

Twenty years after the massacre

By Karrie Ouchas, *In Solidarity* Committee

On December 6, 1989, 25 year-old Marc Lepine entered the School of Engineering at the University of Montreal, carrying with him a semi-automatic rifle and a hunting knife. Before committing suicide, he gunned down 14 women and injured 13 other people attending the school, including four men. One woman killed was stabbed to death after being wounded by gun fire. During the 20-minute shooting spree, he called the female students “feminists” and blamed feminists for “ruining” his life.

A suicide note revealed Lepine’s intent to kill another 19 women he identified as “extreme feminists,” stating he had simply run out of time. The

list included the first female Quebec firefighter, the first female Quebec police captain, a sportscaster, a bank manager, prominent female politicians and a female president of a teacher’s union.



Born Gamil Gharbi, Marc Lepine grew up in an abusive household. Lepine’s father was a bully, often violent and emotionally unavailable to his wife and son. The father treated his wife, and all women, with contempt, disdain and disrespect. After his parents’ separation, Lepine’s mother worked full-time as a

nurse, often only seeing her son on weekends. At the age 14, out of extreme hatred for his father, Lepine legally changed his name from “Gharbi.”



Lepine grew up in an era of feminism, where traditionally male-dominated roles and careers were being challenged by women. He saw this as an extreme act of opportunism by women, who wanted to “retain the advantages of being women, while trying to grab those of men.” This included women pursuing degrees in higher education. Twice, Lepine applied to the School of Engineering. He was denied entrance as he hadn’t completed two compulsory prerequisite credits. Lepine felt that female students accepted into the program were examples of the injustice caused by the feminist movement.

The 14 murdered women became instant symbols of violence and inequality against women. Their deaths prompted public outcry for more support, education and resources to reduce violence against women, as well as more rigid gun controls.

It’s been 20 years since the Lepine shootings, dubbed the “Montreal Massacre.” Has anything changed?

Gun control

In 1989, getting a license to purchase a firearm was easy. A \$10 application fee applied. If there was no history of mental illness or violent crime, a permit

Who we are

Editorial Policy

The content and editing of this newsletter are determined by the committee. We want members to feel ownership of *In Solidarity*, and view it as independent of any particular segment of the union. Content comes from our base of activists, staff and other labour sources.

Where an article has a by-line, the views are those of the author and not necessarily the views of OPSEU.

While we welcome your contributions, we ask that these be constructive. All articles should be signed and include Local number, and should contribute positively to the welfare of this union.

We encourage thoughtful discussion of all related issues and reserve the right to edit for libel, length and clarity, and to reply to those that seem to reflect a misunderstanding of the union and its policies. 😊

The elected members of the editorial committee for *In Solidarity* are:

Karrie Ouchas - Editor, Local 340

Laurie Sabourin - Local 368

Felicia Fahey - Local 681

Tim King - Local 736

Riley Dawe - Local 596

Ex-officio members are:

James Tocker - Executive Board Liaison

Don Ford - OPSEU Communications

Please send mail to *In Solidarity*,
c/o Karrie Ouchas, OPSEU Head Office
100 Lesmill Rd., Toronto, Ontario M3B 3P8
Contact at: ouchas@rogers.com

We are also your elected members of Informed Newsletters for OPSEU/Bulletins informés pour le SEFPO. If you require any support, advice or start-up information concerning newsletters, please contact one of the executive members. 😊



Authorized for distribution:



Warren (Smokey) Thomas, President
Ontario Public Service Employees Union

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was granted. An individual could then purchase as many guns as could be afforded. It was that simple. This is the process that Lepine followed. He applied in September and received his permit in October. In November, he purchased the semi-automatic weapon, 100 rounds of ammunition, a 30-round clip and a carrying case for \$765.03.

Survivors of the Montreal Massacre and family members of victims founded the Coalition for Gun Control. The group lobbied various politicians and government groups. In 1995, the Firearms Act was passed. It called for training for responsible gun ownership, stringent screening of application, storage controls and registration of firearms. Though some aspects of the legislation are still under review and though it is recognized that it can't completely eradicate criminal activities, the Firearms Act, 1995, provides a series of checks and balances to ensure responsible gun ownership.

Emergency response

When the first calls were received by emergency services on December 6, 1989, police were immediately dispatched. They surrounded the campus, securing the perimeter. However, police did not enter the building until reports of Lepine's self-inflicted gunshot wound to the head was confirmed, some say about 45 minutes after the shooting began. Several women were killed during the time that police were on campus as well as when Lepine ended his own life. As a result, emergency response protocols were reviewed and changed.

The changes were put to the test in 2006, at Montreal's Dawson College. It took eight minutes from when the lone gunman, Kimveer Gill, began shooting to when police had the area secured. After being wounded by police gunfire, Gill turned his own

gun on himself, committing suicide. Two people died, including Gill. Another 19 were wounded.

Gill had several guns and rounds of ammunition with him. There is no telling how many lives were saved that day by the changes to the emergency response protocols.

Violence and inequality of women

Following the Lepine killings, the Canadian House of Commons established a subcommittee on the Status of Women. The panel issued the "Violence against Women: Canadian Panel Final Report" in 1993. The report recognizes the challenges Canadian women face for equality and safety. The report called for a national action plan with the goals to achieve women's equality and the elimination of violence

against women. Many groups felt that the report failed to provide a realistic timeline and strategy. However, the Status of Women Panel continue to review the over 400 recommendations and the processes for developing women's equality and safety. Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte and Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz did not die

in vain that day. Each are heroines, having brought about changes that have saved many lives since.

A senseless tragedy

The case of Marc Lepine and the Montreal Massacre extends beyond gun control and women's issues. Marc Lepine was also a victim of child abuse during the most impressionable years of his life at the hands of a violent and chauvinistic father. This forever shaped the way Lepine looked at the world, at women and at violence in general.

It is unfortunate the Lepine didn't receive the support and help he so desperately needed. Maybe this senseless tragedy could have been avoided. However, would the lessons still have been learned?



Great steps from the north



By Tim King, In Solidarity Committee

Who knew that one can “come down” just to go back up?

I came to Toronto from Thunder Bay for OPSEU’s Annual Editors’ Weekend, with “going up” in mind. Other than learning while I was in Toronto, my intentions were to climb the stairs of the CN Tower to raise funds for the United Way. When I registered the morning of October 25, the United Way Central Services Manager stated that no one from that far north had ever participated in the climb. Until now.

I signed up for the 1,776 stair-climb fundraiser to support the United Way and it’s community programs. All money raised would be allocated to my hometown of Thunder Bay. My goal was to raise \$500.

When I had arrived in Toronto, I had already raised \$260 at home. I knew that every little bit helped. I was excited that I was more than halfway to my goal, though unsure of how I would meet it.

I was encouraged by Region 7 members to speak up at the Editors’ Weekend banquet. They spoke up for me. Prior to the Awards Ceremony, an announcement was made mentioning my fundraiser. Through the generosity of attendees and guests, the “united way” of the union became apparent. In less than thirty minutes, OPSEU staff, local executives, local editors, facilitators and guests lined up to give support. Their generosity topped my goal to \$502.25.

At 7 a.m. I began to climb the stairs. Sister Sandra Snider, Region 7 Executive Board Member, was there to provide me with support and encouragement. It took less then 38 minutes to complete the climb. It’s a time I am proud of, especially since I am an asthmatic. I made it back to the Conference hotel, with time to spare, for Rosemarie Bahr’s (from the Canadian Association Labour Media) 9 a.m. “Plain Language” class.

There were two accomplishments that weekend; I completed the climb and, with the generosity of union activists, I exceeded my goal. I give a heartfelt “thank you” to all OPSEU members and their locals, staff, facilitators, board members and guests for opening your minds, your hearts and your pocketbook to help the United Way.

The support I received was so inspiring and motivating, I could probably climb again. 😊



Moving towards a better world

By Riley Dawe, In Solidarity Committee

Back in the 60s it was often said we can choose to be a part of the problem or we can choose to be a part of the solution. OPSEU members can be a part of change for the better! There is no reason to wait for the world to come to us. Taking a chance that the politicians' agenda keeps our best interest central is not the way of the future.

Let me suggest that we take advantage of the knowledge learned from global social justice movements in recent decades to create a better world. We must look for articles in history that can guide us in the direction of innovation for the future decades of generations to come.

Anyone who has made a contribution to making a better world can attest that it is hard work...but it is good work. I cannot speak for the members involved with all the various committees of OPSEU, local executive committees or the Executive Board, but I don't think that they would be too happy with us if we became part of the problem. That is not what OPSEU is about and it is not the example they are working so hard to make in our workplaces, our government and in our communities. I have learned that "making a difference" is work that is filled with frustrations because it never happens completely or as fast as we would like it to.

What can we do? We can rally with organized labour to show our MP and MPP's, alongside our friends, family, colleagues and co-workers that we will make good on our call to take action! We need to take control of our collective hopes for the future. We must ask why the government continues to take out its own shortfalls and mistakes on the public sector.

The McGuinty government needs to accept responsibility for the reality of the economic situation we are in. Why were millions spent on eHealth even as hospitals continue to be underfunded? What are the structural reasons for the failure of our employment insurance that has forced

working families to access food banks? The costs of these shortcomings are consistently downloaded onto the backs of working families. The general public has brushed aside these questions as they juggle several part-time jobs that offer little money or job security.

We need to start looking forward to innovative approaches, stand with our sisters and brothers, with those who have come before us and take on the task of making a difference to our communities, cities and to our nation. Ed Broadbent, a former leader of the NDP, echoed a similar sentiment in his speech to the graduating class in October of 2009 when he received an honorary degree from Ryerson University:

"Knowing what we know today about tar sands these days, we can find a new way to create energy that doesn't despoil the environment. Or we can find a new refundable tax credit that for people with disabilities that will remove them from poverty and allow them to live, engaged and dignified lives. Or we can find a new education system for first nation's reserves which will improve the educational outcomes for children to put them on an even footing with all Canadian children. Or we can find a better refugee determination system that is fast, fair and final."

What makes Broadbent's statement so powerful is the potential for future innovation it contains. Just because things used to be done a certain way in the past, does not mean that the future needs to repeat the same mistakes that have been made. ☺



H1N1: The "Influenza" of 2009 – 2010

By Terri Aversa,
OPSEU Health and Safety Officer, In Solidarity

The experts agree: H1N1 influenza will be the main circulating strain of flu this flu season. Sometimes referred to as "swine flu," the H1N1 virus is a new strain of influenza that first emerged in Mexico last April. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) raised the global pandemic level from Phase 5 to Phase 6, signaling that a global pandemic is underway with sustained human to human transmission. Since then, Ontario has been closely watching progression of the virus.

The last time a similar strain of influenza circulated around the world was in the late 1950s. Most people have never been exposed to H1N1 before. Therefore, they have no immunity to the virus.

H1N1 spreads easily from person-to-person through inhaled droplets and small sprays (aerosols) when a sick person sneezes or coughs, and by contact with contaminated surfaces. Symptoms are similar to regular flu and include fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue.

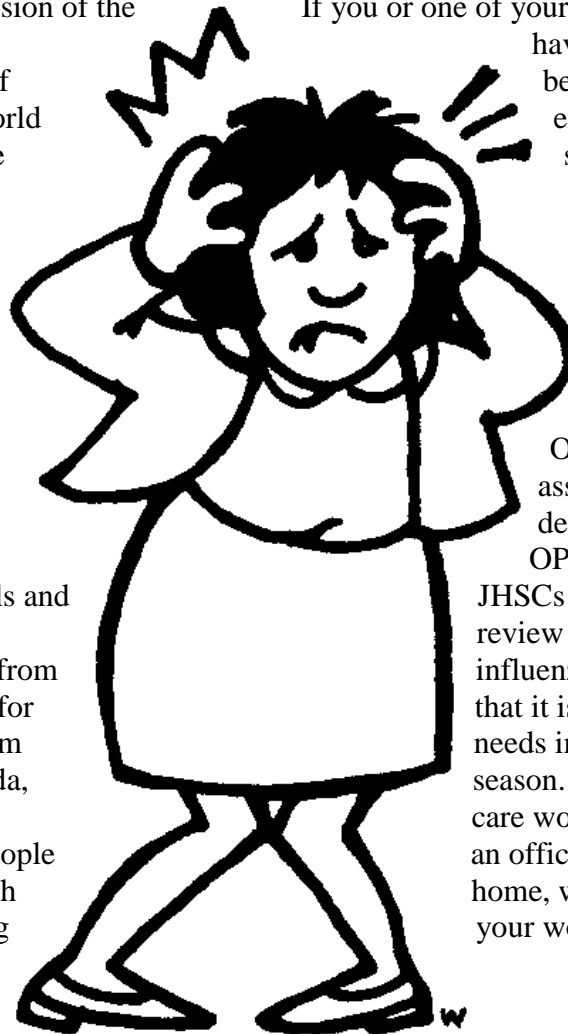
Overall, the death rate to date from H1N1 influenza is no higher than for seasonal flu. However, reports from around the world, including Canada, indicate that the H1N1 virus is affecting younger and healthier people than the regular seasonal flu, which normally strikes seniors and young children the hardest. Although previously healthy people have become very ill, most reports also indicate that people with underlying medical

conditions, such as heart or lung disease or diabetes, are at greater risk of developing severe symptoms such as pneumonia and respiratory failure. Pregnant women have been identified as another group at greater risk of becoming more seriously ill, although no more likely to contract H1N1 influenza.

