

## News from the Society of Energy Professionals

**Privacy  
trumps  
Employer  
convenience:  
Arbitrator**



The Bruce Power Local's John Earle carried the Canadian Labour Congress flag in the Society/IFPTE contingent in Port Elgin on Labour Day. He's flanked by daughter Kaella and son John, with Oliver Hou (r).

**F**ive days into a sick leave, OPG has no right to collect intrusive private health information, says Arbitrator Brian Etherington. And OPG certainly has no right to threaten one's sick leave for failure to provide it.

"We've established a very important point," said **Peter Tien**, an OPG Local unit director. "The employer has no business allowing its Wellness Department to invade our members' privacy when they're most vulnerable."

Arbitrator Etherington ruled on a grievance filed by the Society over OPG's Major Medical Absence Record (MAR) form.

MAR forms are required of all employees and their physicians when the employee involved is unable to work due to illness or injury. They are required at the fifth day of absence, and are designed to establish that the employee involved is sick and unable to work.

In 2005, however, OPG unilaterally changed the MAR form. Changes included the following:

- ◆ The previous form asked for the employee's consent to her/his physician providing the information solicited by the MAR; the new form contained a very lengthy and broad consent:

*... to the use, collection and release and exchange of personal health information to OPG Health Services in relation to the "current absence," for the purposes of disability management, administering sick leave, and for data analysis to support OPG wellness programs. It also provide[d] for the release of return to work and restrictions information to OPG HR and line managers, and agree[d] to disclosure required to comply with the WSIA and the OHSA. It require[d] the employee to give an open ended consent to the exchange of personal health information without any limitation apart from the notion that it must be related to "current absences," but it [was] no longer limited to the information required on the form itself and [was] extended to several other purposes beyond the administration of sick leave.*

- ◆ The previous form noted that there was no requirement to provide a diagnosis of the illness or injury; the



Photo: David Smiley

Judith Logan, of the Inergi Local, holds the Society/IFPTE banner with husband David Junop in Toronto's Labour Day parade.

replacement said that failure to provide one "may result in the denial of benefits."

- ◆ The replacement requested that the employee inform the Employer if s/he had been "referred for further treatment or assessment."
- ◆ The replacement MAR asked "whether the condition is related to pregnancy."

None of this information was required by the Collective Agreement or for the administration of the absence management system, the Society argued, at the five-day threshold of absence. Instead, what the MAR is supposed to do is establish that the employee was absent due to illness or injury, and not for some other reason. To this end, the MAR is co-signed by the employee's physician.

The Society referred to a MAR form that had been agreed to by both parties in 2003. While not perfect, it solicited none of the offending information. There is no doubt, the Society said, that there can be circumstances in longer illnesses where the Employer might require more information, but this dispute was solely the "first threshold" of establishing that the employee was suffering an illness, and such matters as the physician's diagnosis was certainly not required.

OPG argued that the information solicited was necessary because employees can bank unused sick leave, so very long sick leaves were possible. OPG officials also noted that the information was used for:

- ◆ Assisting the employee involved to get back to work sooner
- ◆ Assisting employees in obtaining correct treatments for their conditions
- ◆ Assisting employees with appropriate accommodations, where necessary, upon return to work
- ◆ Detecting sick leave abuse

Arbitrator Etherington ruled that the systematic collection of such information at the “first threshold” of establishing their claims to sick leave violated their privacy under the Collective Agreement and the *Personal Health Information Protection Act*.

He also ruled the form was “coercive,” threatening employees’ eligibility for sick leaves should they fail to provide the desired consents. He went on to note that OPG still has many tools at its disposal for disability management.

He ordered OPG to stop using the replacement MAR form immediately, and for OPG to “construct” a new form that complied with employees’ privacy rights. In August, Arbitrator Etherington issued a final ruling which resolved some Society/OPG disputes over the details of the new form.

Kate Hughes, a lawyer with the Society’s law firm—Cavalluzzo Hayes Shilton McIntyre & Cornish—argued the case on the Society’s behalf. She says there is now a solid line of cases establishing the importance of privacy rights of employees that cannot be overridden by employers or their sick benefit administrators.

