



# POWERWORKS

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April 2015 POWER WORKERS' UNION NEWSLETTER

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## Day of Mourning: April 28, 2015

The Canadian Union of Public Employees first started a Workers' Memorial Day in 1984. A year later, the Canadian Labour Congress Convention adopted a resolution declaring April 28 as a "National Day of Mourning" to honour workers in Canada who had been killed or injured on the job or who were stricken with occupational diseases. April 28 was chosen because it was on that day in 1914 that the first comprehensive *Workers' Compensation Act* in Canada received third reading in Ontario. Now, this day is recognized in one fashion or another in more than 100 countries.



The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* of Ontario came into force in 1979 and workplace fatalities dropped significantly over the following years. Since that initial decrease however, the number of workers killed in this province's workplaces has remained almost unchanged at about one per day. Across Canada, the number of

workers killed in workplaces is closer to three per day. In addition to fatalities in the workplace, hundreds of thousands of workers are injured or suffer health effects from exposure to hazardous substances and chemicals.

PWU members work in a wide variety of locations across Ontario and some of them are among the most potentially dangerous anywhere. This is the reason that the PWU has been at the forefront on health and safety for decades. Before workers had the right under the *Ontario Health and Safety Act* to refuse unsafe work, the PWU negotiated these rights, and more into our collective agreements. The PWU negotiated significantly lower whole body radiation dose limits for our members working in nuclear generating stations than those limits required by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. We have long taken a lead role in continuously improving electrical work protection procedures and training for workers in our province. More recently, the PWU has been working diligently with our workplace partners to ensure that mental health is placed firmly on the health and safety agenda.

To be successful we rely on informed and motivated PWU members and JHSC members and that's why we have been providing union health and safety training to hundreds of our members every year for more than a decade. We work closely with our employers and governments to advance health and safety because we know we cannot achieve our goal of an accident-free workplace without a common commitment.

Despite progress made, the past year was not a good one for the health and safety of PWU members. In that year we experienced an intolerable number of very serious electrical contact injuries and tragically, Mark Urbanowicz, a long-time PWU member and Hydro One employee, was killed at work while driving in hazardous winter conditions near Walkerton last November.

The stakes are high when it comes to workplace injuries. The toll on families, friends and co-workers can't be quantified. All workplace injuries and fatalities are unacceptable and all are preventable.

Even though worker health and safety has to be at the core of every work activity, every day, April 28<sup>th</sup> is a special day when workers and employers remember the dead and the injured. Day of Mourning ceremonies help provide an important focus, and an opportunity for us all to recommit ourselves, to put an end to workplace accidents. Today, we speak for the dead to protect the living.

Don MacKinnon

President

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## Ontario Budget Confirms Plans to Sell Majority Interest in Hydro One

On April 24, Finance Minister Charles Sousa presented the 2015 provincial budget that confirmed the government's commitment to sell off a majority stake in Hydro One to free up some four billion dollars for public transit expansion and other infrastructure investment they believe is essential to secure future economic prosperity in Ontario. The government intends to spend \$130 billion on transportation infrastructure over the next decade, including electrified transit systems, more frequent GO trains, new subways, new light rail transit lines, municipal bus systems and highway improvements across the province.



The decision to sell 60 per cent of Hydro One came on the heels of final recommendations of the Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets. This course of action differed from the Advisory Council's preliminary report that had advocated that Hydro One be split into separate companies for transmission and distribution.

Over the past eight months, the PWU has pressed the government and the Advisory Council to keep the company intact to benefit ratepayers and preserve service quality. The PWU supports the approach adopted by the government as a better option than splitting the company and believes that it will allow the company to grow and provide better stability of employment for PWU members and further highly skilled quality jobs for Ontarians. Keeping the company whole saves costs by avoiding duplication of workforces, work centres, management structure, customer services, payroll service, senior executives and Boards of Directors. Splitting the transmission and distribution businesses into two companies would have needlessly driven electricity rate higher.