The level of risk for contracting H1N1 at work depends, in part, on whether or not jobs require close proximity to people potentially infected with the pandemic influenza or whether workers are required to have either repeated or extended contact with known or unknown sources of pandemic influenza. If you or one of your members believes that they

have contracted H1N1 influenza because of a work-related exposure, then a WSIB claim should be made. As with any WSIB claim, whether for an illness or injury, the worker will be expected to demonstrate the link between her/his work and the illness. If WSIB denies a claim for H1N1 influenza, consult with OPSEU for advice and possible assistance with an appeal of the decision.

OPSEU continues to advise local JHSCs and Health and Safety Reps to review your employer's pandemic influenza or emergency plan to ensure that it is adequate to meet workplace needs in this oncoming influenza season. Whether you work in a health care workplace, a correctional facility, an office, a store, a college, a group home, with the public or in isolation, your workplace should have a



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H1N1: The "Influenza" of 2009 - 2010 continued

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pandemic influenza plan that addresses health and safety concerns of workers.

Ontario Ministry of Labour is referring workplaces to many resources, one of which is the US department of Labor's "Guidance on Preparing Workplaces for an Influenza Pandemic," available at <http://www.osha.gov/Publications/OSHA3327pandemic.pdf>. The OSHA guideline describes steps that employers should take to ready themselves for H1N1, including preparing, consulting with stakeholders, reviewing and practicing a plan, and protecting workers. Protecting workers means not just providing information on proper hand washing or other infectious disease prevention, but also to providing materials that reduce risk, such as tissues, soap, no touch trash cans, hand sanitizer, etc.

In each type of workplace, different measures and procedures may be appropriate. For example, hand-washing stations, maintaining social distancing, not coming to work ill and good cough and cold etiquette may be all that's needed in one workplace, while other workplaces may consider erecting barriers between public and staff. Other workplaces where patients with influenza are cared for may need much more protective precautions as well as staff training.

OPSEU's *A Healthcare's Worker's Guide To Pandemic Influenza* is available on the OPSEU website and provides detailed information to assist OPSEU members to participate in pandemic planning at the workplace. The booklet also contains a handy checklist for all sectors (not just health care) to guide you through the process step-by-step.

Some employers are approaching OPSEU locals asking to negotiate language to modify the Collective Agreement, or to enter into a "Letter of Understanding" in case of a pandemic. In these instances, it is important to contact OPSEU for assistance. OPSEU members should also stay tuned to the OPSEU website for the most recent information in the days ahead. ☺

Labour History

© Clarke/CALM



Rosemary Brown (1930-2003)

"To be Black and female in a society that is both racist and sexist is to be in the unique position of having nowhere to go but up!"

Rosemary Brown was a champion of women's and minority rights and a political and social activist whose contributions to democratic and social processes are exceptional.

Brown came to Canada in 1951 to complete her studies. In the 1960s, she worked as a social worker with various agencies in B.C. In 1987, she became the Ruth Wynn Woodford Professor of the Endowed Chair in Women's Studies at Simon Fraser University.

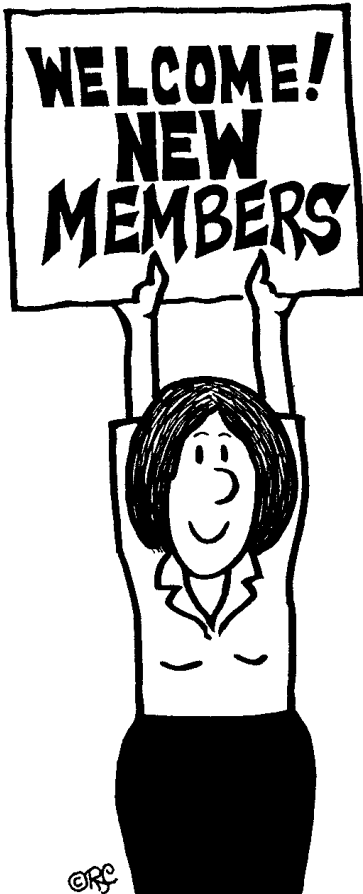
Brown had the distinction of being the first Black woman in Canada to be elected to public office, in 1972 in B.C., serving as a member of the legislative assembly until 1986. She was also the first to run for the leadership of a federal political party in 1975, finishing, after four ballots, a close second in the NDP leadership race.

Brown was a CEO of MATCH International, an organization that works with women in developing countries. She participated in many national and international conferences on peace, women's issues and human rights. She was appointed Chief Commissioner of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, and served until 1996.

New Steward? What you need to know!

By Laurie Sabourin, In Solidarity Committee

1. **Know your contract, and keep it handy.** Every clause is important, especially your grievance procedure. Know how it works and what it can do. Not all contracts are created equal. OPSEU represents the OPS, CAAT-A, CAAT-S and 500+ BPS Collective Agreements.
2. **Know the seniority and job classification lists for the members you represent.** This document should be kept handy for situations that arise around such as job competitions, surplusings, vacation draws, etc.
3. **Know your employer. Know the policies, rules and regulations and practices of your workplace.** Keep a binder handy with all documents the employer produces regarding the policies, rules and regulations. You never know when you will need a copy of it for a grievance hearing.
4. **Know your supervisors.** Know how they operate and how much power they have. Chain of command should be followed when addressing an issue. Continue to go onto the next level of management if your issues are not addressed to your satisfaction.
5. **Know the diversity of your members.** Understand their concerns and issues. Knowing your members will help you



best meet their needs. Encourage workers of colour, young workers and workers with disabilities to become involved in the union.

6. **Know your local union.** Attend local meetings and know what the local is doing. Knowledge is power. Keep informed of the local issues. Your members will come to you for advice and information. Have accurate information to fight rumours and anti-union propaganda.
7. **Know labour law.** Know how it affects your members and the union. OPSEU keeps a grievance database on their website. It can help you fight and win cases by bringing past grievances forward to build your case.
8. **Know what OPSEU is doing.** Keep up on union activities through the union website and publications. Share this knowledge with your members. Know where you can get help. Start a local newsletter or website to keep your members up-to-date.
9. **Know your strengths and limitations.** If you have a question, see answers and advice from other local leaders and your OPSEU regional office. We don't know all the answers to our members' questions. Tell them you don't know. Let them know you will get back to them once you find out the answer and do so in a timely manner. Trust is valuable asset as a union leader - hard to obtain but easily lost.
10. **Keep educated.** We can never stop learning. As union activists we need to continue learning as legislation, policies and collective agreements can change rapidly. You need to keep up-to-date on these changes. OPSEU continues to increase their education budget and find new ways to educate their members. Each of the seven regions holds spring and fall educationals. There are also central-based educationals such as the annual Editors Weekend for members to attend workshops covering skills and technical tips for producing newsletters and/or websites. ☺

Jobs of the Steward: a Quick Quiz

Steward Update

1. The steward should memorize the collective bargaining agreement and be able to recite any section.

True

False

2. The steward is limited to processing only those grievances brought to his or her attention by workers, rather than observing and acting upon violations on his or her own.

True

False

3. The steward should always have the grievor participate in the grievance process.

True

False

4. The steward should refuse to answer any questions about the last union meeting when asked by member who failed to attend. If asked a question, the steward should reply: "If you would

attend the local's meetings, you would know what is happening."

True

False

5. The steward must remain an impartial participant in the resolution of grievances and cannot favour one grievor over another.

True

False

6. The steward should be familiar with the standing committees of his or her local union and know who chairs each of the committees.

True

False

7. The steward should never enter into a discussion of politics or legislation with any member, because this is a personal matter and could make the member angry at the union.

True

False

ANSWERS:

1. False. Nobody could be expected to memorize the agreement. However, the steward should be familiar with the contract and know how it has been interpreted by past grievance settlement and arbitration decisions.
2. False. As the union's first line of defense, the steward can and should act to file grievances when he or she discovers a wrongful action by the employer.
3. True. Keeping the grievor involved in all steps of the grievance procedure is the best way to gain a favourable settlement and avoid charges that the union did not fairly represent the grievor.
4. False. Sure, the members should attend the meetings, but the fact is many don't and the only way they'll learn what is going on is if the stewards share information with them.
5. True. The stewards should be impartial and set examples of fairness and evenhanded treatment.
6. True. It is very important that the steward know the leadership of the local and understand the workings of all union committees. Stewards can't help their co-workers unless they know the different things the union does.
7. False. It is the steward's job to educate members on all matters which affect their working lives, including political and legislative issues.

Ontario government pushes value-added sales tax

Harmonized Sales Tax anything but harmonious

By Karrie Ouchas, *In Solidarity*

In 2009, Premier Dalton McGuinty and his government laid down the foundation for a change in the Ontario tax system to a new “value-added” tax system. The provincial and federal governments penned a deal that blends Ontario’s Retail Sales Tax (RST) with Canada’s Goods and Services Tax (GST). The new Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) is effective as of July 2010. The rate is 13 per cent.

What is unclear is the definition of a “value-added” tax system. The Ontario government has stated the move to a blended tax system will create jobs and save the average taxpayer money. These declarations are made despite the evidence to the contrary and the public outcry against the tax transition.

Many products and services that are exempt from the provincial RST will be charged tax under HST. This will mean we will pay an additional 8 per cent at the cash register. Some of the goods and services previously exempt that will no longer be include:

- Gasoline
- Daily newspapers
- Household energy costs, such as hydro
- Haircuts
- Postal fees
- Condo fees
- Funeral services
- Legal fees

It is unclear if those in the Aboriginal community will continue to be exempt from provincial taxes at



the point of sale. Under RST, Aboriginal peoples living on a reserve, making purchases of goods and/or services for consumption on the reserve are exempt from RST.

Under the HST model, hidden taxes are eliminated, so consumers are told. HST on costs such as raw materials, manufacturing, transportation and retail costs, previously subject to RST and embedded in the purchase price, are reimbursable to the corporations and businesses that incur those costs. This leaves the end consumer responsible for the entire 13 per cent tax. Arguably, it can be said that with the elimination of the embedded tax the consumer is paying less. However, as much as

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Premier McGuinty believes that manufacturers of goods and service providers will reduce their costs/fees, it is unlikely to happen. Consumer costs will remain the same as businesses benefit from yet another tax break and the low-to-middle income working families struggle to pay the new tax on goods they require for basic necessities.

With the elimination of embedded taxes and the reimbursement of HST for businesses in the earlier stages of the supply chain, there is a decrease in revenues for the province. Will this affect the quality and quantity of social services provided in Ontario? Logic would prevail that the reduction in revenues will lead to cuts in provincial services. What remains is where those cuts will occur.

The HST benefits corporations and businesses. Yet, it places another financial burden on working and low income families already struggling with making ends meet.

OPSEU members in the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Revenue and Ministry of Government Services are already under attack with the divestment of Corporations Tax and the Ontario Child Care Supplement for Working Families to the federal government. More than 400 tax auditors left to join Canada Revenue Agency or took early retirement in April 2008. Many of the tax auditors that remained took transfers into RST branches. They are now looking at another round of surplus notices and more job displacement stresses.

Close to 1,000 OPSEU members are impacted directly or indirectly by the repeal of RST and the move to HST. ☹

Justice for pensioners

CUPE/CALM

Several thousand Nortel workers converged on Parliament Hill at the end of October to demand justice and to call on the federal government to overhaul Canada's unfair bankruptcy laws.

More than 2,000 Canadian companies are currently under bankruptcy protection. Protesters demanded that parliament must act now in order to change the law that sets out who gets paid when companies file for bankruptcy protection.

As it stands now, when an employer files for protection under the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act, workers go to the back of the line, behind other creditors, like banks and suppliers.