*Unions don’t have to negotiate restrictions. An employer has **no right** to this highly confidential information unless the collective agreement grants the right **and** the employee consents to it. The restriction doesn’t have to be in the collective agreement—it’s at Common Law.*

While the ruling is important in that it confirms that employers have no right to such information as the diagnosis of the illness, it’s groundbreaking in that Arbitrator Etherington also goes further. He says the employer has no right to solicit information about “underlying medical

conditions” or “other relevant medical conditions,” such as depression or diabetes, an all-too-common practice. For administration of short-term sick leave, Hughes says, “It’s just none of the employer’s business. All they need to know [at this point] is that the employee is legitimately ill and entitled to the negotiated short term sick benefits.”

Arbitrator Etherington’s ruling is especially helpful to unions, Hughes says, in that it’s one of the first arbitration rulings to incorporate the privacy principles outlined in Ontario’s 2004 *Personal Health Information Protection Act*. Under the *Act*, she says:

*It’s the **individual** employee’s right to consent. Employers and unions can’t contract out of the provisions of the Act. [E]mployers and their administrators are going to have to accept that at this stage they can’t even **collect** this information, even if they keep it confidential.*

At the hearings involved, Hughes was instructed by Tien and Society Staff Officer **Elizabeth Traicus**.

## Dues “conversion” referendum underway

Society members are voting on a significant change in the Society’s financial structure.

If members approve the measure—in a referendum that began on October 1<sup>st</sup>—the Society’s dues will change to a percentage of base earnings from its present *per capita* (“per head”) rate of \$16 per week. The percentage recommended by the Society’s Finance Committee and approved by the Board is 0.85 per cent of base earnings, or about \$16 per week for an employee whose base pay is \$98,000 per year.

In a communiqué to members on the referendum, Executive Vice President Finance **Bill Jones** said:

*While per capita dues have been useful and fair in an organization whose members were relatively homogenous, we’re a more diverse group now—the*

*same amount for everyone just isn't fair any more. Our lower-paid members will appreciate the break this change would mean for them.*

The last time Society dues increased was in 2003. At the time, it was thought that a dues increase would be necessary by 2007 or 8.

"Our financial policies require us to run a dues increase referendum when we're at the point where we can't balance the expense of the services we provide with the money coming in," said Jones. "We could do it with an increase to \$18 or \$19 per week, but the Finance Committee and I thought the time was right to address the inequities inherent in the per capita rate."

The Finance Committee recommended a percentage rate of 0.85 per cent, says Jones, as that rate would be "revenue-neutral" as compared to the 2008-2009 fiscal year.

Voting is taking place electronically, through the Society web-site. Members who wish to vote need to log on to their personal accounts to do so. Voting will close at noon on Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Members who cannot attend one of the many meetings called to discuss the proposal can ask questions and make comments utilizing the web-site's discussion forum.

### **PO Elections: Sheppard, Totton acclaimed**

Nominations have closed for the upcoming election of Principal Officers to hold office for the period 2010-2013.

There were no nominations for President other than the incumbent, **Rod Sheppard** (Bruce Power), so he will continue in office for another three-year term.

OPG Local Vice President **Lanny Totton** was the only member nominated for the position of Executive Vice President, Finance, so he was acclaimed as well.

There will be elections to determine the positions of EVP Policy and EVP Membership Services. Nominated for the

former are the incumbent, **Leslie Forge** (Hydro One), and IESO Local VP **Scott Travers**. The candidates for the latter are incumbent **Dennis Minello** (OPG) and Vertex Local VP **Tracy Miller**.

Election packages, which will consist of candidates' statements and ballots, will be mailed in early November. The announcement of voting results is expected around 30 days following Society Council, or November 25<sup>th</sup>.

The next *News*cast will include close-ups on the candidates for the contested positions and their platforms.

### **Board highlights: July-September**

The Executive Board met on July 7<sup>th</sup>, August 5<sup>th</sup>, and September 1<sup>st</sup>, dealing with the following items.

