



**COAST TO COAST UPDATE**  
**AU COURANT D'UN OcéAN À L'AUTRE**  
**INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS**  
**FRATERNITÉ INTERNATIONALE DES OUVRIERS EN ÉLECTRICITÉ**



**PHIL FLEMMING**

International Vice President / Vice-président international  
 First District, CANADA / Premier District, CANADA



**September/October 2008**

Greetings:

Sisters and Brothers, we can't be happy as Canadians with our voter turn out in this Federal election earlier this month.

Voter participation was at an all time national low with only 59.1% of registered electors casting a vote from a high of 70%.

The apathy is not good for democracy. Although, on the positive side, the Tories didn't gain their much sought after majority and will again have to deal with a minority government.

This election witnessed the lowest voter commitment in Canadian history, excluding a referendum held in 1898.

And so the result was predictable.

Conservative won 143 seats with 38% of the vote. Liberals lost seats and ended up with 77 and 26% of the vote. The New Democrats gained a few seats at 37 with 18% of the vote with the Bloc relatively unchanged at 49/10% and the Green shut out with 7% of the vote. We have to wonder how many of our members voted (the same way) or didn't vote at all. We could have made the difference.

It is important that our Local Unions take on the very important role of collective political action and encourage our working families to get out to vote and to vote for parties and politicians who will formulate and pass legislation and adopt policies that are better choices for working people. A number of our First District Local Unions do this very well.

The need to educate our members to the political realities has never been greater. We need to give our members and their families the tools they need so that they realize the need to vote, and when they vote, they elect politicians and political parties that are on our side; the side of the worker.

If we give our members the information, the facts and the scorecards of the parties and their candidates,

they're smart, intelligent people and they will vote for what makes sense to them and their families.

In solidarity,

Phil Flemming, IVP



**New First District International Representative**

I am pleased to announce that effective October 1, 2008 Brother Cordell Cole has been hired as an International Representative for the First District Office replacing now retired International Representative Tom McGreevy.

Brother Cole began his apprenticeship with Local Union 625 in 1983. Then in 1987 he received his Interprovincial Red Seal Journeyman Wireman Certificate and served as job steward on various jobsites. In the same year, Cordell was appointed Vice Chairman of Unit #1, Halifax County and was elected Chairman of Unit #1 and Executive Board Member in 1989. He served in this position for six years and then in 1995 he was elected as Vice President of Local Union 625 and served in that position until 1997, at which time he was hired as an Organizer for the Local.

In 1998 Brother Cole was appointed as Assistant Business Manager and held this position for four years until he was appointed in April 2002 as Business Manager/Financial Secretary of Local Union 625; followed by the membership electing him as Business Manager/Financial Secretary of the Local in June 2002.

In 2004 Brother Cole was elected as Recording Secretary of the Mainland Nova Scotia Building Trades Council and was re-elected as Business Manager/Financial Secretary of Local Union 625 in 2005. In 2007 he was elected as President of the Mainland Nova Scotia Building Trades Council as well as being appointed to the Nova Scotia Labour Relations Board as a Construction Industry Panel Member. In June of 2008 Cordell was re-elected for a third-term as Business Manager/Financial Secretary of Local Union 625 which followed by the current appointment of 1st District International Representative.

International Representative Cordell Cole currently re-

sides in White's Lake, Nova Scotia with his wife Gwen and two children, Lexie (10) and Dylan (7).

**Letter to the Editor: 'World Day for Decent Work' - October 7, 2008** *On October 7, 2008 IVP Flemming sent the following 'Letter to the Editor' to all major city newspapers across Canada; the Toronto Star printed in their October 11, 2008 editorials*

Canada is a proud country that over time has developed strong social values and it has created legislation that believes in protecting rights and freedoms for all of its' people.

Certainly there is a need to improve and build on what Canada has stood for but there is no reason to believe that Canadians support or even remotely approve the abuse of basic rights and privileges of temporary foreign workers.

The Federal Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) program allows employers to take temporary foreign workers as hostages and deny them the rights they deserve. Employers treat them as disposable objects and force them to work without even the minimum of employment and labour laws. Temporary foreign workers are being exploited as Canadian companies maximize profits on the backs of these workers while exposing them to risks while living in substandard accommodations. Reasonable working hours, safety and promised wages are all lost in the fear of being expelled from Canada while all they are looking for is the hope of being treated fairly and a dream of becoming a legal immigrant.

Today is a sad day for Canada as we recognize that the past respect that companies and politicians had for human life and human rights is being forfeited for money and power.

It is time to put an end to this practice and as a federal election is at hand, the opportunity to fix this national embarrassment is right now.