"It's about time that this Conservative government wakes up and gets tough with Nortel and other companies flagrantly stealing workers' deferred earnings," said Canadian Labour Congress president Ken Georgetti.

The CLC has a campaign, "Retirement Security for Everyone," to enhance pensions and to put in place pension protection insurance like they have in the U.K and the U.S. For details and campaign materials go to www.clc-ctc.ca. ☺



Unions not responsible for crisis

Dear *In Solidarity* Editor:

Are unions responsible for the economic crisis in Canada and the United States? The answer is a resounding NO.

Like every other organization, unions have their weak and strong points. Some believe unions have evolved into mini-bureaucracies, which raises concerns about their ability to stay in touch with their grassroots origins. Nevertheless, the overall goals and objectives of all unions to fight for and to maintain decent wages and benefits, as well as safe and fair working conditions for all employees, remain strong and will never change.

In presenting arguments against the above, one need only look closely at the economic realities of the day to know how offensively ridiculous such a belief truly is. Consider, if you will, ordinary workers who have been forced out on strike over the past decade to stop attempts to gut their collective agreements, to fight cutbacks and takeaways and to improve salaries to a decent living wage. Meanwhile, politicians successfully vote themselves double-digit increases and the cost of living rises out of control.

Just how are these workers responsible for bringing our economy to its knees? Given the horrific and unfair sacrifices that workers, such as CAW members (including their pensioners) have been blackmailed into making in order to gain government support for keeping their employers alive, how are they responsible for current economic hard times? If this theory is correct, why hasn't our troubled economy begun to turn around? How are we to believe that laid-off forestry industry workers, who have gone without severance and pension payments rightfully due to them by law, are responsible? Yet, the government would rather hand over taxpayer dollars to forestry industry owners (already in debt to them) in the form of bailouts?

Today, we face an unprecedented number of job losses. Thousands of Canadian workers, forced to pay into our so-called Employment Insurance Program, are

left to struggle on their own due to the unfair policies that drive it. But corporate executives continue to receive obscene bonuses, some sponsored by the government and being funded on the backs of taxpayers, regardless of bankruptcy and financial failure.

Mismanagement at all levels of government has led to the shocking disintegration of private pension funds which have left (or will leave) thousands of workers without income to which they are entitled in their old age, despite many years of hard work and contributions.

We are made to believe that minimum wage positions in the service and telemarketing industries, subsequently replacing tens of thousands of manufacturing and other higher paid jobs outsourced to other countries of the world, are sufficient to meet our needs and current standard of living. How, I ask, does any of this make unionized workers responsible for the current condition of our economy?

We need only ask ourselves: Who has truly suffered the greatest hardship as the result of the economic downturn? At the end of the day, the workers left standing will be responsible for picking up the tab for government overspending, through unfair tax grabs and further cuts to collective agreements.

While other such examples abound, I fear that space and time is running out. However, given these realities alone, I strongly believe that one would be hard-pressed to convince anyone that such an argument is feasible. In fact, in light of the above, I find the mere suggestion that unions are responsible for the economic woes in North America today not only ludicrous, but highly insulting to the intelligence of ordinary workers everywhere. ☺

Louise Fisher, Local 714
Retired Probation Officer, Lifetime OPSEU Member

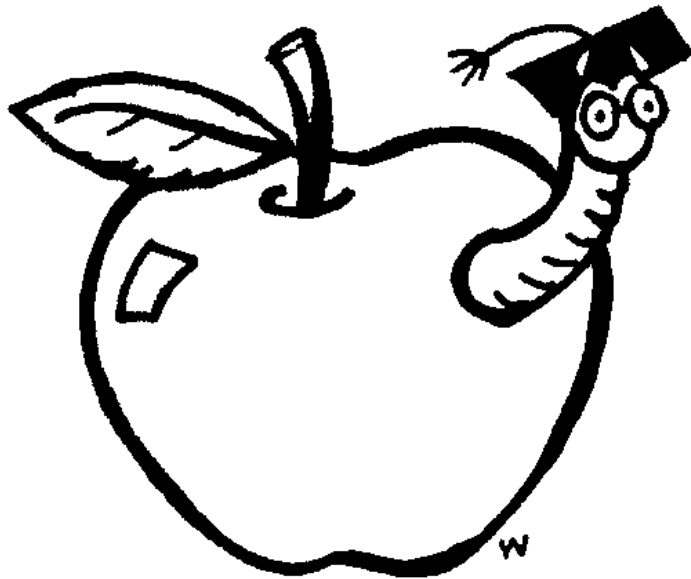


Letter to the Editor

Food for thought

Steward Update

Take a moment to check out what some great (and occasionally not so great) minds have had to say on work, solidarity, unionism, poverty and power – and more. Call it inspiration or call it entertainment, just a little bit can go a long way.



“When a man tells you that he got rich through hard work, ask him whose.”

- Donald Robert Perry

“What a union representative should never forget is the power of the men behind him.”

- Harry Bridges (1901-1990), longshore workers union leader

“Labour solidarity has no borders.”

- labour muralist Mike Alewitz, 1990

“No gains without pains.”

- Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790)

“An injury to one is the concern to all.”

- Terrance Powderly (1849-1924), leader, Knights of Labor

“The strength of a labour group remains within its own hands. No sort of legislation will work for weak unions. ‘Them as has, gets.’”

- Journalist Heywood Broun (1888-1939), 1937



The cat came back

Internet/CALM

A man hated his wife’s cat and decided to get rid of it by driving him 10 blocks from their home and leaving him in a park on the way to work.

Arriving home later in the day, he was surprised to see the cat walking up the driveway.

The next day, he drove the cat to the other side of town, pushed him out of the car and headed home. A few hours later, the cat turned up back at the house.

He continued to take the cat farther and farther away from their house but the cat always found his way back.

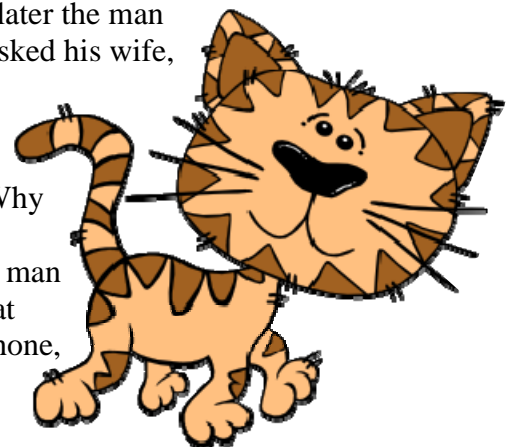
Finally, he packed up the cat and drove a circuitous route through the countryside, running

right, then left, over a bridge, along a river, through a wood until he reached what he thought was a good distance from his home and left the cat there.

Several hours later the man called home and asked his wife, “Jen, is the cat there?”

“Yes,” the wife answered. “Why do you ask?”

Frustrated, the man answered, “Put that wise guy on the phone, I’m lost and need directions.” 😊



OPSEU goes technical: Web conferencing

By Gary Shaul, Local 520

Background

With more than 120,000 members and thousands of elected representatives across the province, OPSEU has many committees. About one hundred of these committees are province-wide, with representatives from each region. We spend approximately \$3 million a year on travel by car and airplane.

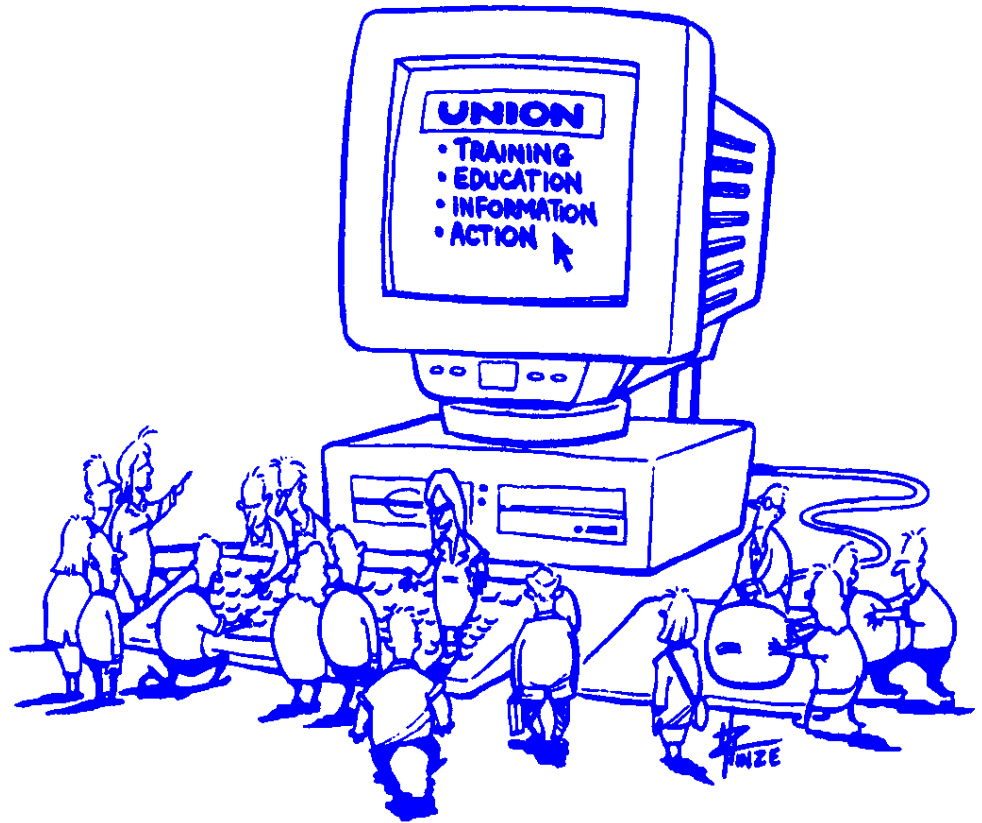
Greening OPSEU was established in 2006 in order for the union to do its part in preventing irreversible climate change and address other environmental issues. OPSEU's foremost greening priority is the reduction of energy use and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Energy use at OPSEU falls into four main areas - electricity, natural gas, gasoline and airplane fuel. In 2008, OPSEU's Executive Board set cumulative GHG reduction targets of approximately 2.5 per cent per year.

With the advent of new conferencing technologies, OPSEU is in an excellent position to reduce its energy use by replacing some "in person" meetings with online web conferences.

What is web conferencing?

Web conferencing is a communication tool that can be used for meetings, presentations, training, technical support and other applications. Unlike teleconferencing, which uses the phone system, web conferencing uses the internet.

In order to take part, participants need a



computer, audio device, a webcam and a high-speed cabled connection to the internet.

Web conferencing features

OPSEU's web conferencing tool is called E-Pop and has the following features:

- Participants can see, listen and speak to each other in real time
- Items can be shared so that all participants see the same thing at the same time:
 - Any type of electronic document (e.g. PowerPoint presentations, spreadsheets, video)
 - Any computer program (e.g. Word, Excel, Unionware)
- Web browser (e.g. Internet Explorer)

(Continued on page 15)

OPSEU goes technical: Web conferencing continued

(Continued from page 14)

Benefits of web conferencing

- Reduction of OPSEU's GHG emissions
- Increased capacity for committees to meet more frequently within their budgets
- Improved safety – e.g. reduced winter and night travel
- Improved accessibility – e.g. members who cannot travel frequently can participate
- Builds OPSEU's credibility in speaking on the environment

Scope – Year One

The main focus is on developing the infrastructure at each of OPSEU's regional offices to support online, province-wide committee meetings (groups of up to ten to twelve). Each staffed office has been equipped with a web conference-ready laptop. The network is also available for other purposes upon request.

Program overview

Upon request by committee chairs or staff, the OPSEU Resource Centre will:

- assign a unique URL for a password-protected, virtual conference room for each group using the network. Once created, the room can be used whenever required by the committee
- a “host” login profile for each room to give “sharing” controls to one participant

Up to 25 computers (seats) can be connected to the network at one time but it is expected that most meetings in the first year will have no more than ten or twelve participants. More than one group can meet at the same time as long as they don't require more than 25 seats in total. The ORC will track the number of users on a shared calendar available to all OPSEU staff.

Members and staff can participate from any staffed OPSEU office (unstaffed OPSEU Membership Centers may be added in the future). Participants can also connect from home *if* they meet all the technical requirements. Committee members must contact their nearest regional office if they need to borrow equipment and/or need meeting space.

On the day of the meeting, participants are expected to arrive about 30 minutes early in order to set up the laptop. Detailed instructions and a user guide are available. At least one regional office secretary per office has received training in case members require assistance.