**Recognition:** The Board recognized the following for outstanding contributions to the Society:

- ◆ The dozens of members who came out to picket in support of Toronto's CUPE city workers during their strike
- ◆ EVP Finance **Bill Jones**, Senior Financial Officer **Joan Florence**, and Accounting Clerk **David Russell** for preparing for and working with the external auditors
- ◆ Admin staffers **Lisa Van Camp** and **Laura Langmaid** for the work in helping to set up the Hydro One Local Council meeting in June
- ◆ Staff Officer **Elizabeth Traicus** for her work on the OPG MAR grievance (see article, above)
- ◆ IESO Local VP **Scott Travers** for having organized a barbeque for his local, and for his contribution to the Society's "technical group"
- ◆ Vertex Local VP **Tracy Miller** for organizing two Blue Jays nights
- ◆ Admin staffer **Laura Langmaid** for her work in organizing the Society's charity golf tournament
- ◆ All those who attended the charity golf tournament
- ◆ Hydro One unit director **Michelle Byck-Johnston** and Society Staff Officer **Matthew Kellway** for their efforts in promoting issues of aboriginal rights in the Society



**On September 18th, the Hydro One Local hosted a BBO and get-together at the Hydro One headquarters at Trinity Square. Members of several locals attended, as well as Society officers and staff. EVP Membership Services Dennis Minello (apron) and EVP Finance Bill Jones (cap) are in the foreground.**

- ◆ All those who served as delegates to the 56<sup>th</sup> annual IFPTE Convention (see p. 8), with special recognition to Vertex Local VP **Tracy Miller** for her work promoting a women's committee for the IFPTE

**Society Council:** The Board did a number of things to prepare for Society Council, including:

- ◆ Approving an agenda for Council
- ◆ Approved changes to the Bylaws that, subject to Council approval, give the Board the right to appoint delegates to the triannual IFPTE Convention

**Strategic Planning:** In accordance with the Society Policy and Procedure on Strategic Planning, the Board approved recommendations of Executive Vice President Policy **Leslie Forge**, setting as "priority objectives" for the 2010-11 fiscal year:

- ◆ Internal organizing for the purpose of creating solidarity within and across bargaining unit boundaries, i.e. a "solidarity project"
- ◆ Strategic and coordinated collective bargaining
- ◆ A significant external organizing initiative, **including initiatives that facilitate or overcome obstacles**

**to the organizing of professional and supervisory employees**

◆ **A significant policy and external relations initiative to shape the government's sector policy in the interests of this union**

Wording in bold italics indicates changes from the priority objectives approved by Council for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

**USW 8782:** The Board approved a donation of \$10,000 to the United Steelworkers of America local on strike at US Steel in Jarvis, Ontario, near the Nanticoke GS.

**CLC Summer School:** The Board approved funding for **Michelle Byck-Johnston** (Hydro One), **Tracy Miller** (Vertex), and **Shirley Hayes** (Bruce Power) to attend the Canadian Labour Congress summer school (see p. 11).

**Hardship Fund:** The Board agreed to write off nearly \$40,000 in bad loans from the Society's Hardship Fund. The Hardship Fund was created with donations—not dues—around the Hydro One strike of 2005, and the loans were from that period. The Board agreed that while the write-off was necessary for auditing purposes (accounts receivable must be written off after a certain period), payback of the loans would continue to be pursued, up to and including the garnisheeing of wages.

## Renewable power: Society says, Why not OPG?

Ontario Power Generation is well-positioned to be an innovator in renewable power generation, but is being left out of the picture, say Society leaders.

"It seems obvious to us that OPG is well positioned to meet multiple critical public policy objectives," said Society President **Rod Sheppard**, "reducing greenhouse gas emissions, spawning green industry and green jobs here in Ontario, and providing Ontario ratepayers and Ontario industry with affordable electricity rates."