#### **Harper Congratulates Election**

*The following letter was written on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008 by Ken Georgetti to the Prime Minister requesting a meeting with him and the Minister of Finance*

"Congratulations on your party's re-election as government in Tuesday's 40<sup>th</sup> General Election, I am certain you and your party will be devoting your energies and concerns to ensuring the well-being of Canadians as we head into the economic storm about to unfold as the fallout of the global crisis hits home.

Prime Minister, in the aftermath of the election campaign, it is time to push aside partisan politics as we grapple with solutions to weather a coming recession.

As you know, the Canadian Labour Congress represents 3.2 million workers across the country. Those workers are feeling vulnerable and looking to their leaders – both in their unions and in Parliament – for reassurance that everyone is working together to ensure there is a plan to protect jobs; an adequate safety net is available if people lose their jobs; their hard-earned pension plans do not become collateral damage from the fallout from corporate greed, malfeasance and excesses; and there is good oversight and regulation of the financial industry that has played fast and loose with workers' savings and pensions for too long.

Hardworking Canadians have lost over \$80 billion from their pensions and registered retirement savings since March 31, 2008 due to the Wall Street subprime mess. But even before that, in the summer of 2007, Canadian pension plans and retirement savings lost \$13 billion in the Asset Backed Commercial Paper fiasco.

Prime Minister, the coming economic storm demands that we all work together. I invite you, and the Minister of Finance to meet with the Canadian Labour Congress to discuss Canada's position going into the upcoming summits to deal with the financial crisis. We would like to meet with you to be part of the dialogue in developing a plan that would help protect Canadians from the harshest consequences of an economic downturn.

We look forward to contributing to the dialogue on how best Canada's government can help its citizens during these times."

**Unionized Earned 8% More - Wages Outpaced Inflation In 2007 And 2008** *Article taken from CLV Reports – Labour News – September 8, 2008*

As far as annual income is concerned, workers covered by a union continue to earn more than those who aren't. According to Statistics Canada's *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, in 2007, full-time unionized workers earned an average of \$24.15 compared to \$20.55 per hour for non-unionized employees, while part-time unionized workers earned an average of \$19.99 per hour compared to \$12.56 for non-unionized part-timers.

Statistics Canada notes that the higher wages seen in unionized workplaces are not all attributable to unionization itself, as job tenure, size and type of the workplace, geographical location and so on have to be taken into account. The raw data for unionized workers in 2007 shows they earned 8% more per hour than non-unionized (\$23.58 as opposed to \$18.98).

On average, unionized women working full-time received about 94 per cent as much in hourly earnings as

did men, and unionized women working part-time earned 14 per cent more.

In 2007, wage gains (for workplaces with over 500 employees) averaged 3.3 per cent with the rate of inflation at only 1.9 per cent. In 2008, the trend continued – at least in the study's time frame (from January to April) – with wage settlements running at 3.4 per cent and inflation at 1.8 per cent.

**Television Station Improperly Recorded Employee Telephone Conversation** *The following article is based on excerpts from the 'Commissioner's Findings' PIPEDA Case Summary #387 out of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada*

The Privacy Commissioner is committed to her mandate to inform the public and stakeholders about Canada's privacy law; and case summaries under the Commissioner's findings from complaints made under PIPEDA (Personal Information and Protection and Electronic Documents Act) offer concrete examples of, and guidance on, how PIPEDA applies to the day-to-day management of personal information by organizations. The subject of complaints can range from privacy of health information, to financial confidentiality, to personal information handling practices of different organizations.

Below is a situation that turned into a complaint. The case summary is posted on the web site by the Commissioner's Office which was brought forward by **IBEW Local Union 230** and their CRTV members.

The violation to PIPEDA in this situation was actions committed contrary to Principle 4.3 of Schedule 1. The application of this Principle states that the knowledge and consent of the individual are required for the collection, use or disclosure of personal information, except where inappropriate.

The Commissioner determined that the lessons learned in this case are:

- \* Companies planning to install telephone recording equipment on employees' telephones are required to inform their employees of these plans and the reasons for them before putting the equipment into use.
- \* Companies are obligated to inform customers that their telephone calls may be recorded and why.
- \* Companies must implement policies for telephone taping that are in line with this Office's (Privacy Commissioner's) "Best Practices for the Recording of Customer Telephone Calls."

IBEW Local Union 230 represents the employees at CRTV located in the small community of Campbell

River on Vancouver Island, BC. Business Manager Phil Venoit alleged that the Campbell River TV general manager had improperly taped telephone conversations at the workstation of a former employee who worked as a Customer Service Representative (CSR). CRTV denied the taping device, hidden between a divider hanging off her desk attached to some wires, one of which was a telephone cable, was working. The conversations made from the workstation were personal and/or work related in nature. Some of the calls made by the CSR, were to Local Union 230's office.

