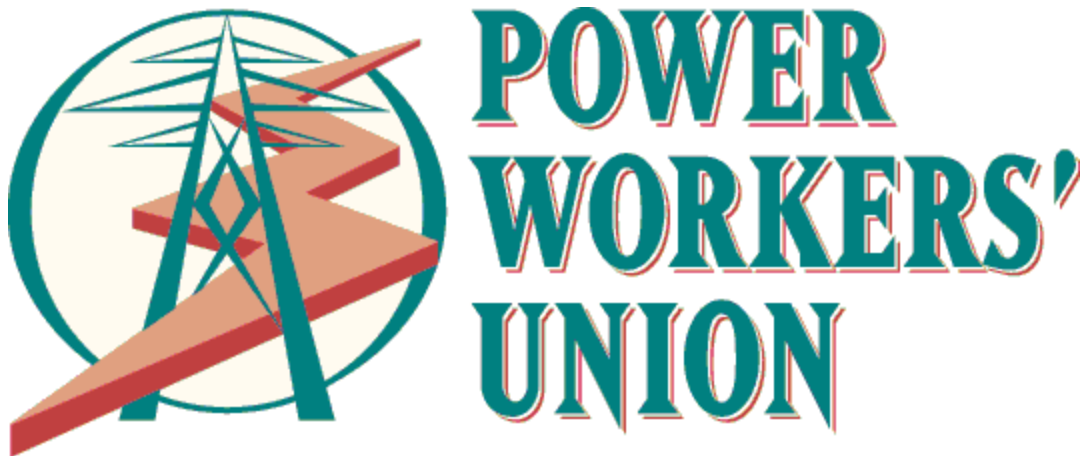




Newsletter July 2013



L to R: Don MacKinnon (President), Bob Walker (Sector 1 Vice President), Brad Carnduff (Sector 2 Vice President) and Mel Hyatt (Sector 3 Vice President)

During the week of June 24th, the Power Workers' Union held its election convention at the Hilton Suites in Markham for its executive officers: the President and the three sector Vice Presidents. Don MacKinnon was re-elected as president, Bob Walker was acclaimed as Sector 1 Vice President, Brad Carnduff was re-elected as Sector 2 Vice President and Mel Hyatt was re-elected as Sector 3 Vice President. As part of the conven-

tion, each candidate was given ten minutes to speak to the delegates. In this newsletter, we've included the remarks made by Don MacKinnon.

Let me start by saying how proud I am to have served as your President for the past 13 years and to thank you for the tremendous support you have shown for your Union and for me personally over that time.

Until 13 years ago when our former PWU President announced he would be resigning immediately to take a job with Ontario Power Generation, I had no designs on becoming President of the PWU.

I offered up my name at that time because I was uniquely experienced, prepared and positioned to help restore PWU membership confidence in their Union. At that time, I had already been Vice President for 11 years, I knew the issues facing PWU members, I had already led many bargaining committees through successful rounds of negotiations, I had an extensive background in worker health and safety, I had developed good relationships with the Vice Presidents and Chief Stewards from all parts of the membership, I had gained an in depth understanding of PWU policies, I knew and had worked with all of the staff of the Union, I knew their particular responsibilities, their skills and their value.

Soon after taking office, at the request of many PWU members, I proposed a review of our Executive Officer election procedures and we commissioned Gord Wilson, former President of the Ontario Federation of Labour, to engage our membership across the province and to make recommendations to reform the PWU electoral process to be more inclusive of the membership.

That led to the process whereby members in each unit elect delegates to represent them at the election convention. Prior to the process we have today, the election of Executive Officers was left exclusively to our Chief Stewards.

As an elected delegate, you have a big responsibility to the PWU membership—you will elect the people who will lead them through the next 4 years—4 years over which the Union will face some of the most difficult issues in our history. I know you will be thinking of the needs of all PWU members, their families and their future when you cast your vote on their behalf.

During the time I have served as your President, even though we faced a host of challenges from aggressive employers and governments, we have consistently bargained wage increases above the rate of inflation, collective agreements that have provided PWU members with the longest-running, sustained improvements to real income and standard of living in modern history. This achievement is unmatched in the union movement and it has come from strong leadership, good planning, teamwork and solidarity, backed up by a strong organization.