Sheppard's remarks were made on September 9<sup>th</sup> in a presentation to the Standing Committee on Govern-

ment Agencies of the Ontario Legislature. The Committee was looking into the operations of OPG with a view to reporting its observations and findings to the Legislative Assembly. The Committee also heard from OPG, Atikokan Mayor Dennis Brown, the Organization of CANDU Industries, the Canadian Gas Association, and the Lac Seul First Nation.

Sheppard was accompanied by OPG Local VP **Lanny Totton** and UDs **Joseph Fierro**, **Tony Kokus**, and **Alex Saba**.

Noting that OPG operates more than half of the Province's nuclear capacity and virtually all of its hydroelectric resources, Sheppard discussed the company's enormous procurement advantages and the proximity of its assets to transmission resources and shoreline and offshore wind potential. He said OPG is "well positioned" to be a platform for green energy and a creator of green supply chains and jobs for Ontario.

Noting that the previous week the government had announced the impending closures of four coal-fired generation units, Sheppard decried the "silence" of the government on other efforts to green the electricity industry, including:

- ◆ The lack of a firm commitment to using biomass fuels in the current coal-fired stations, especially Atikokan
- ◆ Subsequent to the recent announcement of a delay in nuclear new-build, the silence on new-build and refurbishment of current nuclear assets

Sheppard said "no serious plan" to address global warming would overlook the role of nuclear power, especially in Ontario. "We need a nuclear plan and OPG needs to be central to that plan, he said, particularly if "we ever hope to decarbonize ground transportation with ... electric and plug-in hybrid technologies" and if "we ever hope to recover a manufacturing base here in Ontario."

Sheppard also noted that the government has demonstrated "a very uncompromising commitment" to building new natural gas-fired plant in Ontario.

**Are we committed to emission-free nuclear power to provide most of our baseload energy, or are we not?**

*Thousands of megawatts of gas-fired capacity have been built in recent years, and there are literally thousands more megawatts of gas-fired generation planned. Questions arise: Are we committed to emission-free nuclear power to provide most of our*

*baseload energy, or are we not? Are we committed to a future without fossil fuel generation, or are we not? Where does OPG sit in any of these scenarios? Why doesn't the government*

*use OPG as an instrument to develop a very significant wind industry here in Ontario? Would it not be perfectly consistent with climate change policy objectives? Would that not be perfectly consistent with the commitment to affordable energy for Ontario ratepayers? Would it also not be consistent with the commitment to build a green economy with green jobs?*

OPG plays a vital role in Ontario's economic and social well-being, he said. "It is an agency whose potential is still not fully realized.

The Society recommended:

- ◆ OPG's regulated assets should continue to be funded properly through Ontario Energy Board rate hearings;
- ◆ Connection of OPG hydro projects to transmission should be on the same basis as wind enabler connections;
- ◆ OPG should be given a standard hydroelectric energy supply agreement (HESA, a form of power purchase agreement) to build new hydroelectric plants;
- ◆ OPG should be encouraged to build windmills and pumped storage stations to allow low-priced power at night, and generate at higher prices in the daytime;
- ◆ Excess wind generation should be curtailed to avoid the spilling of water;

- ◆ OPG should be directed to continue with its biomass work;
- ◆ OPG should refurbish Pickering B and Darlington A;
- ◆ OPG should build a new nuclear plant at the Darlington site; and
- ◆ finally, OPG should deal with the demographic issues and try to better engage its employees.

The Society got some support from Opposition members of the Committee John Yakabuski and Peter Tabuns. Yakabuski decried the "good economics" of dispatching \$0.15/KWh wind power while spilling \$0.04/KWh water. But Tabuns got at the heart of the question the Society was getting at:

*The thing I've always found extraordinarily strange is that the government has not used OPG to build renewable energy. My sense of the technical ability that exists at OPG-Hydro One, as a matter of fact-is that it's a very substantial asset for the province as a whole, and if it was given the opportunity to build more renewable power in this province, because in fact the hydroelectric facilities are one of the leading world examples of renewable technology, that you could really go to town.*

Tabuns also worried whether it was wise to build thousands of megawatts of natural gas-fired generation when it seems likely natural gas will be in short supply soon.

