

PRESIDENT'S BULLETIN

OPG Salaries - The Rest of the Story

The newspaper and media stories running today about OPG salaries miss critical information that provides a historical perspective on electricity generation in Ontario. While the actual data on which the media reports are based is not available, we do know what's happened in Ontario's electricity system concerning staff levels, the lack of new hires and overtime.

The numbers tell a clear story of the destruction of the province's electricity workforce since restructuring began with the NDP government in the early 1990's – significant staff reductions, few new hires and a dependence on aging workers having to work longer hours to get the job done.

- In 1991, the number of PWU members in regular jobs at Ontario Hydro was 19,114. When the membership data from 2002/2003 of the Ontario Hydro successors is combined, the current regular membership in those companies is 13,060 or 68% of what it was in 1991.
- During that same time, electricity for the province produced by Ontario Hydro in 1991 and its successors in 2003 has increased by over 12%.
- Not only has the number of PWU members in the system seen a major decline, the members remaining are considerably older (48 years old on average now compared to 38 years old in 1991) with significantly more service (25 years+ now compared to 11.4 years in 1991).
- Incomplete data shows overtime payments for PWU members in these companies have increased by more than 200% since 1991.

If there's anything to be really concerned about it's the disaster just waiting to happen from a combination of inadequate staffing of Ontario's electricity sector and the current government's coal shut down policy (the real reason for the OPG loss last year).

Other aspects of costs have been negatively impacted by the cut backs as evidenced by the recent Pickering review panel's findings that in-house expertise at OPG could have significantly reduced over runs associated with rehabilitation work. Simply put, contracting out has not been an effective solution.

While the PWU awaits the release of the actual data, we will continue to ensure the real history of the province's electricity system is explained.

Don MacKinnon
President
Power Workers' Union