For more information, please contact the OPSEU Resource Centre at 416-443-8888. Outside the Greater Toronto Area, call toll free at

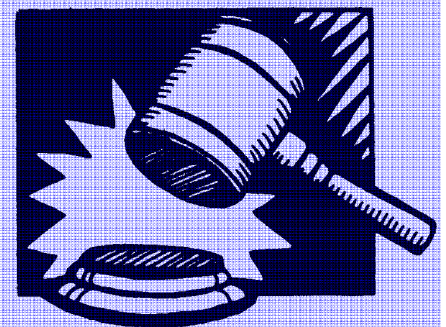
Supreme Court upholds right to demonstrate

CUPE/CALM

The Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear appeals from citizens demanding compensation for inconvenience suffered during a demonstration by Montreal workers in September 2003.

Initially, the Superior Court ordered the workers to pay a fine of \$25 to \$35 to 435 people. Subsequently, the Court of Appeal concluded that the right to travel by car without suffering undue delay does not fall under the Charter of Rights.

Representing the workers, president of CUPE Local 301, Michel Parent, welcomed the news. “This court decision enshrines our right to demonstrate,” Parent said.



Early detection saves lives

By Nancy Leeson, Local 727, In the Know

Cancer is a scary word, especially when it comes to yourself or your family. Over 10 years ago, it hit home to me.

When I first felt the lump in my breast, I left it for a month thinking it would go away. It didn't. When I phoned the clinic to make an appointment, they told me to come in that afternoon. After my doctor examined me, he did a needle biopsy. He, then, ordered an ultrasound and mammogram for the following week. The results came back inconclusive the next week. He suggested I see a surgeon.

When I saw the surgeon a week after that, he was just finishing his scheduled operations for the day. He suggested that I have a biopsy done right there and then. He didn't think it was cancer. However, the only way to be 100 per

cent sure was to perform a biopsy on it.

Talk about fast health care. Only two weeks after going to my family doctor, I was having surgery. It wouldn't happen this quickly nowadays.

The following Monday, I received a phone call from my family doctor. The biopsy results were positive. It was cancer.

When I met with the surgeon again a few days later to have the stitches from the original surgery removed, he told me that he had found TWO lumps. The one that I had discovered was not cancerous. The smaller one he had noticed just before closing me up was cancer. Even though the doctors were

right, the lump I had found was not cancer, my intuition was right in having it tested.

Now I had decisions to make. Did I want to go through chemotherapy and radiation, just radiation or have a mastectomy? I had to have my lymph nodes removed from under my arm to see if the cancer had spread and a bone scan to see if there was cancer in my bones. I decided to wait until I knew if it had spread before making any other decisions.

Two weeks later, I was again preparing for surgery. This time, it was to remove my lymph nodes; a surgery I wasn't too crazy about because I knew that it would cause damage to the nerves and leave my arm numb.

The results came back. No cancer. My bone scan was done next. Again, the results were negative.

By this time, I had seen the oncologist (cancer doctor). He suggested that I should still have chemo and radiation since I was so young. I agreed. I would be off work for over 14 months between the

treatments and the recovery. It was a relief to know that I had benefits from work and would get paid through short term sick pay and long term income protection (LTIP) insurance. Many do not get any wages while having treatments.

A month after my last surgery, I had chemo. For the next six months, I was tired and weak.

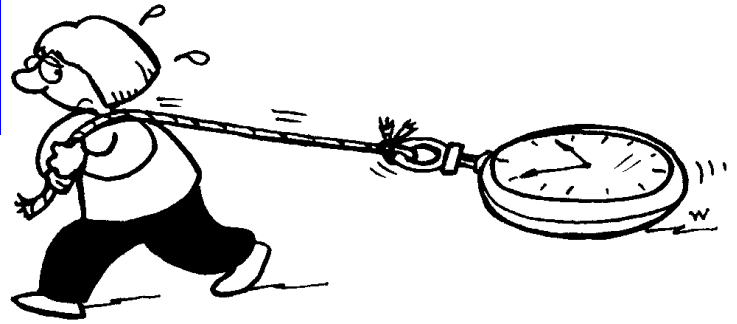
During this time, a fellow co-worker called. She was also battling breast cancer. We would talk and share. She persuaded me to come to the local support group meeting. I have been going ever since.

**STAY
HEALTHY**

(Continued on page 17)

Early detection saves lives continued

(Continued from page 16)



A month after I finished chemo, I was in Thunder Bay undergoing radiation. I stayed at the Amethyst House for the next six weeks. One just did not have time to recover.

After my radiation was done, and I was back home, I heard the news that my fellow co-worker had died from this terrible disease. It was a sad time indeed.

When I think back to this time now, I realize I was lucky to have all my test, operations and results so fast. I have heard many horror stories of wait times or mix-ups that are happening today.

My story doesn't end there. Two years later, I opted for blood tests to see if my cancer was genetic. The doctors didn't believe so since I had no immediate family members who had cancer. Again, they were wrong. I tested positive for the breast and ovarian cancer gene!

I received a mixture of messages from my doctors (surgeon, oncologist, radiologist, family doctor) on what I should do. In the end, I decided to have a full bilateral mastectomy (both breasts) and ovaries removed. I have yearly checkups now and for the rest of my life, since the gene means I have a 90 per cent chance of getting my cancer back.

Guys, don't forget you can get breast cancer, too. When I was having radiation, a man was also having radiation for breast cancer. No, it is not common, but it does happen. My cancer gene came from my father's side of the family. Even though my father has the gene, so far (at 92 years of age), he has not had cancer.

One never knows who will get cancer. Genes only account for about 25 per cent of breast cancers. Be aware. Anyone can get cancer, gene or no gene.

If you suspect anything, go with your gut and get checked. One of my friend's doctors told her he was 99.99 per cent sure it was not cancer TWO different times and for two different cancers. He was wrong both times. She didn't sit back. She insisted on being tested, even when the doctor didn't want to requisition the tests. She is still alive today.

If you suspect something, get it checked. Insist on it, if you have to. People of all ages, during all times of life, can get cancer. Do not go unchecked.

Early detection can save lives. 😊

Breast cancer wait times in Canada – 2008 Report Card

Abnormal screen to diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 weeks from screen to diagnosis, if biopsy required
Surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some provinces have established targets ranging from immediate (most urgent) to several weeks (less urgent) • 90 per cent of Ontario surgeries within 5.6 weeks
Radiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 weeks (Canadian benchmark)
Chemotherapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As soon as surgical incision healed. • Maximum safe wait times for early stage breast cancer is 12 weeks, with 4 – 8 weeks in the safe range. • Ontario median wait time is 5.6 weeks

OPSEU leading the way: Mental Illness in the Workplace course

By Laurie Sabourin, In Solidarity Committee

Part One: Understanding

Unions are beginning to take on a crucial role in the area of mental health in the workplace. Activists can help ensure the well being of their members by offering more support individually, working with the employer and challenging stigma.

OPSEU is leading the way. This year, OPSEU members and staff from across the province attended a two-day training course, entitled “Mental Health in the Workplace: Challenging the Stigma.” This course became available at regional educationals in the fall of 2009.

The financial and human costs of workplace mental health concerns are enormous. The Great West Life Centre for Mental Health in the Workplace website (www.gwlcentreformentalhealth.com) gives us staggering numbers for the economic impact of mental illness in our workplaces. The Canadian economy loses billions to mental health issues. Mental health disorders in the workplace cost Canadian companies nearly 14 per cent of their net annual profits and up to \$16 billion annually. Absenteeism is estimated to cost 7.1 per cent of payroll with the majority of absences considered stress related. At some point during their lifetime, one in five Canadians will experience a mental health issue such as anxiety or depression, most often during their prime working years.

Canadian CEOs have agreed that stress, burnout and

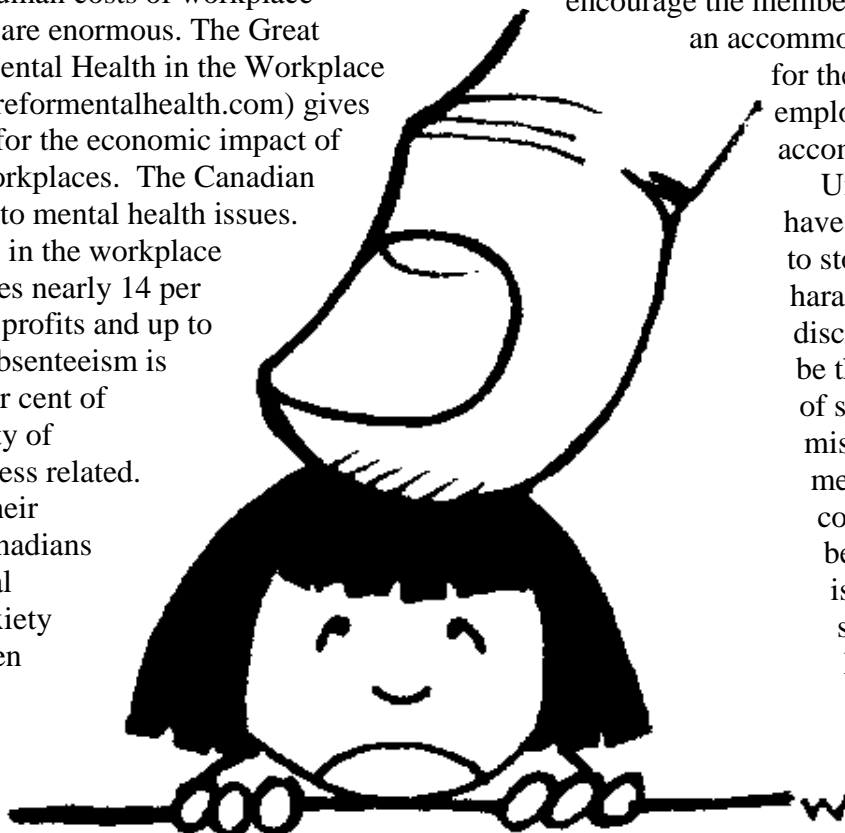
physical or mental health issues are the main concerns limiting productivity in the country. These conditions may lead to other health conditions. Stress on the job can double the risk of a heart attack. It has also been linked to infectious disease, cardiovascular problems and higher incidence of back pain, repetitive strain injuries and colorectal cancer.

Reducing Stigma: it's everyone's responsibility

Mental illness affects people of all ages in all kinds of jobs and at all educational levels. Union representatives have a unique role to play. Individuals with mental illness may need help when dealing with their employer. Union reps can

encourage the member to see the need for an accommodation or advocate for the employee with the employer to find accommodation solutions.

Union stewards also have a legal requirement to stop any workplace harassment or discrimination that can be the unfortunate result of stigma or misconceptions about mental illness. Some co-workers may believe their employer is giving the person special treatment. However, the issue must be addressed openly with the members. Other



(Continued on page 19)

members do not need to know the nature of the disability but they are more willing to accept the accommodation if it is addressed as a health concern. The union representative must balance the responsibilities of the member with mental illness and the other bargaining unit members.

Here are strategies to support the member who has a mental health concern:

- Familiarize yourself with the employer's accommodation policy and your collective agreement.
- Help the worker recognize that he or she has an issue and initiate a discussion about accommodation and the possible need for it. The grievance process may be too confrontational and adversarial for an individual experiencing or recovering from mental illness. Therefore, try to work with the employer for solutions.
- Listen carefully to the individual but know your limits and refrain from giving advice. Refer the member to a qualified individual who has the time and resources to help. Union stewards must concentrate on helping the individual resolve work-related issues.
- Support the member and keep in contact with her or him to make sure the accommodation process is working. An accommodation may need to be adjusted and open dialogue must occur between all parties for its success.



Remember to respect the confidentiality of personal medical information about any worker while being open about how any changes may affect others.



In our culture, there is a strong social stigma attached to having a mental illness. Stigma manifests itself in incorrect, negative stereotypes and discriminating behaviour. In our society there is much discomfort with mental illness. It is not seen like other illnesses such as heart disease and cancer; it has been labeled the invisible illness. Often the only way to know someone has a mental illness is if they disclose it. And pervasive stigma about mental illness makes it difficult for a person to acknowledge to themselves there's a problem, let alone disclose it to a work colleague.

The media has distorted our views and interpretations of mental illness. Television and movie character's behaviour are usually aggressive, dangerous and unpredictable. The characters are labeled "killers" or "psychos." News coverage of mental illness is only newsworthy if it is related to violence. Even casual conversations among friends, family and co-workers are casually laced with terms such as "lunatic" or "crazy" and jokes to describe those with a mental illness. All of these distort the public's views and reinforce the inaccuracies about mental illness.