The Society welcomed Tabuns's points. Fierro noted that the increasing use of natural gas for electricity production will tighten competition for supply with homeowners who heat with it, driving up prices in winter.

"It was a very successful appearance," said Sheppard. "It's important to keep the government on the hot seat where OPG is concerned. They're not making the best use of a very valuable public asset."

The Society's team received thanks from the committee for its "informative presentation" and "strong technical responses to [committee members'] questions." Mr. Yakabuski was quoted in the next day's *Toronto Sun*.

A video of the Society's presentation can be found on the Society web-site.



On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, Society and IFPTE officials and staff handed out leaflets at the headquarters of Onex in support of IFPTE Local 2001, who were in bargaining at Spirit Aerosystems in Wichita, Kansas. (The two parties settled three days later.) Pictured (l to r) are IFPTE staffer Omar Latif; the Society's Richard Long, Bill Jones, Keith Rattai, Tracy Miller, and Rod Sheppard; and IFPTE staffer Anna Liu.

## Bruce Power Local ratifies contract extension

A one-year extension of the Bruce Power Local's five-year contract has been approved in a membership ratification vote.

Ninety-eight per cent of those voting voted in favour of the extension, first agreed to in June (see **NewsFLASH** 2009:01). Of the 880+ members of the Local, 534 cast ballots.

"The vote was an overwhelming endorsement of the direction and leadership of both the union and the CEO," said Local VP **Rob Stanley**.

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The contract was slated to end this December. It has now been extended to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010, with a three per cent increase in wages effective January 1<sup>st</sup>.

## IFPTE Convention: Sheppard elected; Junemann, Shearon re-elected

Society President **Rod Sheppard** has been elected one of the two Canadian Area Vice Presidents of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE).

Sheppard's election came at the IFPTE's 56<sup>th</sup> triannual convention, held in early August in Las Vegas, Nevada. It was the first IFPTE convention since the Society hosted one in Toronto in 2006.

"The Canadian area is the fastest growing area of the IFPTE," said Sheppard, "and I hope to make sure it stays that way."

Misty Hughes-Newman, of Local 161 (Telecommunications Employees Association of Manitoba) is the other Canadian Area VP.

### IFPTE Officers

Both IFPTE President **Gregory Junemann** and Secretary-Treasurer **Paul Shearon** were re-elected to three-year terms of office. They ran unopposed.

Hydro One Local VP **Keith Rattai** seconded Shearon's nomination, saying it was a "great honour" to be doing so.

*Paul, you were an inspiration to us on the [Hydro One] picket lines in 2005, and you continue to demonstrate the right place for you is right here as Secretary-Treasurer.*

### Energy Forum

In anticipation of Convention, the Society arranged for an "energy forum" to take place, inviting IFPTE delegates



interested in that sector to get together to brainstorm around common issues.

Attendance was gratifyingly good. While IFPTE Local 20, professionals at Pacific Gas & Electric in California, was certainly expected to be there, a surprisingly disparate group of delegates attended, including the Telecommunications Employees of Manitoba, and even the U.S. National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

Fighting contracting out was a universal theme. Green energy was also a hot topic. Those present expressed hope that the sector would meet again at the next convention.

### Women's Forum

The thing that undoubtedly caused the most convention "buzz" was the effort undertaken by the Society's female delegates, along with the women from Locals 195 (New Jersey public employees) and 2001 (Boeing engineers) to "re-invigorate" the IFPTE's Women's Committee.

**Tracy Miller**, one of the leaders of the Society's women's committee ("Sisters in Society"), says SiS found that, though the IFPTE has a formal women's committee, it had been inactive for "several years." "They did a study, but once it was finished they didn't leave that next Convention with any action plan to move forward."

So Local 160 sponsored a motion calling for the reactivation of the IFPTE Women's Committee, and the three local women's groups set about organizing a Women's Forum for Convention, assisted by IFPTE staff, who arranged for space and guest speakers.

