of WiN-Canada could be an important resource for the industry, as talented people need to turn their minds and effort to the task of attracting lots of new people. To help the youth of today become the nuclear adults of tomorrow, they said, WiN Canada could provide such things as leadership, mentoring programs, and much else.

In particular, the Society's women highlighted the following presentations that seem to dovetail nicely with the Society's strategic plans:

- ◆ AREVA Resources Canada recruited 52 per cent of its mining workforce from northern communities—80 percent from First Nations, helping to shore up the sustainability of the communities from which they come. Lines of communication are open to the elders of the community, and programs are provided for children so that mutual respect and understanding will prevail between Areva's mining operations and First Nations.
- ◆ OPG's "emPOWERed Women" helps female employees build a support network and develop their

leadership capabilities. Providing formal education and mentoring, the presenter called it a "grass roots endeavor that is focused on empowering women to take initiative and lead with courage."

The Honourable Lisa Raitt, federal Minister of Natural Resources, was the lunch time speaker, advising the women present to, "Take the opportunities that are given to you to be role models in our professions and, most importantly, be good to each other."

"Mix and match" pension benefits legal: Everyone knows but the Employer

Members of the IESO Local nearing retirement are still being denied "mix and match" pension benefits, even though the Financial Services Commission of Ontario (FSCO) has confirmed the option is legal.



IESO Local Vice President Scott Travers

Local VP **Scott Travers** has vowed to fight on. It is “very disappointing as the Society has continually pointed out the seriousness of this issue for our members who are retiring,” he said.

“Our collective agreement allows members the flexibility to manage their own risks, and that’s the way it’ll stay.”

The matter has been in dispute since the Local was informed that IESO’s management had sought and received an opinion letter from FSCO. That letter said allowing mixed pension entitlements, based on pre-1987 and post-1986 earnings, was not legal.

IESO management had sought the opinion from FSCO unilaterally, apparently not divulging that the Collective Agreement allowed such benefits, and tried to implement the change through an amendment to the pension brochure. While Management withdrew the brochure amendment, they implemented the change over the Society’s refusal to agree to it. As the unilateral nature of the change violated the collective agreement, the Local grieved.

The change restricts the choices available to Society-represented employees with pre-1987 service. (In 1987, changes to the *Pension Benefits Act* rendered the two periods distinct in their treatment of pensions.) In most Society jurisdictions, prospective pensioners can take portions from the one part of their pension eligibility in commuted value, and pension from the other. Among other things, it allows employees to retire taking a great deal of commuted value, while retaining post-retirement benefits.

While the grievance was in arbitration, the Society wrote FSCO requesting clarification.

All employer pension plans in Ontario must be registered with FSCO. FSCO has the mandate of ensuring that the province’s pension plans comply with the standards set out in the *Pension Benefits Act* (PBA) and regulations.

On February 9th, FSCO’s Deputy Superintendent of pensions wrote Society and IESO counsel rescinding the Commission’s earlier letter, based on submissions both

Parties had made, stating that the Act “ought not to be interpreted to prohibit [the] partial transfers” in question.

Shockingly, IESO management has refused to bring its pension options into conformity with the Collective Agreement; instead, they wrote to FSCO to reiterate their position that “mix and match” should be considered illegal.

“The FSCO has clarified an important question for us,” says Travers. “From the Society perspective ... the current refusal of the IESO to acknowledge [the letter] is totally unreasonable,” he said.

Member drive ups OEB Local participation

A membership drive undertaken at the Ontario Energy Board has significantly boosted Society membership at that Local.

“It seems to me it’s a vote of confidence in the Society,” said Local VP **Edik Zwarenstein**. “Some employees had a wait-and-see attitude, but now that they’ve seen what we can deliver, they’ve joined as full participants in the Local.”

Since the Local settled their first collective agreement (see *Newscast* 2008:05), 46 new members have signed membership cards. This brings the member/non-member ratio up to 94 per cent from its previous 60.

While a majority of OEB employees have always supported the union, as in many new unions there was a significant number that didn’t jump on the bandwagon right away. “We were careful not to exclude them,” said Zwarenstein. “We even had a non-member sitting on our bargaining team.”

Hydro One Local member vying for OSPE Board re-election

Society member **Alourdes Sully** is campaigning to be re-elected to the Board of Directors of the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

"It would be wonderful to have Society members' support," she says.

First elected in 2006, Sully has been active in organizing and participating in OSPE's "political action network," a group of volunteers based in each MPP's riding that has been carrying on advocacy on behalf of Ontario's professional engineers. OSPE has also sponsored receptions at Queen's Park for MPPs and their staffs.

For the next three years I think we need to have a focus on advocacy with the business community. We've had a good program with the government, we know all our MPPs, but what we still need to do is educate the business community. There's still some confusion in business about what OSPE is, and what engineers do.

She has also been active in the Audit and Investment Committee, overseeing OSPE's finances; the Chapter Liaison Committee, which works to improve communications with Professional Engineers Ontario chapters; and the Energy Committee, which, for example, is researching and preparing OSPE's response to the provincial government's **Green Energy Act**. She pushed successfully, she says, to ensure that the Energy Committee include a focus on the need for improvements to electricity infrastructure and energy conservation.

Currently Sully is the only representative of the electricity industry on the OSPE Board. It's important that the industry continue to be represented, she says. "Energy is big news right now. I believe we can do a lot more, working with the government on policy issues, even at the federal level."

Another of Sully's interests is the Women in Engineering Committee, which focuses on issues related to the status of women in the engineering profession. The group is planning a survey this fall on the subject, the "first one since the early 1990s." Women make up only 12 per cent of engineering employment, she says.



Alourdes Sully, at the Trinity Square building in Toronto

She says another potential issue is the concerns raised by a recent Engineers Canada study. According to the "Engineering Labour Market Supply Report" approximately 30 percent of persons working in engineering occupations do not hold engineering degrees. The interim report is available at OSPE website.

Originally from Haiti, Sully immigrated to Canada with her parents when she was 15. She got her engineering degree from l'Université Laval, concentrating on electrical and optical communications systems, and a master's degree in engineering management from l'Université de Sherbrooke. She's worked for Hydro One since 1999, and is currently a senior technical specialist in infrastructure planning for the next generation of the company's telecom architecture.

OSPE is an advocacy organization created to enhance recognition and increase the public profile of Ontario's professional engineers. While it was created jointly by Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) and the Canadian

Society for Professional Engineers (CSPE), it has been entirely independent since 2004.

Four of the positions on OSPE's Board are currently up for election, and six candidates are vying for those positions.

Voting is being conducted by Broadridge, an independent agency, through direct mail and over the internet. Ballotting packages were mailed in mid-March.

Votes must be cast by April 16th.

Society Newscast 2008:07

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