As union leaders, we must understand mental health issues and expose the stigmas associated with them and communicate these insights to our members. Understanding is the first step to accepting. The antidote to stigma in the workplace is for the environment to be positive, encouraging and welcoming. 😊

Part two will discuss in-depth the accommodation rights and responsibilities of employers, employees, and unions.

Buy Canadian

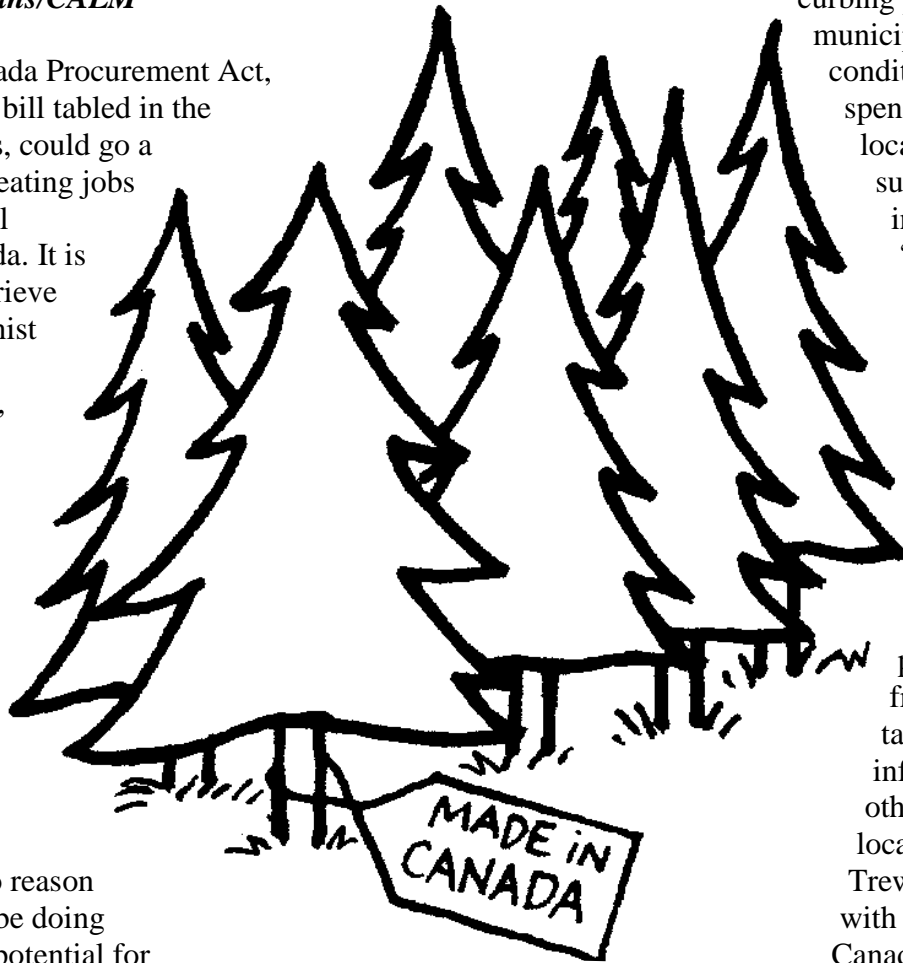
Council of Canadians/CALM

A Made In Canada Procurement Act, a private member's bill tabled in the House of Commons, could go a long way toward creating jobs and supporting local economies in Canada. It is also a welcome reprieve from anti-protectionist rhetoric from the Harper government, says the Council of Canadians.

"All of Canada's major trading partners, including the U.S., Europe and China, have ways to prioritize national companies when spending public money on major projects. There's no reason Canada should not be doing the same when the potential for job creation and economic growth is so promising," says Maude Barlow, national chairperson of the Council of Canadians.

As in the U.S. economic recovery legislation, the bill introduced by New Democrat MP Peter Julian, Burnaby-New Westminster, gives preference to Canadian companies in the transfer of money to the provinces, municipalities and private companies, or in the direct purchase of goods and services. It would also commit the government to buy goods and services from countries and companies that adhere to the International Labour Organization's core labour standards relating to the rights of workers.

Both these measures could be carried out under existing NAFTA and WTO guidelines on procurement without unfairly and unreasonably



curbing provincial and municipal powers to put conditions on public spending, including buy local or environmental sustainability initiatives.

"The Harper government has offered Canadians nothing but fear-mongering and anti-protectionist rhetoric against "Buy American" policies in the U.S. while seeking out new ways to curtail provinces and cities from spending public tax dollars for infrastructure and other major purchases locally," says Stuart Trew, trade campaigner with the Council of Canadians.

European Union trade officials have insisted that Canadian provinces reduce their spending powers and forgo local preference policies before the EU will enter into free trade talks with Canada. The Council of Canadians believes this is the Harper government's real motive for curbing provincial and municipal spending powers, and that Harper is using the controversy around Buy American policies to shield trade reforms that most Canadians would oppose.

"The Made In Canada Procurement Act is a welcome alternative to secretly negotiating new procurement agreements with the U.S. and Europe that threaten local and democratic solutions to the economic crisis," adds Barlow. ☺

Sleep habits: Tips for shift workers

MAHCP News/CALM

Too little sleep can result in loss of cognitive ability and decreased motor skills, which can result in an increase in accidents and on-the-job injuries.

You can improve your sleep time by:

- getting seven to eight hours of continuous sleep
- fixing your bedtime
- sleeping as soon as possible after a night shift
- making your sleeping quarters as dark as possible using white noise like fans or air conditioner units
- unplugging phones and fax machines
- disconnecting doorbells and intercom
- asking neighbours, friends and family not to disturb you while sleeping
- telling children that there should be no interruptions during your sleep
- hiring a babysitter
- not watching the clock
- taking time to unwind, especially after a hectic shift.



Avoid:

- caffeine four hours before sleep time
- strenuous exercise or activity just before sleeping time
- nicotine or alcohol
- sleeping pills or sleep aids

Be as routine as you can about your bedtime. Take all medications and vitamin supplements at the same time every day. If working shift, take vitamin D to make up for your loss of sunlit hours. If sleep eludes you, get out of bed and read a book or watch television for a little while, until you feel more tired.

And, remember, a healthy lifestyle promotes healthy sleep. 😊

Management's 4Ds

OPSEU 166 Newsletter

1. **DELAY:** The pattern of postponing action on an issue until the members have lost interest or hope.
2. **DENIAL:** Refusing to recognize that there is even a problem to be addressed.
3. **DISCREDITING:** Undermining the ability and the moral authority of the union activists (often by spreading rumours).

4. **DIVISION:** Finding a group of workers who aren't concerned about this issue and pitting them against the union.

Each of these is a challenge to our creativity and skill.

- The 4Ds should be expected.
- The 4Ds should be prepared for.
- The 4Ds should be fought with strategy as well as outrage.

Source: D'Arcy Martin, www.thinkingunion.net

Corrections march in Pride

By Nancy Hart-Day, Local 234

Coming out of the closet. Who would have ever thought we would be doing it in Corrections? In 2009, that's exactly what we did. For the first time, I and a few others represented Ontario Correctional Services in the Toronto Pride Parade.

For the past twenty years or so, I have attended the Gay Pride celebrations in Toronto, held every June. I always look forward to the Pride weekend celebrations. This is the one time during the whole year I can celebrate life, feel comfortable in my sexuality and embrace our diverse community. More importantly, it's a weekend I feel free from discrimination, fear-mongering and ignorance. I felt safe enough to walk down the street, holding my partner's hand, and not have to worry about being stared at, ridiculed or bashed. This event provides a sense of belonging.

In the past, amidst the laughter, clapping, dancing and celebrating during the parade, a sense of sadness and shame would overcome me, as I watched men and women in various uniforms marching with pride. These uniformed people were members of the Fire Department, Ontario Provincial Police and various other police forces from all different regions across the province. The most recent uniformed group represented was the Canadian Armed Forces. Yet, there was no representation from Corrections. Until now. The last door was finally opening for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) employees in Correctional Services.

As we were standing in the pouring rain, waiting for the parade to start and the clouds to part, we began to wonder. Is this march really going to happen? It was the anticipation of it all, waiting for

Photo courtesy of Nancy Hart-Day



the moment to occur. It felt like I was coming out of the closet all over again, but now on a much bigger stage. No longer hiding who we are and clearly identifying that we exist here, too. We exist in our community offices and behind the walls of our institutions in Correctional Services. It felt like a moment of truth.

It was an emotional moment as we turned that corner to start the parade down Yonge Street. There was no turning back, no time for regret. Now we are clearly identifying ourselves. I felt we were marching for those that couldn't. We were letting others know that they don't have to be afraid and they are not alone. It felt very important to be marching in uniform, under our banner of Correctional Services. We became part of the larger LGBTQ justice community. The first public appearance of the Pride in Corrections Affinity Group and their supportive allies at the parade was an unforgettable experience.

Sometimes you have to be seen in order to be heard, and we were claiming our voice. 😊

A weekend to remember ...celebrated in style

By Dora Robinson, Vice-Chair, Provincial Women's Committee

This past November, the 25th Anniversary of the OPSEU Provincial Women's Committee (PWC) was celebrated at the 2009 biannual Women's Conference. 150 participants travelled to Richmond Hill to enjoy eye opening seminars, empowering guest speakers and networking opportunities.

Tackling the conference theme, "Women's Empowerment in Difficult Economic Times" began with a powerhouse line-up of guest speakers. On opening night, Sister Patty Rout, OPSEU 1st Vice-President/Treasurer brought her greetings and opening remarks, getting us started down the road to learning and sharing our experiences and finally calling upon us to act. Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Ontario NDP, spoke about the current economic crisis and the dismal failure of the current Liberal government to pro-actively respond to the issues. She addressed the problems of contingent workers and

the impact the economic downturn has on women in our local communities.

The 25th anniversary celebration was shared with veterans of the women's movement. We were honoured by the presence of these strong, independent, history-making women, many of whom are still active in the union and their communities. Maxine Jones, an early PWC critic, gave a fiery speech about the usefulness of a women's committee and challenged us to look at exactly how much change has occurred over the decade. She certainly got our attention!

The weekend included a screening of Mary Walsh's, "Poor No More" and was followed by an intimate talk by OPSEU's LBED member, Vicki Baier, who participates in the film. Vicki's personal story and her experience as a contingent worker put a human face on the conference theme. Our plenary panel consisted of three powerful women who discussed women's issues from an international,

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A weekend to remember ...celebrated in style

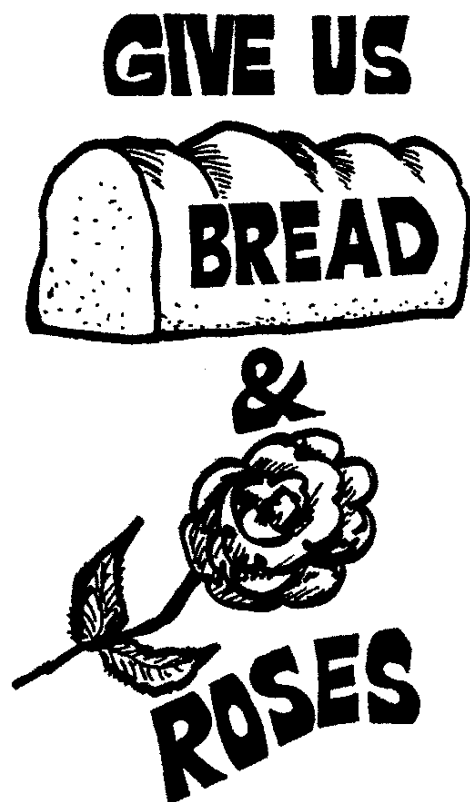
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labour and community perspective. The information was incredible. Our thinking was challenged throughout the weekend workshops.

We met in regional groups to discuss to develop viable action plans for the union and our communities. Talking the talk is not enough; strategizing about how to “walk the walk” and make a difference is where we need to focus. The regions will roll out their plans over the next couple of years. We meet again at the next conference in 2011.

The list of women's issues continues to grow, the needs ever deeper and the call for change even louder. The women of OPSEU are cohesive, strong, informed and active participants in their various lived experiences. They continue to struggle for pay equity and a decent living wage; the need for a national childcare program; an end to violence and the restoration of funding to advocacy and research for women's programs.

We will keep our eyes on the ball, move forward and work together to realize the kind of economic and social equality women deserve. ☺



Newsletter course exposed

By John Francis, Local 346

Attendees at other OPSEU education sessions listened, awe struck, to the screams and cries for mercy that rang out from the Westhill Room this weekend. Don Ford and Laurie Sabourin reduced hardened union activists to quivering, whimpering imbeciles during the New Newsletters course.