*The forum was tremendously successful—there were over 75 in attendance. It was something people really got engaged in, a lot of energy. So one of the other forums the next day was cancelled and we continued [the Women's Forum] on a second night. It was sort of an open-mic dialogue about issues about kick-starting things, moving forward, and supporting our motion.*

The resolution eventually was approved by Convention, and was provided for in the IFPTE budget. Miller says she

expects the three active women's groups will be meeting annually, to "populate the Committee and discuss how we're going to form an international women's committee." She says she doesn't expect any discussion at the next Convention about invigorating the women—"we'll be very vigorous."

### Society resolutions

The Society went to Convention sponsoring three resolutions, asking for international support for them. They were:

- ◆ A motion to re-invigorate the IFPTE Women's Committee (as above)
- ◆ A motion to begin a process resulting in a change to the IFPTE's name
- ◆ That industry sector-specific meetings be scheduled at all IFPTE Conventions

All three motions were passed, though the motion on the name change was amended to stipulate that no name change would be a possible outcome of the process.

At the Society's request, the IFPTE Executive Council agreed to review all current and past policy documents to ensure the language reflects the IFPTE's international character, incorporating Canadian references where appropriate.

## D'Andrea elected Director of Unit 1

Pickering's **Andy d'Andrea** has been elected Director of Unit 1.

In a three-way election, d'Andrea received the majority of the votes cast. The results were:

Andy d'Andrea	90
Khalid Malik	49
Magda Naguib	34

Unit 1 came open when **Yi-bin Shi** stepped down, having accepted a position in another unit. Unit 1 consists primarily of members in Pickering A and B engineering, finance, and performance improvement organizations.

## OPG Local settles “confidentiality” issue in high-MRPH investigations

The Society and OPG have arrived at a near-complete resolution of Management’s practice of attaching “OPG confidentiality” to health and safety investigations.

“We’re sticking to our rights as full participants in health and safety processes,” says OPG Local unit director **Tony Kokus**. “It’s outrageous that we’ve been denied access to crucial documents that help us represent our members.”

OPG claims that investigations into “high MRPH” (maximum reasonable potential for harm) incidents take place in a cloak of solicitor/client privilege, given that they sometimes result in charges being laid against OPG and/or its employees. To that end, Management refused to divulge the results of those investigations to most Society representatives.



Photo: Michelle Byck Johnston

**On August 17<sup>th</sup>, the Society sponsored its first annual golf tournament. Twenty-two foursomes participated, raising \$5,400 for the Children’s Wish Foundation. Pictured are (l to r) David Romanowicz (OPG), Janet Sakauye (OEB), and Jorge Hurtado (Cavaluzzo Hayes).**

Kokus notes that, in accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, health and safety issues are jointly managed by the employer and the union. “The law gives us the right to equal participation; those documents are just as much ours as theirs.”

Such reports have been distributed to Joint Health and Safety Committee members, which include Society representatives, but those representatives have been told not to distribute them to other responsible Society officials. To resolve the dispute, OPG has agreed that normally “Union elected representatives, Union Legal Counsel and Union Staff Officers” can also have access.

Management has reserved the right to withhold investigation reports in cases where prosecution is likely to ensue. The Society has reserved the right to grieve any individual cases that might arise.

“We’re either equal partners, or we’re not,” Kokus says. “If we’re not, then we shouldn’t be participating.”

The OPG Local was represented in negotiations by Kokus, unit directors **Joseph Fierro** and **David Romanowicz**, and Society Staff Officer **André Kolompar**.

## Bruce Power: Off-duty phone calls issue settled

The Bruce Power Local has resolved a long-standing irritant, and won a new benefit for their members in the bargain.

Members who are called on business when they are not on duty or on-call will now get an hour’s pay for every hour in which they receive such calls. If the calls occur between midnight and 6 a.m., they’ll get overtime pay.

“It’s a win-win,” said Local VP **Rob Stanley**. “It settles a long-standing issue currently not covered in the Collective Agreement, while providing Bruce Power with an agreed upon, structured process to manage this issue.”