Over those 13 years, benefit packages have been steadily improved, employment security provisions have been stronger than ever in our history even in the face of plant closures, and pensions have been protected through one serious financial crisis after another. We can all take pride in this record.

Our governments should share similar goals, but unfortunately sometimes, they lose their creativity and optimism. Sometimes, they lose track of their purpose and attack, rather than promote, the rights and standard of living of the very people that set the pace for progress: the working middle class.

We are seeing those attacks from the Harper government in the form of Bills C-377 and C-525. These bills are designed to weaken unions financially and to make it much more difficult for workers to form a union in the first place.

The provincial Tories have a similar agenda – they promote so-called "Right to Work" legislation which means individuals could opt out of pay-

ing union dues even after the majority of a workforce has decided to unionize. They say workers should be able to access the benefits negotiated by the union but should not have to pay dues. They go even further to say that employers should not be allowed to deduct dues from a member's pay to remit to the union.

Again, these are tactics to weaken your ability to collectively bargain improvements to your standard of living. They will ask you to vote for them and support their attacks on your Union. They will tell you that somehow, you will be better off. We will caution PWU members and make sure they know these are not the "Red Tories" that have formed right/centre governments in the past. These are right-wing hardliners the likes of which are relatively new to Canadian politics.

Make no mistake: working people still have power in their vote and the PWU will do its part to ensure that voters understand the coming threats.

When it comes to electricity policy, we have a variety of issues. We continue to deal with the recurring issue of distribution rationalization, merchant transmission, offshoring and outsourcing. We will not let up on our pressure for conversion of the coal stations, nuclear refurbishments, and nuclear new build. More often than not, the policy problems we face with governments and political parties come from their naivety and their acute lack of knowledge of the electricity industry.

They often fall prey to powerful, well funded lobbyists who sell approaches that sound nice to the uninitiated but turn out to be seriously flawed and difficult to recover from once adopted.

For many years we have worked hard to influence the debate on electricity policy in a positive way. I meet with as many people and organizations as I possibly can—including decision makers in government, the various political parties, bureaucracies, energy companies, unions, government agencies, industry associations and environmental organizations—usually

in the evening, every week, month after month, to put forward workable strategies that will support our membership's needs.

These same relationships can become invaluable at other times, when we run into a particularly tough round of bargaining, or bad legislation is being contemplated, or one of our employers needs a new financial arrangement to be successful.

I can tell you that even though we face difficulties on many fronts, your union is better prepared than it has ever been to effectively represent the needs of our members.

We are financially stronger than we have ever been.

We have grown to 48 separate bargaining units.

Soon after I was elected, we initiated multiple layers of training for literally thousands of Stewards, Principal Stewards, Chief Stewards and Health and Safety Representatives and, more recently, for new members. This investment in our future is already paying off for all of us.

Our training initiative has not only helped to ensure that our members will receive the best possible representation from their Union but it has become a key part of our succession planning and is helping us recruit and prepare the PWU leaders of tomorrow.

At any given time we are participating in approximately 40 regulatory proceedings that have the potential to negatively impact our members or their employers. No other union comes close to the PWU in terms of these types of activities.

We were recently successful in a court appeal to an Ontario Energy Board decision that had cut \$147 million from OPG's rate order.

We were successful in our recent intervention in the Supreme Court of Canada appeal to the Irving Pulp random mandatory drug and alcohol

testing decision. This will put us in good stead to defend against the development of unreasonable policies that would invade the privacy of our members in our workplaces.

I should mention as well that for over 30 years the PWU has pushed for the recognition of PWU members Workplace Safety and Insurance Board claims related to Agent Orange exposures and I am very pleased that a recent report from an independent panel commissioned by the Ontario government has helped us take another huge step toward securing compensation benefits for our members and retirees who have long suffered the effects of those exposures.

In closing, I would like to thank you again for your commitment to your Union and your fellow PWU members. We will face many more difficulties and today I ask you once again to stand with me for four more years to face them together.