

June 29, 2007

Hydro One deal ratified

Beginning a new era?

Members of the Hydro One Local have ratified a new five-year deal.

The deal was reached on May 31st in two-party bargaining. Bargaining team members recommended it unanimously to the Local's members.

"It's a strong show of support from the membership," said Local VP **Keith Rattai**, "and it gives us new hope that we've turned a corner in our relationship with Hydro One management. They seem sincere in their desire to make a better work environment, and this agreement could be a good beginning."

The vote was 559 in favour, out of 621 votes cast. Turnout was over 77 per cent. The walk-in vote was conducted in 13 meetings from Thunder Bay to Ottawa to London, from June 11th to June 19th. Mail-in ballots were required by noon today, and the vote was counted shortly thereafter.

The agreement is for the period April 1st, 2008 to March 31st, 2013; however, both Parties will apply to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for early termination of the current agreement, so that the new one can replace it as of July 1st. (Employers and Unions cannot agree to terminate current provisions without Labour Board approval.)

Key to resolution of the contract was resolution of a series of grievances and an unfair labour practice



Keith Rattai, Sonia Pylyshyn, John Cameron, and Lynn Andrews (seated)

complaint filed by the Society following the 2005 strike. Many of these disputes involved the Company's removal of 60 Society-represented employees

from their roles, and the moving of some 80 positions outside the Society bargaining unit. Settlement of the collective agreement resolves all those matters.

Employees who were removed from role will be offered voluntary severance with a package. Those who wish to stay will be offered an equivalent position by a Joint Hydro One-Society team. Employees who do not accept such offers will receive selection priority for two years for vacancies for which they are deemed qualified or qualifiable.

To deal with the jurisdiction issues, Hydro One will increase the cohort of Society-represented positions to 20 per cent all regular Hydro One employees by the end of the fourth year of the contract, and to 25 per cent by the end of the fifth year. Even if PWU and MCP (management) numbers remain as is, this would leave the Local with at least 1,042 members by 2013, more than were in the unit previous to the 2005 strike.

"There's a lot of work to be done in the transmission industry," said Rattai, "and Hydro One has to hire. We're confident we'll be reaching at least the numbers we've agreed to."

A joint problem-solving committee, the operations of which will be overseen by the Presidents of Hydro One and the Society, will monitor the progress of these commitments.

Wages will increase 3.0 per cent in each of the first three years of the agreement (2008-10, and 2.5 per cent in the

last two (2011-12). A cost-of-living allowance will be in effect for the last three years (2010-2012). In addition, a new salary progression plan will replace the current performance pay system; employees will automatically progress to the next step of a new system of salary bands, unless they are held back by management for performance problems.

The Hydro One Local went on strike for 105 days in 2005, largely over the Employer's demand that employees accept a two-tier wage, benefit, and pension system for new hires. The relationship between the parties following the strike continued to be difficult, to the extent that in December, 2006, the Legislative Standing Committee on Government Agencies recommended that Hydro One make efforts to improve labour relations and employee morale.

"It's historic, the first two-party settlement the Local's achieved since the break-up of Ontario Hydro," said Society President **Andrew Müller**, "It reinforces for me the importance of taking a multi-faceted approach to collective bargaining." He gave credit to the Society's government and public relations strategies, run in support of the Hydro One Local, advocating for better labour relations at the company.

The Hydro One Local bargaining team included Local VP **Keith Rattai**, unit directors **John Cameron** and **Lynn Andrews**, and Society Staff Officers **Jim Bell** and **Sonia Pylyshyn**.

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