



# POWERWORKS

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October 2014 **POWER WORKERS' UNION NEWSLETTER**

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## Highlights of the President's Report to the Council of Chief Stewards October 1, 2014



Don MacKinnon, PWU President

The Power Workers' Union continues to evolve and adjust to meet the needs of PWU members in constantly changing workplaces. We have a tradition of being there for PWU members - to create opportunities that otherwise would not exist - in good times and in bad. Change in our workplaces is inevitable, and, often, change is of our own creation for the benefit of our members. When we can't control change in the way we would like, it is our responsibility to do our best to ensure that our members are treated fairly and with respect.

This year, we saw the closure of Nanticoke and Lambton Generating Stations (GS). We also saw the Thunder Bay GS burn coal for the last time. A year before that, we saw Atikokan GS cease coal generation. Hundreds upon hundreds of PWU members and their families were impacted by the policy decisions of government.

Where would all of those people and their families have been without their Union? Years before the closures, the PWU negotiated arrangements that would ensure that the employees at those stations would be treated with respect. They would all have the opportunity to transfer to other work locations or take an enhanced severance option. The PWU was instrumental in researching and securing the continued operation of the Atikokan and Thunder Bay GSs through the conversion from coal to carbon-neutral biomass. We continue to press for the conversion of the Nanticoke and Lambton GSs to use natural gas and biomass because it makes sense for Ontario to recycle and reuse these valuable assets.

There are few accolades when you go through an ordeal like coal closure but imagine where the affected people and families would be today without their Union.

Forty years ago, the PWU membership at our coal stations was arguably the strongest and most militant group within our Union - but when all three political parties decided that the stations would be closed, it

was the strength of a diverse PWU that came to the aid of those members who were under attack.

Since the mid-1990s the PWU has evolved from an organization that was originally designed to represent the employees of one company – Ontario Hydro – to a modern multi-faceted Union that represents members at companies throughout Ontario in 49 bargaining units. This didn't come about by accident - it came through planning, creativity and hard work.

Over the next year, we will take steps needed to ensure that our representative structure is designed to meet the changing needs of our diverse membership. Nothing stays the same and that is not always a bad thing. We will assess our institutional strengths and identify ways we can do things better. We will continue to evolve so that we can provide the best possible representation for all PWU members – wherever they work.



During Council, the Chief Stewards review reports from elected representatives, committees and staff that will provide an overview of PWU activities since last Council and many of the issues facing our members in the coming months and years.

I am pleased to report that your Union is financially strong and working harder than ever to meet the many challenges confronting PWU members.

On behalf of all PWU members, I thank each and every PWU representative for your hard work and dedication – your commitment to protect and improve the quality of life of all PWU members and retirees.

## Electricity Industry and Government Relations Update

Turning to electricity policy and government relations - much has happened in the past year.

Ontario elected a Liberal majority government in June. The antagonistic approach of Tim Hudak with his cynical attacks on working people and public sector jobs took the focus off the performance of the Liberal government and galvanized working people against the Progressive Conservative Party. He was warned.

It remains to be seen whether the Wynne government will use its majority to improve the direction of electricity policy and labour relations in this province. Governments often take on different characteristics and policy directions when they gain a majority.



News remains positive regarding the refurbishment of six more reactors at Bruce Power and all four at Darlington.

A September 15, 2014 letter from Premier Wynne to Minister of Energy Bob Chiarelli confirms that all 10 refurbishments are on the list of government priorities.

These projects will result in more than 8,000 megawatts of greenhouse gas emission-free electricity generation. Without these projects, much of that production would have to come from imported, high-carbon shale gas generation. Ontario's action plan on climate change would fall back dramatically. Electricity prices would become much more volatile and beyond Ontario's control - and Ontario would lose its nuclear industry with its tens of thousands of high-skilled, well-paying jobs.

Minister Chiarelli has made it clear that the government will not force amalgamations of Local Distribution Companies. This commitment from the Minister has not stopped those who would benefit financially from lobbying for a change in the ownership structure of both municipally-owned utilities and Hydro One. An influential Bay Street contingent continues to promote a variety of schemes that would result in the further transfer of publicly-owned electricity assets to the private sector.