Stanley says the number of calls his members in engineering and maintenance were getting at home was on the

increase due to the application of stricter policies and tighter timeframes to complete work on the back-shifts.

Though the collective agreement had provisions for members who are “on-call,” it was silent on employees getting calls when they were supposed to be entirely off duty.

Under the settlement, phone calls to Society members who are off-duty must be approved by a shift manager or designate before they can be made. Calls made about non-operational issues, for example, lost keys, or an offer of overtime hours, do not attract this payment.

The agreement is intended as a pilot—it expires on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010.

The grievance out of which the agreement arose had been scheduled for a second day of arbitration hearings; instead, settlement discussions bore fruit.

## **CLC School: Building inter-generational empathy and skills**

*By Tracy Miller*

On Sunday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2009 the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Summer School for the Ontario Region began with over 100 union members gathering to attend various week-long courses. The Sunday evening plenary session was kicked off by a welcome from Kelly Hayes, the Director of the Ontario Region Office of the CLC and by Barbara Byers, 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!

X, Y, or Boomer—Talking Between the Generations in the Union—was facilitated by Erin Harrison (National Representative for Youth – CLC Staff) and Peter Boyle (retired steelworker from the Kingston area and past President of the Kingston District Labour Council). There were nine participants, from the following unions: Canadian Office & Professional Employees Union (London), Canadian Union of Public Employees (Guelph), Public Service Alliance of Canada (Toronto and Trenton), Telecommunications Work-

ers Union (Alberta) and the Society of Energy Professionals/IPFTE Local 160 (Toronto).

The following objectives were set out at the beginning of the week:

- ◆ Increasing awareness of the needs and realities of the members of different generations in the union and the workplace
- ◆ Building comfort and skills for engaging in meaningful cross-generational dialogue
- ◆ Exploring how the union might respond to the values of the different generations in their midst, and share perspectives on how union culture can continue to adapt to meet the needs of each generation
- ◆ Knowing better the interests, values, and experiences across the generations
- ◆ Increasing empathy for each generation
- ◆ Interacting better with members from all generations in new ways
- ◆ Building an inclusive and vibrant union while becoming advocates for cultural change

In today’s workforce there are four generations—Traditionalists (1922-1943), Boomers (1943-1960), Gen-Xers (1960-1980) and the Millennials (1981-2000). Including the instructors, our class was made up of five Boomers, three Gen-Xers, and three Millennials. A great emphasis was placed on understanding each generation, the influences on these generations, and the myths and misconceptions of each generation.

The course was heavily focused on small group discussion and presentations back to the main class in a variety of different tasks. These small group exercises were done both within one’s own generation and with an inter-generational mix. We had a lot of opportunity to learn from each other and gain a better understanding of how each of us relates to the different generations.

In order for the labour movement to grow (both in size and density) and remain meaningful, we need to continue to find ways to bridge the gaps between the generations

so we can work together. There is no doubt we will face difficult times ahead—we need all of our members (past, present, and future) to relate to our movement/causes/issues in order to be successful.

## **New modules for Society web-site, and Sisters, too**

The Society web-site is becoming more interactive!

Several new features have been added or are near-launch for Society members' use and enjoyment. They include:

- ◆ A module that can be used for voting in Society elections and referenda
- ◆ A "bulletin board" feature that can be used as a discussion forum, especially for elections and referenda
- ◆ A "Society Deals" feature for members easily and conveniently to benefit from Society discounts,

events, and membership programs—available on or before October 27<sup>th</sup>

- ◆ A "Society Store" where members can purchase Society branded items—expected to launch on or before November 1<sup>st</sup>

Members must be logged on to their web accounts in order to use any of these modules.

The voting module and bulletin board are in use for the current dues conversion referendum (see article above). The discussion forum can be an especially useful tool for Society members in remote locations, as it gives them easy access to Society leaders during important events, provided they have internet access.

On October 8<sup>th</sup>, Sisters in Society, the Society's women's group, launched their own section of the web-site. Members can find it in the red menu on the bottom-left of the home page.

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