Participants bled from their fingertips as they were forced to type article after article for imaginary newsletters. They were dragged screaming into a second childhood during relentless craft sessions of cut and paste, using actual scissors, paper and glue. (Can no one smuggle a copy of Microsoft Publisher to them?) Heaven help you if you pasted a crooked article. A big stick was never actually produced, but it was certainly implied.

All attempts at escape failed as, one by one, their iron wills were broken.

As you travel home after your enjoyable weekend, spare a thought for your fallen newsletter sisters and brothers. Don't let their sacrifice be in vain. Support your local newsletter. ☺

Brother Francis attended the Region 3 Educational Weekend, from November 21 – 22, 2009, at the Delta East, Toronto. He participated in the New Newsletters course, facilitated by Don Ford, OPSEU Communications Officer and Laurie Sabourin, In Solidarity Committee member. At the end of the two-day course, groups are expected to produce a newsletter, to be distributed to all Educational participants. This was Brother Francis' humorous contribution, which was simply too good not to be shared.



Crossing the lines

By Wade Stevenson, Local 329

In April 2009, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) honoured me with the OPSEU Human Rights Award. This award is given to individuals who make outstanding contributions to human rights related issues that benefit the broader union.

As I stated in my remarks when I accepted the award at OPSEU's 2009 Annual Convention, the award is not simply about me. It's about all people.

Someone nominated. The OPSEU Executive Board debated all nominations. They voted. And I was chosen to receive this award.

This may lead some to ask, who is this person? What have they done and why is it so important?

My name is Wade Stevenson. I used to have little to do with the union, other than paying my dues, reading the occasional newsletter and reviewing the OPSEU website.

A little more than 18 months ago, that all changed. I contacted the union to get some assistance with an accommodation matter that had been sitting before the employer since June 2007. I'd approached my employer and stated simply that I identify as *transgender* or, more precisely, a *cross dresser*. I indicated that I intended to incorporate this into my work life, rather than having just a part of myself at work and spending energy hiding a vital part of who I am.

This threw the employer into a state of confusion. Suddenly, my employer was confronted with a situation they had never dealt with before. Many

questions were asked. Then, my employer stopped talking altogether. They retreated to their "ivory tower," hoping I would go away; that the situation would vanish. This led me to become increasingly frustrated and had a negative impact on my mental health. That's when I decided to ask the union for help.

My journey led me to OPSEU's Equity Department. I was referred to Philip Shearer, past

Chair of the Provincial Human Rights Committee (PHRC). I told Philip my story at a private meeting in London, Ontario. His initial reaction was nothing short of "wow." What is this and how do we deal with it? This was a rare situation. We were unaware of

any other labour union in Ontario with the same or similar experience.

Now the research began. Education was hard to come by. I give Philip a lot of credit here. He took the lead and took great effort to find out exactly what "transgender" and "cross dresser" meant.

Transgender is a state of one's gender identity that doesn't match one's assigned birth sex of either male or female. It is an umbrella term often used to describe gender variant identities, such as transsexual, cross dresser, gender queer, etc. The precise definition remains in a state of flux and will change as our understanding of gender evolves.

Cross dresser – is a term used to describe an individual who temporarily adopts clothing and an identity consistent with the opposing birth gender.

These definitions are, at best, simplistic and will



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Crossing the lines continued

(Continued from page 25)

likely change as our collective understanding of gender evolves.

The research uncovered potential barriers. I'll describe a few from my point of view.

1. What about the issue of identification for two separate identities in the same person? I told my employer that I wanted two separate pieces of workplace identification issued; one reflecting my male persona, the other my female person.
2. Then, of course, was the issue of names. Would I continue to use a single name, change my name legally or use two names according to my presentation? How would the employer handle this?
3. Which washroom should I use?
4. How often would I dress as a woman and where?
5. What are the legalities?
6. What about education? There were little resources about how to accommodate a cross dresser in the workplace.
7. What are my rights as an employee?
8. How do we address an employer resistant to change?

Those are just some of the barriers that came up initially. Others have come since and more will crop up as things continue to evolve for me.

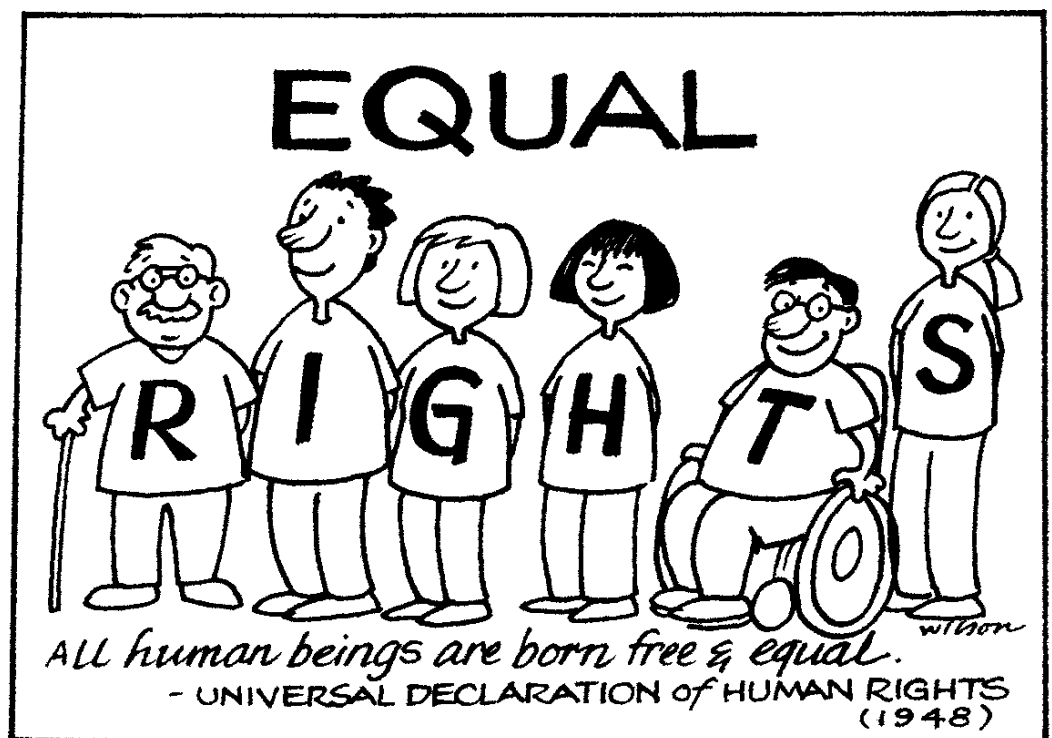
Well, my story quickly unfolded from there. I "came out" at work. More than that, I realized OPSEU needed to be more educated about gender variant identity. With the Rainbow Alliance, I developed a workshop entitled "Bending the

Binary – Practicing Gender Expression in the Workplace." This workshop was presented by Judy Robertson and I at the 2nd Annual International Human Rights Conference on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Rights in Copenhagen, Denmark in July 2009.

Why is this important? It is up to the individual to determine that for themselves. But, here is why it is important to me.

It highlights that human beings don't always fit into the molds created by society. We have a duty to ensure that no individual is oppressed. Despite our differences, we are all human beings. We need to remember that in order to grow and flourish. Labour unions have a role to play as well, by promoting social change.

In this case, OPSEU stepped up and pushed for the rights of one person, despite the obstacles and lack of precedence. In so doing, our union took a leading role in promoting human rights for all of us.



My bucket list

By Felicia Fahey, *In Solidarity*

As union activists, members of society, members of families, volunteers, employees, we are always asked to produce; to meet deadlines and multitask, often beyond our means. We sometimes wonder if we can keep up to the fast pace of our ever changing world. During an autumn training session at the LCBO this year, a group of colleagues and I took part in a Train-the-Trainer session. The task before us was to do a five-minute presentation to the class. The purpose was to get us used to speaking in front of people. The presentation could be on anything, ranging from how to make a low carb mojito to swinging a baseball bat correctly.

As a trained public speaker, I thought the task seemed relatively simple. The only difficulty I could see was cutting my long-winded and story-telling tendency into a five minute dialogue (I am known to speak in five-minute long sentences). I sat down and began to think about what would make a great presentation. Being very competitive and a perfectionist made it difficult to decide. What could I do that people would really think was interesting? I was stumped. I couldn't believe it. A colleague asked, "Well, what are you good at doing?" Still nothing.

Then it came to me: my bucket list. A bucket list is defined as a list of things to do before you die. It comes from the term "kicked the bucket."

After watching my 29-year old girlfriend with three children lose her courageous battle with cancer, I became obsessed with living life to its fullest. You never know when your time is up, so make the time you have count. I try to tell everyone I know to slow down and smell the roses. With that, I urged the class to stop. Pause for the five minutes the employer was giving us during the presentation and think about their lives and what's really important to them.

We are always asked as activists and employees to do things for others. Rarely are we asked to do things for ourselves. After reading this, just stop. Take just a few minutes to do the exercise I gave my class.

Start your own bucket list. It can be open ended but at least start it. If you never stop to think about what is truly important to you, how can you ever be expect to get it done? Life cannot be rewound. You cannot hit the age of eighty and decide, "Wow, I should have done that." By then, it is often too late.

The template below is a simple "Bucket List" format. I welcome you to come up with two things you want to accomplish for each category and start living for each day. I have provided a few samples from my own bucket list. Have fun.

Remember the words of Abraham Lincoln - *"In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years."* ☺

Family	Travel	Financial/Career
~to watch both my girls walk down the aisle	~to take my husband to Las Vegas	~To buy cottages for my kids next to each other
Education	Events	Random
~To learn how to gourmet cook	~go see Billy Joel and Elton John in concert together	~to volunteer at a children's cancer camp

Transportation transformation: Car sharing

By Elizabeth Reynolds, Local 520
(founder of AutoShare – Car Sharing Network Inc.)

Car Sharing Definition

The Victoria Transportation Policy Institute offers this comprehensive definition of car sharing:

“Carsharing refers to membership-based automobile rental services intended to substitute for private vehicle ownership. It makes occasional use of a vehicle affordable, even for low-income households, while providing an incentive to minimize driving and rely on alternative travel options as much as possible.”

Car Sharing in Canada

Car Sharing is perhaps the most significant change in car use patterns since Henry Ford began paying his workers enough to afford one of his cars. When cars were first produced at the turn of the century, they were impractical and expensive, but they did provide an environmental benefit. They cleaned the streets of horse manure. Today, from global warming to asthma, road rage to near-constant gridlock, the car's original benefits to society are now eroding our quality of life.

The automobile's impact is so significant precisely because of its success. Although 80 per cent of Canadians live in cities, Canada has one of the highest ratios of car ownership in the world, nearly one for every two people. More than 16 million cars now traverse Canada's roads. Each car travels, roughly 16,000 km per year...a total of some 256 billion kilometers.

Integrated Mobility

Car sharing helps create the shift towards more sustainable transportation in two principal ways – by sharing the fixed costs of car ownership among many users and by increasing mobility options, especially when car sharing can be linked to other modes of transportation, such as public transit, railways and inter-city buses, car rentals and taxis, bicycle rentals and parking authorities.

Environmental Concerns

Technological improvements over the last 20 years have already done much to reduce the environmental impact of the individual car, but much of the ground gained through technological improvement is lost as we drive more cars greater distances. We need multiple strategies to address how we will transport goods and ourselves in the coming years — urban planning initiatives, economic strategies, education, and most importantly at the individual level, behavioural change — to lessen our dependence on the automobile.

Because it is so tightly woven into the fabric of our life, the car presents a special kind of environmental dilemma. There is the need to reduce the environmental damage associated with it, while at the same time preserving the advantages it has given us. Reconciling these objectives presents a challenge uniquely met by car sharing.

Numerous studies have, logically, linked increased driving with higher levels of car ownership. The question becomes how to disentangle ownership and use of the automobile. The success of car sharing in Europe over the past 25 to 30 years, and elsewhere in North America over the last decade, proves that it provides a level of access similar to car ownership, but less burdensome and costly.

In reality, car sharing participants gradually reduce the total amount they drive quite significantly, 50 per cent and more, without feeling deprived of the resource or any loss of personal mobility. This is achieved by the fact that using a car sharing automobile becomes a conscious, rather than a reflexive, act and over time a much lower level of car dependency is realized.

Additionally, organized car sharing present a real opportunity to introduce alternatively fueled and electric vehicles to a wider market in order to hasten the implementation these advanced technologies, further reducing emissions, and even more so where electricity can be obtained from renewable sources.

