

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE OPSEU SOCIAL MAPPING PROJECT

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SURVEY SAYS : A newsletter for the OPSEU Social Mapping Project - MAY 2010 - Issue 2
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OPSEU gets noticed for leading the way!

In 2008, no one realized just how revolutionary the idea of a union collecting human-rights data was. However, after some background research, OPSEU members discovered that they were taking a bold first step.



Barbara Hall - *“OPSEU is not only doing the right thing, but the smart thing, and is leading a path in the labour sector”*

OPSEU has now successfully completed Phase I of the Social Mapping Project – the largest and first ever demographic survey of union membership – and is beginning to receive attention and congratulations.

“You can’t solve human rights problems without all the information,” says Barbara Hall, Chief Commissioner of Ontario Human Rights Commission “OPSEU’s collection of human rights-based data will certainly help, whether you’re looking for indications of gaps or ceilings in your organization, or the ability to expand services to reach all members. OPSEU is not only doing the right thing, but the smart thing, and is leading a path in the labour sector by doing this important work.”

Within the labour movement, other unions are looking to OPSEU for insight and advice about best practices. “We have an aging population and declining birth rates. The affects on our labour force and labour movement are going to be profound and long-term,” says Karl Flecker, the National Director of the Anti-Racism and Human Rights department at the Canadian Labour Congress. “Who wouldn’t want to know their strengths and weaknesses within this context? OPSEU is a leader within the labour movement. The Social Mapping Project is a comprehensive initiative to better understand its membership and staff and to vitally examine its internal structures, programs and policies. OPSEU’s project is setting the standard for what it takes to be ready and committed to grow the labour movement so that all workers are not left behind.”

Karl Flecker - *“OPSEU’s project is setting the standard for what it takes to be ready and committed to grow the labour movement so that all workers are not left behind.”*



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The Benefits of Data Collection

Many of the 26,768 members who took the time to complete the survey asked us the same question – “How does knowing more about my life and who I am help the Union?”

Here is some of what the new OHRC Guide tells us about the benefits of good data:

IDENTIFYING AND VERIFYING ISSUES

Good data can help identify and verify issues, theories and perceptions, such as perceptions of equal opportunity and treatment.

 **PROACTIVE** Good data can help to proactively address issues, measure progress and capitalize on opportunities. Collecting data can help measure a general state of affairs, not limited to specific cases or events. Good data can also reduce exposure to possible legal action and human rights complaints.

KNOWLEDGE BASED POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Good data can gain trust, develop effective, respectful consultations, and secure the support of key decision-makers and stakeholders. Collecting, tracking and evaluating data on an ongoing basis can provide organizations with credible, compelling information when communicating with key decision-makers and stakeholders about support for sensitive policies, programs or initiatives.

Using OPSEU’s Membership Data

The data from Phase I provided us with a lot of rich information about our membership and staff. While these numbers are essential, further research in Phase II will be key to unlocking the meaning behind the numbers. Here is an example:

Through focus groups and individual interviews -
A Systems Review - OPSEU will get information directly from the members about what recommendations and improvements could best address issues raised in Phase I.

Phase I: Membership Survey = Numbers. e.g. 78% of members have never attended a union learning opportunity

Phase II: Systems Review = Focus groups and interviews that pose questions about the numbers. e.g. “Why aren’t members attending? What kinds of policies or information would facilitate their participation?”

Full Project Completion = Full recommendations based on numbers and experience. e.g. Both child-care and long distances were cited as the main factors related to non-attendance. Improvements related to child-care policies and reimbursement, as well as developing on-line learning tools are recommended.



This Newsletter is authorized for distribution by Warren (Smokey) Thomas, OPSEU President

To read the full Executive Summary from the report, go online to www.opseu.org/countmein

Next Issue: Important Questions & Answers about the Project