The government has appointed a Special Advisory Council (Council), headed by the CEO of the TD Bank Group, to make recommendations on how to enhance the value of Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Hydro One and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario. Although the Council is in the early stages of its deliberations, it is a concern of many that the Council could recommend the sale of some of these revenue-generating assets in order to reduce provincial debt.

The PWU had a preliminary meeting with the Council and provided some general advice but as yet the Council has proposed no specific initiatives for our comment.

The government has indicated its preference to keep these assets in provincial hands and to find ways to squeeze more revenue out of them. I will report further as the direction of the Council becomes more evident.

The Leech report on electricity agency pension plans was released to the public in August. Leech made a variety of recommendations regarding the affordability and sustainability of pension plans at OPG, Hydro One, the Independent Electricity System Operator (IESO) and the Electrical Safety Authority (ESA).

Each of these pension plans is enshrined in the respective PWU collective agreement and any changes would have to be negotiated with the Union and ratified by the membership.

On a positive note, the general performance of the plans has improved significantly since Mr. Leech was commissioned to make his recommendations.

Formal discussions regarding the long-term stability of the pension plans have not been scheduled as yet. Again, I will report as this issue continues to unfold.

The federal Conservative government doesn't appear to have learned much from Ontario's election results. Along with cutting funding for Employment Insurance programs, they have re-introduced Bill C-377 that would impose public reporting of finances on unions. The clear purpose is to weaken the voice of working people by making the financial state of a union known to employers and the hard right-wing media.

These requirements were designed to create animosity between individuals in the general public and unions as well as between individual union members who may disagree with certain union expenditures even though they are approved through the democratic structure of the union.

These public reporting procedures do not exist for any other type of organization or company.

The next federal election is only a year away and we will try to keep you informed of the relevant policy platforms of the main parties as the election approaches.

### **Health and Safety**

Last year, I reported that the Fact Finding Panel on 2,4,5-T herbicide (commonly called Agent Orange) had released its report confirming that PWU represented employees of Ontario Hydro had been exposed to dangerous levels of the herbicide in the late 1970s and early 1980s. I am pleased to report that the

Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) has now approved some of those claims, particularly for prostate cancer and Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Claims related to other cancers and skin conditions have been disallowed by WSIB and those have been appealed by the Union.

We are finally starting to get some traction with some of our employers on mental health issues. This attention from employers has come from new data that shows mental health issues as the main cause for use of sick time in many workplaces. The PWU has partnered with a number of mental health organizations over the years including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, the Canadian Mental Health Association, and the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario.

### **Bargaining**

The bargaining climate in Ontario has chilled somewhat in the last few years. Your bargaining committees are running into some pretty tough and sometime adversarial sets of negotiations — but I am very proud to report that the PWU is still negotiating the best collective agreements in the country. In the past year, the PWU has successfully bargained 20 collective agreements.

They were spread pretty evenly among the three Sectors: seven in Sector 1, five in Sector 2, and eight in Sector 3.



Last January, our Sector 1 bargaining team reached a solid four-year agreement with Bruce Power that included wage increases, employment security and strengthened the pension plan.

The PWU team at AECL reached a negotiated settlement for the first time in many years. The last few rounds of bargaining at AECL were resolved through binding arbitration and not until long after the expiry date. Congratulations to our PWU team that put a very good agreement together at a very difficult time when the future operation of the company is being offered up by the federal government to various consortiums of domestic and foreign bidders.

Our Sector 2 team did a great job in negotiating a first collective agreement for the newly unionized workforce at Brookfield Power Wind Operations. This also marks the first collective agreement negotiated by the PWU specifically for wind workers.

Sector 3 got the job done in securing a solid settlement in a very tough round of negotiations at Grimsby Power. Sometimes bargaining in the smaller units can be just as difficult as the big ones.

We all owe our thanks to the 20 PWU bargaining teams who showed tremendous creativity, patience and

resolve in negotiating the best agreements anywhere and under very difficult circumstances.

In the coming year, the PWU will bargain 16 more collective agreements. That may sound like a slower than average year but, this winter, PWU bargaining committees will negotiate with our two largest employers: OPG and Hydro One. Both agreements expire on March 31, 2015. We will have great PWU teams at these bargaining tables. I will work closely with all three Vice Presidents, our Bargaining Committees and Staff to secure the best possible collective agreements for PWU members.

