

June 2014

**POWER WORKERS' UNION NEWSLETTER**



# POWERWORKS

## **Kathleen Wynne and the Liberals Win a Surprising Majority**



Ontario's June 12 election results were a surprise to most, considering that only a couple of the polls predicted such a strong showing from the Liberals - or such a poor showing from the Progressive Conservatives.

The Liberals took 58 seats (up 10) while the PCs dropped 9 to 28, and the NDP stayed at 21.

There is no doubt that the PCs suffered from their harsh austerity agenda, their attacks on unions and Tim Hudak's image. When the results were in, Mr. Hudak announced that he would resign as party leader as soon as a replacement could be selected.

The NDP disappointed many of their loyal supporters by bringing down the government on an unexpectedly progressive Liberal budget that included a new Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. Now, the NDP has moved from a position of power in a minority government to the sidelines in a Liberal-controlled Legislature.

Premier Wynne was able to distance herself and her team from the McGuinty government and the gas plant scandal enough to allow voters to believe that, even though they were voting for the incumbent Liberals, they were voting for change.

Premier Wynne now plans to recall the legislature on July 2nd to reintroduce her May budget, which had formed the basis of her party's platform.

As always, the PWU will do our very best to ensure that our members' issues regarding electricity sector policies, labour strategies and legislation that impacts working people are brought to the attention of Premier Wynne and her government in an effective manner.

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### **PWU Members Win Labour Council Award**



On June 3rd, the PWU members at PowerStream were honoured by the Toronto and York Region Labour Council with a community leadership award recognizing their contributions during the Christmas 2013 ice storm. Pictured above, left to right, are Michelle Ruggeri (Lead Steward, Customer Service), Steve Fowler (Lead Steward, Meter Reading), Paul Thistle (Lead Steward, System Control) and Todd Dion (Chief Steward).

As the ice storm made its way across Southern Ontario on the 21st and 22nd of December, more than 92,000 PowerStream customers were affected. While some outages lasted only a few hours, some families were without power into the New Year. The PowerStream Customer Service team worked 12-hour shifts until New Year's Day to communicate with residents, business owners and property management companies about what the company was doing, when power would be restored and where community warming centres could be found. Customer Service Representatives fielded over 185,000 back-to-back phone calls in addition to responding to customer emails and keeping in touch with the Control Room and workers out in the field. Many linespersons worked 16-hour days right into the second week of January.

The PWU is affiliated to the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, which includes hundreds of local

unions representing 195,000 working men and women.

Over 350 PWU members work at PowerStream, a community-owned energy company that provides electricity distribution and related services to more than 360,000 customers residing or owning a business in communities located immediately north of Toronto and in Central Ontario. It is jointly owned by the Cities of Barrie, Markham and Vaughan.

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## **New Requirements for Mandatory Basic Health and Safety Training**



Effective July 1, 2014, Ontario employers will have to ensure that all workers and supervisors have completed a basic occupational health and safety awareness training program. The first of its kind in North America, Regulation 297/13 mandates basic safety awareness training for all Ontario workers and supervisors.

The genesis of this regulation was the tragic workplace incident on Christmas Eve, 2009 when four construction workers in Toronto lost their lives and another was seriously injured when the high-rise scaffold they were using collapsed. The Ministry of Labour subsequently appointed an expert advisory panel to review Ontario's occupational health and safety system and one of its 46 recommendations was mandatory health and safety awareness training for all Ontario workers and supervisors.

For many years, the PWU has advocated for mandatory health and safety training for all new employees. We have also partnered with Rob Ellis in his emotional push for safety orientation training for young workers. Rob lost his 18-year-old son to a workplace accident on his second day on the job.

Employers can choose to use their own programs or the training program developed by the [Ontario Ministry of Labour](#). The Ministry has also developed tools for employers to assess their current programs for gaps, to develop or modify templates for keeping records of the required training and to check what workers and supervisors know about the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. Local Health and Safety Committees need to be involved in the development of training programs. The [Workers Health and Safety Centre](#) is also able to provide training that meets the requirements of this regulation.

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## Heat Illness Can Be Deadly



Every year, thousands of workers become sick from exposure to heat, and some even die.

### *What is heat illness?*

The body normally cools itself by sweating. During hot weather, especially with high humidity, sweating isn't enough. Body temperature can rise to dangerous levels if precautions are not taken such as drinking water frequently and resting in the shade or air conditioning. Heat illnesses range from heat rash and heat cramps to heat exhaustion and heat stroke. Heat stroke requires immediate medical attention and can result in death.