(Continued on page 29)

Transportation transformation: Car sharing continued

(Continued from page 28)

Individual and Societal Benefits of Car Sharing

Car sharing demonstrably contributes to reduced congestion and air pollution and saves users money. The benefits of car sharing are summarized as follows:

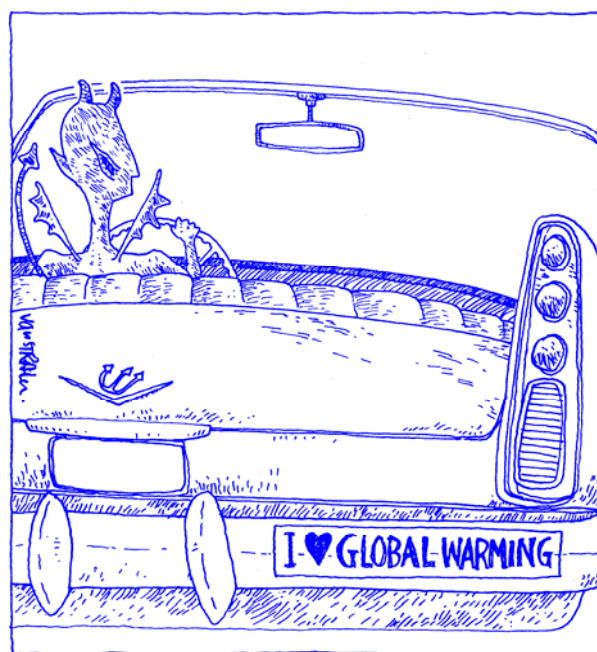
- Low cost access to a fleet of vehicles through shared use. This benefit reduces the total cost of car travel to individual participants and results in more efficient use of expensive vehicles;
- Maintenance and insurance are pooled with costs shared among users and recovered through fees;
- Mobility options are increased through access to cars for those who did not previously own a car. Car sharing can also provide access to different types of vehicles, from economy cars to station wagons, minivans and light trucks. Where these choices are available, mobility options are increased compared with ownership.
- Car sharing can be a cost-effective alternative to ownership of more than one vehicle.
- Car owners are confronted with the full marginal costs of a personal vehicle use each time they drive a car share vehicle. Experience has shown that use of public transit, walking, cycling and other alternatives to single occupancy car use, increases among car sharers as they adjust their lifestyle to their new portfolio of transportation options.
- Since car sharing increases public transit use, transit agencies have a new source of riders and revenue as car sharing grows within urban areas.
- Studies have shown that car sharing decreases per capita annual vehicle kilometers traveled and energy consumption from personal vehicle use by approximately 50 per cent. This can have a significant impact on the potential to reduce air pollution from cars, including emissions of greenhouse gases and ground level smog.
- Car sharing can reduce the amount of parking spaces required in cities since the average ratio is one vehicle for approximately 15 to 20 users, and since car sharing vehicles are in use for more hours per day than personally owned vehicles, there are fewer vehicles parked at any one time.

- For communities, car sharing can mean fewer cars impinging on neighbourhood space and improves social equity for those previously deprived of access to a personal vehicle.
- Where car sharing vehicles are located at subway and bus stations, car sharing becomes an option for transit riders at both ends of the transit portion of a given trip. In such situations, car sharing can contribute to reduced peak-hour road congestion.
- Car sharing can improve mobility options and the overall livability of higher density urban developments. Developers of residential, industrial and commercial properties can benefit from the reduced costs of providing parking infrastructure in areas where car sharing is coupled with public transit access and other transportation alternatives.
- Car sharing can be formally organized as either for-profit or non-profit businesses, but it can also be less formally organized on a neighbourhood, apartment building or workplace basis.

Conclusion

Car sharing is an innovation that can have a profound, long-term impact on how personal vehicles are owned and operated. Shared use of the expensive resource represented by the personal automobile can make an important contribution to reducing many of the negative societal impacts of these vehicles. ☺

Note: *this is an abbreviated version of an article that appeared in the Journal of World Transportation Policy and Practice in July, 1999. E.R.*



Representing difficult members

Consider these steps to take, and to avoid, when dealing with difficult members

Steward Update

Few stewards would argue that most of their union work flows directly from problems with management. Contract misinterpretations and outright violations, thoughtless supervision, paperwork foul-ups and a million other things go wrong all the time, adding up to a real handful for stewards.

That's why it can be such a frustration and disappointment when some of your most difficult problems come not from management, but from your own ranks.

If you've been a steward for any length of time, you've certainly dealt with difficult members. These can be people who constantly attack the steward and the union over one issue or another or demand the impossible – and then get angry when the impossible can't be made to happen. And then there are those co-workers who are whiners – always complaining and nagging the steward for help, but never doing anything to help themselves.

The fact is, most of your co-workers are probably fine folks. It's just that occasional difficult person who might be making you wonder why you ever agreed to be a steward in the first place.

The question is, what can you do about it?

A good start would be to try to understand why members sometimes act in these difficult ways. You've seen them all, at one time or another:

1. Members with legitimate complaints about the union or steward;
2. Members who demand "service" in exchange for their dues, because they view the union like an insurance company or other service they buy;
3. Members who seem to cause difficulty in everything they do, perhaps for psychological reasons.

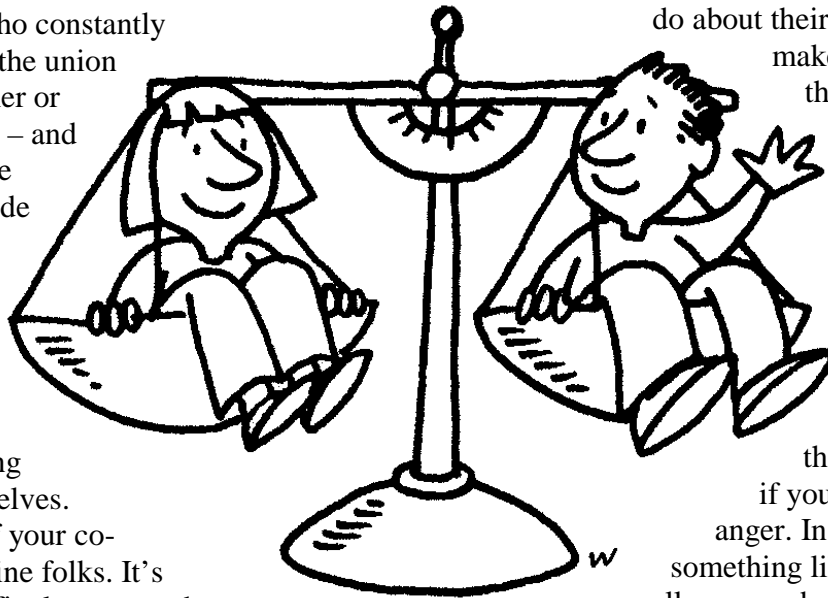
Don't yield to temptation

It can be tempting – and easy – to put people into Category 3. But think long and hard before you do this. Listen to their complaints so you really understand where they're coming from.

And keep in mind that you have a legal obligation, under your Duty of Fair Representation responsibilities, to do your best possible job on their behalf. Be really sure that there's nothing you can do about their complaints before you make the decision to reject them. Whatever the

cause for the anger, when a co-worker is mad you need to defuse the situation before you can get down to business. People who are angry usually just get more agitated if you tell them to "calm down" or

if you respond with more anger. Instead, firmly say something like, "I see that you are really angry about this. I want to hear what you have to say, but I can't do that if you keep yelling."



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Representing difficult members continued

(Continued from page 30)

A legitimate complaint

If the member has a legitimate complaint, look for constructive ways they can help you solve their problem. If someone screwed up, acknowledge it and focus on what can be done now to make things better. Try to involve other members in the discussion and the solution, if possible.

If members are in the “service model” mindset and are demanding their “money’s worth,” you have an education job to do. Scolding or lectures about what a union is, and what is expected of union members, will probably just make the situation worse. Show members that *they* are the union by the way you do your job. Keep them informed about everything, talking to them one-on-one as necessary. Whenever there are problems in your workplace, call members together to plan actions to get solutions.

And that co-worker who is definitely a Category 3 type? Well, there is an old saying, “If you wrestle with a pig you both get dirty and the pig likes it.” In other words, don’t get sucked into this individual’s personal problem. Don’t argue or get into long discussions with him or her – it almost always gets you nowhere. Instead, make clear, firm statements that don’t engage the complainer. Say things like, “I hear what you said, and I’m sorry you feel that way, but now I have work to do.” You may even have to repeat it several times. Eventually the difficult person will see that they can’t get you to “wrestle” with them and they will move on to something or someone else.

In all situations, it’s important that you have developed good relationships with the members you represent: your bet resource in dealing with difficult members is almost always going to be your ability to draw on other members for help and understanding. 😊

*** All Steward Update articles are reprinted courtesy of Union Communications Services Inc., 1633 Connecticut Ave. NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20009. To order a subscription, you can call 1-800-321-2545.

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A Labour Minute



Martin Luther King’s last battle

During the 1960s, the 1,300 Black men who worked for the Memphis sanitation department weren’t a great deal better off than their slave ancestors.

Wages were so low that men working full time as garbage truck crew could still qualify for welfare if they had a family. A worker injured on the job could be fired.

The workers asked the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) for help.

Shortly after the union agreed to represent them, a rain storm caused an electrical short in a garbage truck compactor and two men were crushed to death. No compensation was paid to their families.

Frustrated and angry, the sanitation workers walked out on strike. The city management brought in scabs and refused to recognize the union.

Peaceful picketing, marches and sit-ins were met with mass arrests, tear gas and brutal beatings by the police riot squad.

Civil rights leader Martin Luther King was busy planning the Poor People’s March on Washington, but came to help organize support for the strikers.

On April 3, 1968, Dr. King delivered his famous “I have been to the mountain top” speech to a hall filled with strikers and their families. The following day, he was murdered by a racist gunman.

The assassination prompted people to travel to Memphis by the thousands and march and demonstrate in support of the strikers.

The city caved in and bargained a decent contract, which not only ended the 63-day strike, but gave AFSCME the momentum to organize municipal workers across the southern states.

Martin Luther King was a long-time friend of organized labour. The last, great struggle of his life was on behalf of a group of downtrodden, oppressed workers and their union.

Labour Minutes recount the history of working people and take just a minute to read.

-Dishaw-Roy

Activism in Colombia: Strength and courage

By Jennifer Giroux, Region 6 EBM

The life of an activist is hardly easy. The life of an activist in Colombia can be life-threatening.

At OPSEU's 2007 Annual Convention, delegates voted to boycott *Coca-Cola* products based on known human rights and labour rights abuses at their Colombian bottling facilities. The same resolution expanded to include a commitment by OPSEU to lobby the Canadian government to not enter into a Free Trade Agreement with the Colombian government.

It was with this in mind that an OPSEU delegation was sent to Colombia in August 2009: Jennifer Giroux, Region 6 Executive Board Member, Jamie Ramage, Chair of the Broader Public Service and the Ambulance Division, Brenda Wall, OPSEU Campaigns Officer, Heino Nielsen, Administration in Policy, Planning and Programs, Archana Mathew, OPSEU Equity Officer and Yhony Munoz, Local 256 member.

OPSEU is not the first Canadian union to send a delegation to Colombia. However, with Brother Munoz at the helm of the project, this solidarity mission was very different. Brother Munoz has a vast knowledge of the country and the experiences of labour and human rights activists there.

The OPSEU delegation had the opportunity to meet with numerous organizations and individuals who could provide on-the-ground experience and insight.

The agenda certainly kept us on the move. In the two and a half weeks that we were in Colombia, we stopped in five different cities and met with over thirty organizations, ranging from trade unions, to human rights organizations, to politicians, including Canada's own ambassador to Colombia.

Meeting with the activists throughout Colombia was an eye-opening experience. Colombia is a country with 30 million people living below the poverty line. An estimated 14 million live on the streets. More than 6 million are under-nourished. The legal minimum wage roughly equals \$250 per month, and comes only after working long, exhausting hours.

In comparison, an exceptionally small portion of the population is extremely wealthy, holding the

(Continued on page 33)



Jennifer Giroux, Jamie Ramage, Brenda Wall, Archana Mathew, Heino Nielsen and Yhony Munoz

Activism in Colombia: Strength and courage

(Continued from page 32)

majority of power over the vastly impoverished. A mere 6 per cent of the population owns over 70 per cent of the land. The country's media outlets are largely owned by the family of the vice-president, leaving few opportunities for the stories of the people to be told.