### **Union Training**

Succession planning for the PWU leaders of tomorrow remains a top priority. The retirement of the Baby Boomers is in full swing and the PWU is not insulated from the loss of leaders, skills and institutional knowledge that most large organizations are experiencing.

That is why, for more than 10 years now, the PWU has focused on Union training programs for new members, Stewards, Chief Stewards, Principal Stewards and Health and Safety Representatives – to prepare the next generation of PWU leaders, as best we can, for the new challenges that PWU members will face. This is an investment in our future that is guaranteed to bring valuable returns.

### **Regulatory Issues**

The PWU was, once again, very active participating in regulatory processes over the past year. The PWU is the voice of electricity sector workers in Ontario and that holds true in regulatory affairs and government relations. No other union participates in electricity regulatory processes to the extent that the PWU does. (A report describing all PWU participation in regulatory proceedings was provided to the Chief Stewards.)

### **PWU Focus for the Next 12 Months**

Some of the top priorities of the PWU over the next 12 months will include:

- First-in-class health and safety advocacy, collective bargaining and representation for PWU members.
- Doing everything we can to maintain rights to free collective bargaining and successor rights for PWU members.
- Delivery of union training to ensure that PWU members and representatives have the tools to succeed and to develop the next generation of PWU leaders.
- Redoubling our efforts to gain commitments to convert Ontario's existing coal plants to utilize carbon-neutral biomass and/or natural gas.
- Promoting the importance of nuclear unit refurbishments and new build to provide affordable

greenhouse gas emission-free base-load electricity and support the transition to electric vehicles.

- Influencing the level of co-operation between Ontario's nuclear companies and the federal and provincial governments to revitalize Canada's role in the global nuclear industry.
- Influencing government policy and direction regarding the dangers of merchant transmission.
- Influencing the development of sound carbon reduction programs and participating strategically in other regulatory proceedings.
- Strategically organizing new groups of PWU members.

A review of the structure of our Union to ensure that the representation model is focused on the sustainable advancement of PWU members and their families. These action items are not listed in order of priority and will be pursued simultaneously.

### **Conclusion**

As the elected leadership of this great union we commit to work with common purpose and put the interests of PWU members first in all we do. I am honoured to work together with each and every PWU representative to improve the standard of living and the quality of life for all PWU members.

In Solidarity,

Don MacKinnon  
PWU President

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## **Danny Farrell Retires**

Long-time Chief Steward Dan Farrell (Danny to many) retired from Hydro One in July of this year. Dan attended the Council of Chief Stewards in October where he was honoured for his tremendous contribution to the Power Workers' Union.

Dan is a Forester by trade. He worked initially at Ontario Hydro and later at Hydro One. He was first elected as a Chief Steward in 1980-81 making him the longest serving Chief Steward in the entire PWU at the time of his retirement. Dan also served on the Executive Board, on many committees including Health and Safety, the Joint Forestry Training Committee, the Bruce Power Trust and many others. He was a strong voice at the bargaining table in numerous rounds of negotiations and even served a stint in the Union Office as a Staff Grievance Officer.



Dan was there on the leadership team of the PWU through a long period of dramatic change. The break-up of Ontario Hydro was one of the more significant of those changes and Dan found that to be a tough point in his career. Until the split of the company Dan had represented members working in generation, transmission and distribution along with the corporate and business support groups.

With the split, Dan continued to represent the Hydro One employees while the generation members were transferred to another Chief Steward. Staff had to be relocated, retire or take a layoff when the Timmins Service Centre was shut down. Staff members who had worked there for 25 or 30 years had to move to Sudbury or look for another job and Dan did his very best to help people find the best positions from the options available to suit their needs.

During the 1985 strike at Ontario Hydro, Dan had three picket lines going in his area. He recalls the ups and downs of trying to manage the lines but the members came through then as they always do. The main issue in the strike was the use of contractors. The PWU's stand taken in 1985 led to restrictions on the use of contractors and the eventual negotiation of the Purchased Services Agreement in 1991.

Throughout Dan's life he has remained a staunch supporter of the NDP and Dan will tell anyone who will listen about the importance of supporting the political party that most consistently supports workers' rights.

