

Convention at a Glance



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new leaders elected



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By Christina Chrysler



After a season of campaigning at the regional and provincial levels, President and Vice-President/Treasurer hopefuls provided their final thoughts before delegates cast their deciding votes Friday morning. Ed Arvelin, Tara Maszczakiewicz, JP Hornick and Sara Labelle were vying for the top job, while Laurie Nancekivell and Eduardo (Eddy) Almeida sought the position of First Vice-President/Treasurer (FVPT). The elections were moderated by NUPGE Secretary-Treasurer Bert Blundon. All candidates spoke passionately to their hopes and goals as leaders of OPSEU/SEFPO.

Presidential candidates focused on a need for positive change through increased co-operation, communication and education, including mentorship and support at the local level, to increase diversity within all levels of OPSEU/SEFPO. The upcoming Ontario election was also a hot topic, with presidential candidates reminding members of our potential collective power when we work together towards a shared vision of improving working conditions for all Ontarians. The FVPT candidates also spoke about strengthening the union through fiscal transparency and increased

financial support at the local level. Voting took place on a digital platform. Both elections required just one round of voting, with Hornick take enough votes to avoid a second ballot. Labelle came second, with Arvelin and Maszczakiewicz in third and fourth places, respectively. Nancekivell edged out Eddy Almeida in another very tight vote. With two new leaders guiding the union, OPSEU/SEFPO turns a page – and equips itself to face the evolving and ongoing challenge of improving the working lives of its members – and every worker in Ontario.

Elizabeth Ha takes Human Rights Award

By Marilyn Ott

This year's winner of the prestigious Human Rights Award is Long-time OPSEU/SEFPO member and activist Elizabeth Ha.

Ha has worked tirelessly on behalf of workers, for many years. She works as a property valuation analyst with the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation of Ontario (MPAC) where she also serves as first vice-president of Local 154.

Ha is also chair of the union's Provincial Human Rights Committee and vice-chair for people of Asian descent on the union's Coalition of Racialized Workers. Ha was also recently re-elected as vice-president of the OFL's Workers of Colour Committee.

Ha continues to be a staunch advocate for equal rights, and she works hard to ensure the voices of racialized workers are heard. Ha has done extensive work in championing the rights of migrant workers within her region and has worked closely with Justicia for Migrant Workers.

Every year, Ha has collected and delivered food, clothing and other important supplies to workers in need.

"Elizabeth and I have worked together for many years and her input was always important," said President Warren (Smokey) Thomas in presenting her award.

For her part, Ha said she was honoured and humbled to receive this award."

"I'm really happy to be back here with my OPSEU/SEFPO family – it feels amazing. To receive this award makes it so much better. I want to thank you, the members. If it were not for you, I would not be here today. This is truly like a family."



Together, apart: attending Convention remotely

By Christina Chrysler

After two years of lockdowns and limited capacity events, I was excited to plan my journey to this year's Convention. However, life had very different plans. As the expression goes, "When it rains, it pours" – and very inconveniently, I found myself managing a number of health issues and related appointments, making a trip from the Ottawa area to Toronto impossible.

Necessity truly is the mother of invention. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it is how to come together when we are forced to be apart. Being provided the option of joining remotely through Chime allowed me the opportunity to reconnect with the energy and vitality that events like Convention generate.

Although I miss meeting new people and forming relationships with my union family, I have still been able to observe resolutions, recognize award recipients and share in the excitement of Friday's election. At one point during Friday's events, I observed over 330 people, just like me, participating virtually.

What an amazing thing technology can be. Here's hoping that OPSEU/SEFPO continues in this spirit of inclusion for future events and Conventions, so that participation, even as observation, is accessible to all.

Donations by OPSEU/SEFPO members matched by union

By Marilyn Ott

At OPSEU/SEFPO, we are finding new and creative ways to come together and care for each other. As an example of this, the money donated by members during Convention will be matched, as per the union's donation policy. The money will be distributed according to the approved donations requests. It was inspiring to see how happy the membership was to help in such a tangible and generous way. I'm am sure the funds will come in handy. What may be even more important are the well wishes that go with the gift. This is truly a creative way to help each other – and yet another way we're pulling together through challenges and opportunities, renewing and embracing our commitment to fight for a better, stronger public sector and province.



Resolutions

RESOLUTION C1

Where part time, seasonal, temporary, casual, or otherwise precarious employed members are elected to a bargaining team, and they do not have wages to replace during days scheduled for bargaining or caucus meetings, that OPSEU pay them for the equivalent of a full day's pay at their regular hourly rate.

Moved by Local 571 and Greater Toronto Area Council. Carried.

RESOLUTION EB13

The existing members of the Ad Hoc Committee be allowed to continue with consultative and investigative work on proposed changes of equity seats on the OPSEU/SEFPO Executive Board which would require changes to the OPSEU/SEFPO Constitution; and this work be done in conjunction with assistance from representatives from OPSEU/SEFPO Legal Services Division, the Equity Unit and a member of the Constitutions Committee; and the proposed changes to the Constitution for equity seats on the OPSEU/SEFPO Executive Board be completed no later than Dec. 2022.

Submitted by Executive Board. Carried

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION

OPSEU/SEFPO to pressure PM Trudeau to remove Russian diplomats from Canada. Defeated.

RESOLUTION M5

Resolution to form an Ad Hoc Committee to formulate a comprehensive policy on childcare and troubleshoot issues that target barriers to participation related to the need for safe, effective child care.

Debate to be continued on this motion tomorrow.



OPSEU/SEFPO continues to break down barriers

As the union continues down the road to greater inclusivity, it passed the following constitutional amendment on anti-Black racism:

"29.9.3 Every new Member shall, as part of his/her application for membership in the union, be required to sign a declaration containing the following words: "I, _____, solemnly promise to uphold and obey the Constitution and Bylaws of this Union, to assist my fellow members to improve their economic, political, and social conditions, to uphold the principles of democracy and fair play, and to do no deliberate wrong or harm to any other member of this Union.

"I further promise to uphold the Union's commitment to dismantling anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and all forms of racism and discrimination."

The Coalition of Racialized Workers achieves constitutional status

By Michael Hamilton

OPSEU/SEFPO racialized members have a great reason to feel rejoiceful. An amendment to the union's Constitution was passed overwhelmingly by delegates to grant provincial committee status to the Coalition of Racialized Workers.

Peter Thompson, chair of the Coalition of Racialized Workers, delivered a powerful introduction to the amendment. The coalition would be opting for self-selection, based on members who express interest in being a part of the coalition, with two members per region. The coalition would be entitled to send one of those members per region as a delegate to Convention with voting rights. The coalition members will also be able to go to the CLC, OFL and NUPGE with voting rights.

Diversity is one of our union's greatest strengths. This constitutional amendment will allow the coalition to drive further change within OPSEU/SEFPO.

Members at Convention gave a thunderous standing ovation when this amendment passed. It was a very proud day for OPSEU/SEFPO. Real, significant change is happening in the union, and it's about time our racialized members were recognized for the excellent work they have done and will continue to do.

Change is seldom easy, but the membership demonstrated they are ready to start making the real changes needed for a more inclusive union.