Over and over again, the OPSEU delegation saw firsthand the mission of President Alvaro Uribe's government to privatize all public services throughout the country. The President is utilizing extraordinary measures to ensure that this happens, no matter what the cost is to the country and its people; from hauling doctors and nurses out of hospitals and onto waiting buses and immediately replacing them with privatized contract workers to using "demobilized" paramilitaries to intimidate

workers and activists by way of threats, assaults, murders and disappearances.

The stories that we heard during our time in Colombia were deeply personal and traumatic. The strength it took for individuals to recount their experiences was nothing short of heroic. Although speaking out and sharing experiences is certainly a risk to these activists, they choose to speak out because it is the only way of having their stories told. Repeatedly during the trip, we were thanked by individuals for not only taking the time to meet with them, but for listening, documenting and promising to share their stories.

For a full account of OPSEU's solidarity tour in Colombia, check out:

<http://opseu-colombia.blogspot.com/>

For more information on the Coca Cola issue, check out the new documentary film, "The Coca Cola Case." ☺

Largest increase in food bank use

Food Banks Canada/CALM

Results of the HungerCount 2009 Survey show food banks across Canada helped 794,738 separate individuals in March 2009, an increase of 17.6 per cent, or almost 120,000 people, compared to March 2008—the largest increase since 1997.

Of the 794,738 people helped, 9.1 per cent stepped through the front door of a food bank for the first time.

"Food banks have unfortunately seen first-hand the effects of three recessions in three decades," said Katharine Schmidt, executive director of Food Banks Canada.

The need for food banks increased in every region. The profiles of those assisted is as varied as in past years:

- 37 per cent of those assisted by food banks are under 18.

- Nearly half of assisted households are families with children.
- 19 per cent of households that turn to food banks for help each month are living on income from current or recent employment.

- 6.3 per cent of assisted households report some type of pension as their primary source of income.

"It is likely that hunger in Canada is even more widespread than HungerCount findings suggest," Schmidt said. "For every person who turns to a food bank for help, several others in need of assistance do not ask for it. Canadians need to focus on long-term, policy-based solutions to resolve the problem of hunger." ☺

www.foodbankscanada.ca



Have you found your Spark?

By Felicia Fahey, In Solidarity Committee

At a time when more people are recognizing the importance of being healthy, a new website has been developed to help people with that very goal. SparkPeople was created in 2001 by Chris Downie and is growing by leaps and bounds.

The website was developed by Downie after he sold his online auction site, similar to eBay, for an estimated \$70 million. This left him with lots of money and nothing to do. Downie got the idea to create the website after creating his own program to help cope with his shyness and anxiety as a teenager. He decided to start a website specifically intended to “spark” millions of people to reach their healthy lifestyle goals. “There are websites that focus on weight loss and others that focus on goal setting and motivation but none out there combine the two,” he said.

SparkPeople is 100 per cent free. Downie has sunk over \$5 million of his own money into this website. He says it’s his mission in life help people. “This is our (family’s) way to give back and help the world,” he says.

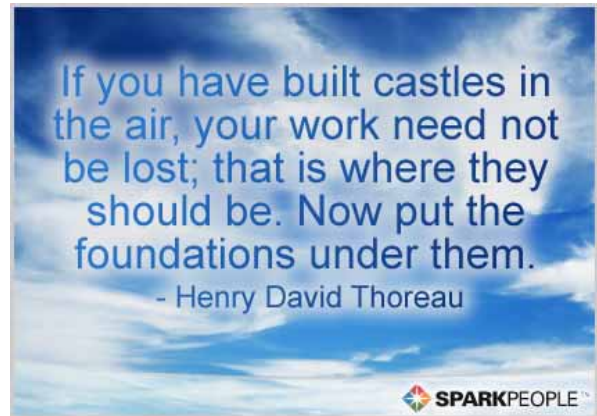
SparkPeople offers exercise routines, menu planning, recipes, food tracking/calorie counters,

interactive motivation, peer chat, message boards, motivational articles, videos and much more. This website has been recognized by medical professionals across North America.

SparkPeople hosts a variety of sites, including SparkTeens, SparkRecipes, DailySpark and SparkAmerica.

In a world where nothing is free, it is refreshing to come upon a site like SparkPeople. It is easy to use and truly focuses on the end user. Business Week magazine named sparkpeople.com Best On-line Health Website in 2006, 2007 and 2008.

If you have been looking for a site to help you get healthy, check out the website or sign up at www.sparkpeople.com. ☺

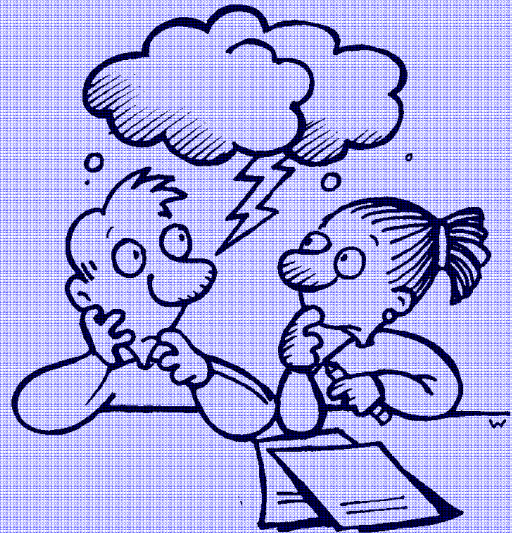


Tease your brain

There are three switches downstairs. Each corresponds to one of the three light bulbs in the attic. You can turn the switches on and off and leave them in any position.

How would you identify which switch corresponds to which light bulb, if you are only allowed one trip upstairs?

Solution on page 35.





Listen to your body's warning signals

By Edwin Mercurio, Local 526

Do you ever wonder how we care more for our cars than our body? We do regular oil changes, timely overhaul of our car's engine and follow the vehicle manufacturer's maintenance schedule.

The daily routine of our jobs, family and home are taking a heavy toll on our bodies. Research shows that sitting daily at work in front of our computer is more stressful than heavy lifting.

Writers, lawyers and educators know that mental work consumes more energy than manual labour.

Stress and body fatigue are the after effects of our modern day society. But we often ignore the warning signals our body tells us. If our car flashes the "check engine" sign, we immediately drive to our friendly mechanic or car dealership repair shops. Ignoring this sign means more problems for our pockets, being stranded on busy highways or getting involved in a potentially disastrous accident and expensive court litigation.

When our body aches and tells us something is wrong we take pain killers and go on. We continue to overwork and overstress our body. Science proves that the human body organ is more complicated than the most modern computer or car engine ever invented. But do we care to tune up or overhaul our

body? Some do but most of us don't. Unfortunately we only have one integrated body. We can change a car when it conks out but when our body goes caput, that's it.

A relaxing vacation away from work does wonders as long as we don't add stress to ourselves by over booking our schedules. Another inexpensive

way is to find a place or a hobby to de-stress and pamper yourself with things that will nurture and rejuvenate your mind, spirit and body.

Above all enjoy the benefits of massage.

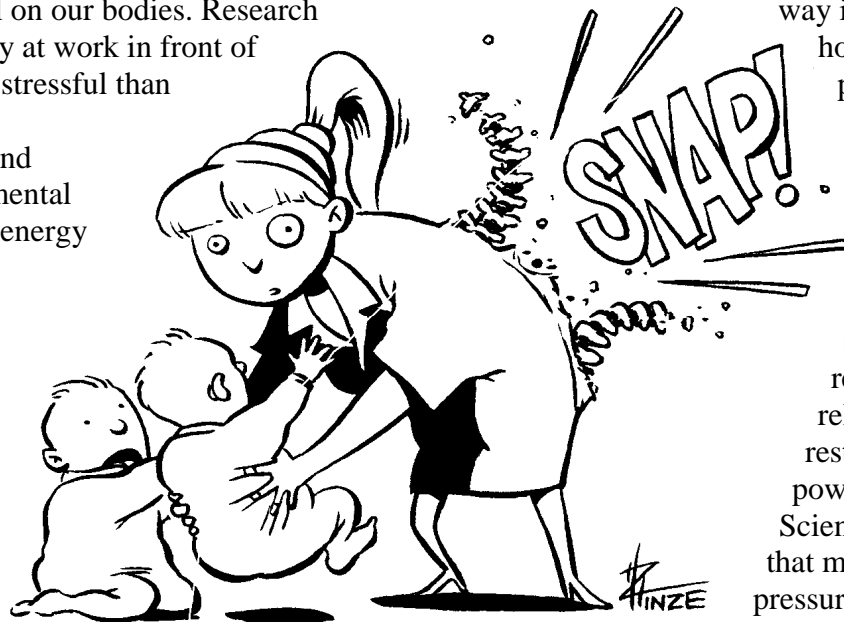
Since the 90s, massage has gained recognition for helping relieve stress and restoring regenerative powers to our body.

Scientists are discovering that massage reduces blood pressure, dampen harmful stress hormones, boost the

immune system and raise mood-elevating brain chemicals such as serotonin.

After strenuous exercise, skilled hands by massage practitioners can press lactic acid out of muscles easing the pain of marathon runners and tri-athletes. Many big corporations integrate massage in their benefit package to boost work performance and employees' health and well-being at work.

Take advantage of massage therapy provisions as they may be provided for in your collective agreement. Your body will love you for it. ☺



Keep the first bulb switched on for a few minutes. It gets warm, right? So, all you have to do then is switch it off, switch another on, walk into the room with the bulbs, touch them and tell which one was switched on as the first one (the warm one) and the others can be easily identified.

Solution to Tease your brain, page 34

Big brother is watching the internet, too

By Karrie Ouchas, In Solidarity Committee

It used to be that we only had to worry about con artists, identity thieves and cyber stalkers while we surfed the internet. With the advent of social networking sites, such as MySpace, Facebook, Twitter and blogging, there is a new concern about who may be watching us; our employer.

Social networking sites like those listed above allow users to update what is going in their lives, comment on their “friends” posts, create groups of like-minded people and upload pictures of themselves, their families or anything else they’d like.

There are times when our better judgment does not factor in when we post something negative about a co-worker we are frustrated with, a particularly tyrannical manager or an unfair employer.

What few realize is that many employers actually monitor such sites closely. Don’t think it could happen to you? Your privacy settings are set high? Consider this. When adding “friends,” anyone that person is “friends” with may gain access to your profile. This may include someone in management.

Cyber chatter, such as posts, status updates and blogs can be, and are being, used as discovery

evidence in lawsuits for allegations of discrimination, defamation, harassment and/or invasion of privacy. There are known cases of individuals who have been terminated and charged with insurance fraud for posting pictures of vacations taken while receiving long term disability payments, as one example.

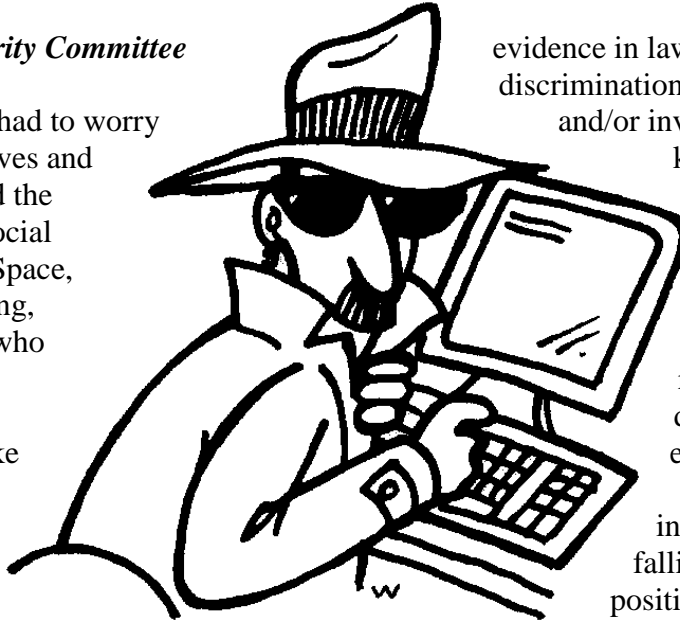
Arguments of privacy invasion as defense are falling mute on the courts. The position of many ruling judges is this: once you post something on a social networking site, it becomes a part of the public internet domain. Once it enters that public domain, privacy provisions may no longer apply.

Social networking sites have also become a common tool in the recruiting process, in the screening of potential applicants for vacant positions.

Use common sense when posting anything on line, including comments and pictures. Ensure that your friends do not post anything about you without your permission.

Want to know what is on the world wide web about you? Do a “Google” search of your name. You’d be surprised.

And remember, Big Brother is watching. ☹



Ontario Public Service Employees Union
100 Lesmill Road, Toronto, Ontario. M3B 3P8
www.opseu.org / www.sefpo.org

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