When Dan started, computers were not widely used and neither were cell phones so keeping in touch with members was a very different proposition than it is today. Dan notes that even though remote contact with members is easier now, it is more difficult to get members to come out to meetings where they can communicate face to face – he is quick to remind us of the importance of face-to-face communication on serious issues.

He highlights the importance of newer members understanding their history and that what they have today in terms of working conditions, health and safety, standard of living, pensions, benefits and legislative rights was the result of the struggles and determination of generations before them. Each generation has a responsibility to the next.

Dan always enjoyed the camaraderie of the PWU leadership and their commitment to unionism over a period of more than three decades. He made many life-long friends.

"I've been the luckiest person in the world. I call my wife Saint Noella. In forestry, we were away 60 percent of the time and as a Chief Steward I was away from home at least as much.



Noella was in Timmins raising three kids, supporting the farm and working at the post office. She's one in a million; you won't find another woman like her."

*On behalf of all PWU members across the province we thank Danny for his dedicated service to his Union and wish both Danny and Noella a long, happy and healthy retirement.*

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## **PWU Community Volunteer Awards 2014**

The Union takes great pride in the giving spirit of our members across the province and their special contributions to the communities they live in. Each year the PWU selects four members/retirees who have demonstrated outstanding citizenship in their community.

At October's Council of Chief Stewards, President Don MacKinnon presented the annual PWU community volunteer awards - one for a deserving member from each of the three sectors and one from the Retired Workers' Chapter. Although none of the recipients was seeking any recognition for their efforts they can be sure that PWU members are proud of them. Each received a PWU jacket, a certificate of thanks and a donation of \$1,000 to a charity of their choice.

### **2014 PWU Volunteer Award Winners:**

Sector 1: Dominique Jackson



for her contributions to Women's House Serving Bruce & Grey and Kincardine Women's Triathlon.

Sector 2: Tony Hall



for his contributions towards suicide prevention for young people.

Sector 3: Helen Moffatt



for her contributions to Boy Scouts, Girl Guides and White Oaks Public School.

Retired Workers' Chapter: Stephen Kendal



for his contributions to the Sunnycrest Nursing Home.

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## PWU Health and Safety Activist Awards

The PWU recognized three members with annual Healthy and Safety Activist Awards at the 2014 Council of Chief Stewards. The winners were Len Bridge (Sector 1), Kevin Jones (Sector 2), Ian Ritchie (Sector 1). The Awards are in their second year and recognize the amazing work that activists undertake on behalf of the membership in all PWU work locations. The PWU Provincial Health, Safety and Environment Committee selects the winners. The Committee invites nominations from members for 2015.



*Pictured left to right: Health & Safety Staff Officer Dave Trumble, Kevin Jones, Len Bridge & Ian Ritchie*

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## Retired Workers' Chapter Update

Retirement is a time to enjoy family and take up interests that weren't possible during working years. It's also a time to stay connected to your



Union given possible attacks on pensions and benefits. The PWU Retired Workers' Chapter (RWC) is there to make that happen.

That was the message delivered to 300 PWU retirees and their spouses during meetings in Kincardine and Port Elgin earlier this month by Peter Kelly, President of the PWU Retired Workers' Chapter. The RWC boasts almost 4,000 members primarily from the successor companies of Ontario Hydro. Plans to expand the RWC membership to more retirees are underway. As a first step, a new email address [rwc@pwu.ca](mailto:rwc@pwu.ca) is available for retirees to send questions and issues.

Bob Menard, newly-appointed PWU liaison to the RWC, explains his role is one of keeping the lines of communication open between the retirees and active members. He points out one of the RWC's roles is passing on bargaining submissions from retirees when appropriate.

Also, there may be a time in the future when the PWU will want retirees to actively support PWU pension and benefit battles. To be sure you stay connected with the PWU and other retirees, join the RWC. You can call the Union office at 416-481-4491 or toll free 1-800-958-8798 for a registration form. Membership is a great value at \$12.00 a year.

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## Feature Photos:

### *Pictures submitted by PWU membership*

Picket Line 1985 Strike  
Submitted by: Albert Sham



Bruce Power Unit 7 Outage  
Submitted by: Larry Alderdice



OPG Darlington Scaffolding  
Submitted by: Paul Robichaud



You can forward your pictures to PWU Communications Department: [comm@pwu.ca](mailto:comm@pwu.ca)