### *How can heat illness be prevented?*

Employers should establish a complete heat illness prevention program to prevent heat illness. Workers new to the heat or those that have been away from work and are returning can be most vulnerable to heat stress and they must be acclimatized.

To prevent heat related illness and fatalities:

- Drink water every 15 minutes, even if you are not thirsty.
- Rest in the shade to cool down.
- Wear a hat and light-coloured clothing.
- Learn the signs of heat illness and what to do in an emergency.
- Keep an eye on fellow workers.
- "Easy does it" on your first days of work in the heat. You need to get used to it.

If workers are new to working in the heat or returning from more than a week off, and for all workers on the first day of a sudden heat wave, implement a work schedule to allow them to get used to the heat gradually.

## PWU Representatives Attend National Safety Council Meeting



Leadership Advocacy  
National Safety Council  
RESEARCH  
Education

In late May, members of the PWU Provincial Health, Safety and Environment Committee attended the Spring Meeting of the Labour Division of the US-based National Safety Council in St. Louis. Chief Stewards Ron Callaghan (Sector 3, Unit 16), Jeff Parnell (Sector 2, Unit 12) and Health and Safety Staff Officers Tom Nicholls and Dave Trumble represented the PWU.

Tom chairs the Utilities Committee for the Division and used this meeting to update committee members on the PWU's ongoing concerns with fire retardant clothing. Tom and Dave conducted a session on workplace inspections that was well attended and well received.

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## PWU Training Schedule: September and October 2014



Health and Safety Accreditation 3	September 24 to 26
Member Awareness Session	October 20 and 21
Stewards Training, Level 1	October 22 to 24
Stewards Training, Level 2	October 29 to 31

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## PWU Member Wins YMCA Woman of Distinction Award

On May 22nd, the YMCA of Toronto bestowed one of its Women of Distinction Awards for Leadership on PWU member and Electrical Safety Authority (ESA) employee Cheryl Carbis. Cheryl became the first female electrical inspector at the ESA in 2000 and three other women have since been hired as inspectors. Joining Cheryl at the gala awards dinner were Sector 3 Representative Rick Johnson, ESA Chief Steward Brian Stratychuk and ESA Steward Jenn Vautour.



Here is the citation from the YWCA:

*While men continue to dominate the world of skilled trades, more and more women are pursuing lucrative careers as skilled tradespersons thanks to trailblazers like Cheryl Carbis.*

*Cheryl's contribution to the trades spans decades. She showed an early talent for electrical work, and was the first female student at her high school to win the Grade 11 and 12 Electrical Awards. Starting when she apprenticed in 1983 as the second woman apprentice in her local union's history, she often found herself the only woman on job sites with hundreds of workers. As a result, Cheryl made it her mission to lead by example and to mentor young women entering the trades.*

*As the first female inspector for Ontario's Electrical Safety Authority (ESA), Cheryl's visibility and perseverance has been an inspiration to her peers and women who follow in her footsteps. She was a founding member of Sisters in the Trades, and a key figure in the formation of the Women's Committee of her union local, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 353.*

*She shares her enthusiasm for the trades with young women at career events hosted by organizations including Skills Ontario, Skills Canada, Junior Achievement, and the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program.*

*Cheryl's career is a story of opening doors for women in the trades and she has been recognized as a leader and advocate by the National Association of Women in Construction, and earned a place in the Who's Who of Canadian Women in 2006.*

A video profile of Cheryl can be found [here](#).

## PWU Hosts Annual Charity Golf Tournament



On June 5th, the PWU hosted its annual charity golf tournament at the Nottawasaga Inn Resort near Alliston. The double shotgun tournament over 45 holes was a complete sell-out with 360 participants. Over \$25,000 was raised for the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation, the Canadian Diabetes Association and the Ross Tilley Burn Centre at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre. PWU members from all over the province joined with industry guests and sponsors for a great day of golf and camaraderie.



Three-time Olympic gold medalist Cherie Piper and sister of PWU Sector 1 Chief Steward Steve Piper is pictured here with Sector 1 Senior Administrative Assistant Keri Borg at the Hockey Shoot-Out.

The tournament winners certainly seem to be enjoying their victory!



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and donations, PWU would like to thank...



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