The government plans to offer shares in the company to the private sector through an Initial Public Offering (IPO) starting with 15 percent of the value of the company by the end of this year. Further share offerings will follow later with the stipulation that no shareholder, other than the government, will be allowed to own more than 10 percent of the total. The government plans to retain a 40 percent share which will give them considerable input into the direction of the company without the full control and authority they have today to interfere politically and issue directives.

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### **PWU/Hydro One Apprenticeship Program a Great Success**

For more than 15 years, the jointly administered apprenticeship programs of the PWU and Hydro One have provided quality training opportunities to almost 1,800 PWU members. For centuries, apprenticeship programs have been recognized as the best structure in which to plan and manage the transition from new employee to skilled journeyman in a given trade. Skilled tradespeople know that it requires a timely mix of formal classroom training and practical work experience for a person to learn a skilled trade effectively. A new employee, regardless of their level of education, requires work experience. Colleges can help with the classroom training if that classroom training is scheduled strategically at the appropriate stage of the apprentice's practical work experience. On their own, colleges can't provide the full training model to produce a

quality journeyman because they don't provide the hands-on experience and mentorship required for tradespeople to learn how to perform the duties of their trade safely and competently.



In the 1998 round of collective bargaining, Hydro One and the PWU established a new approach to apprenticeship and peak maintenance and construction work programs. The agreement allowed Hydro One to utilize a skilled and efficient casual workforce supplied from the newly-created PWU Hiring Hall for peak work programs in the place of more expensive contractors. Apprentices would be hired into Hiring Hall positions and have preference when applying to regular jobs. Regular PWU-represented employees would continue to perform work of a continuing nature.

The 1998 Collective Agreement established the Joint Apprenticeship Council (JAC) to oversee the program. The mandate of the JAC is to establish and maintain the apprentice training program as well as to adopt operating rules and conditions in keeping with the applicable apprenticeship legislation.

All apprentices are hired through the JAC.

Apprentices may be assigned to work alongside qualified regular employees or qualified Hiring Hall employees as required for training and



practical experience. For the first time, all apprentices were required to complete the Certificate of Qualification (C of Q) in their particular trade, providing PWU members with a portability of skills they were not required to have before 1998.

For the first time, all apprentices at Hydro One would progress through government-recognized apprenticeship training. Linepersons are now trained as Power Line Technicians in the Red Seal apprenticeship program. Electricians are now trained as Construction and Maintenance Electricians in the Red Seal apprenticeship program.

Mechanical Maintainers are trained in the Industrial Millwright apprenticeship program. Truck Mechanics continue to be trained as Truck and Coach Technicians in the Red Seal apprenticeship program. Foresters are now trained in the Utility Arborist apprenticeship program.

Prior to the establishment of the JAC, the company had followed a typical industrial trades training model. Almost all trades were trained in company-specific training programs that did not provide the workers with recognized apprenticeship certifications and did not utilize recognized community college trade school programs. The training was delivered exclusively in the field and at Hydro One's own training facilities. Certificates were not recognized by most employers outside Hydro One. As a result, during periods when the company was downsizing, workers were encouraged to leave but many had difficulty finding work in their chosen trade because they did not have a C of Q.

Since 1999, 1,773 apprentices have been jointly recruited into the JAC apprenticeship program. More than 1,000 of these apprentices have received their provincially-recognized certification as journeypersons in their trade. There are more than 550 apprentices enrolled in PWU/Hydro One apprenticeship programs today.

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**Spots are filling up quickly...**



**Thursday, June 4, 2015**  
**Nottawasaga Inn Resort**  
**6015 Highway 89, Alliston**

**All money raised will be donated to the Ross Tilley Burn Unit at Sunnybrook Hospital, the Multiple Sclerosis Society and the Canadian Diabetes Association.**

Rain or shine, tournament will begin at 12 pm Shotgun start, scramble format.

\$120 per person includes golf, cart, BBQ lunch and a buffet steak dinner.

**To register, please send the completed registration form for yourself and/or your foursome no later than May 22, 2015. Include any dietary requirements.  
Questions - please email Dee at [rkaur@pwu.ca](mailto:rkaur@pwu.ca).**