IBEW First District International Representative Christine Pynaker, the 1st District's Privacy Officer assisted in the primary submissions of the CSRs, and investigation by the Assistant Commissioner. The investigation ultimately confirmed the allegation. The Assistant Commissioner of the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada recommended that since the station had intended to install telephone recording equipment on all CSR workstations for quality monitoring purposes, to have a record of conversations in case of a dispute, and to deter abusive customers, the station had to inform its employees of its plans to install such equipment before using it and why, and to inform customers that their calls may be recorded and why. The station, however, ultimately decided not to tape telephone calls.

The complaint was considered well-founded and resolved. This means that the Commissioner, being of the view at the conclusion of the investigation that the allegations were likely supported by the evidence, before making a finding made a recommendation to the organization for corrective action to remedy the situation, which the organization took or committed to take.

For the full story under the Commissioner's findings go to [www.privcom.gc.ca/cf-dc/2007/387\\_20061204\\_e.asp](http://www.privcom.gc.ca/cf-dc/2007/387_20061204_e.asp)

### **Canadian Free Trade Deal with Colombia**

*This article has been taken from a letter that was written by Local Union 230 Business Manager Phil Venoit to the Right Honourable Stephen Harper Prime Minister of Canada on May 26, 2008*

This is being written with great concern over the pending trade discussion with Colombia. The atrocious human rights violations perpetrated upon Colombian workers are well documented. Colombia is a country where more trade unionists are killed than in the rest of the entire world combined.

It is understood that during the administration of the current President, Alvaro Uribe Velez, 560 union officers and members have been brutally and systematically murdered, at the same time there has been 955 summary executions recorded by the Colombian

Army. Paramilitary organizations linked to powerful drug cartels have used terror, torture and massacred entire communities to create a mass exodus of the countryside in order to appropriate huge tracts of resource rich land. The United Nations calls Colombia the "worst humanitarian disaster" in the Western Hemisphere. Meanwhile, the United States Congress has indicated they will not pursue a Trade Deal with Colombia at all at this time citing their horrendous human rights track record as the pivotal reason for that decision.

Canadians strongly disagree with your position that requiring Colombia to clean up their human rights problems prior to Canada signing a Free Trade Deal as being "ridiculous" is absolutely absurd, and so out of step with basic Canadian moral values it seems surreal. Requiring President Uribe to stop the systemic slaughter of Colombian Trade Unionists prior to signing a Trade Deal is the only truly Canadian response.

Canadians further understand that you are currently negotiating a financial penalty for the murder of Colombian trade unionists, essentially making Canada and every Canadian citizen an accomplice in the extermination of Colombian workers. With all due respect, this is murder, not a parking violation or a late library book, but murder.

As Canadians, we are therefore with our strongest intent urging you to stop immediately any further Trade discussions with Colombia until the Colombian Government has conformed to the concept of workers rights to organize and work without fear of being brutally murdered, and until there has been full and public debate in Canada weighing the benefits of such a relationship, and what appears to be a deal with the devil himself.

#### **Local Union 213 – Vancouver, BC Growth Spurt**

*Excerpt taken from Local Union 213 Newsletter – October 2008*

Local Union 213 Assistant Business Manager, Harry Van Beest reports that the local has seen reasonably good growth in the last twelve months with 119 new Journeypersons signing membership cards as well as the Joint Training Committee (JTC) indenturing 223 new apprentices. Approximately 150 came from non-union contractors and the rest from our ELTT program. This number does not include those apprentices not yet initiated.

The JTC has close to 600 indentured and initiated apprentices at this time. While most of our growth

was as a result of "stripping" open shop electricians, Local 213 welcomes *Pivot Electric, RS Electric, Tempco Refrigeration, EQ Lending, Magna IV Engineering* as well as *ADT Vancouver Island* and *Okanagan*.

#### **Goudreau in the Philippines - 40,000 Workers**

**Wanted** *The following article was supplied by Barry Salmon, Public Relations for Local Union 424, Edmonton, AB whose resource was the Asian Pacific Post dated Wednesday, October 08 2008*

Following meetings in Manila this week with Canadian officials, The Philippines is poised to deploy as many as 40,000 overseas Filipino workers to Western Canada, each year.

Alberta alone has requested 10,000 skilled workers and professionals for its oil and gas industry, as well as construction workers for its infrastructure projects.

At a high-level meeting in the Philippine capital's business centre of Makati, Alberta Ministry of Employment and Immigration Minister Hector Goudreau and Philippine Labour Secretary Marianito Roque signed a Memorandum of Agreement outlining a partnership for cooperation in the recruitment and deployment of overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) to address Alberta's labour shortage.

Roque said he is looking at sending as many as 40,000 OFWs every year to Alberta and three other Canadian provinces with which the Philippines recently forged similar labour migration agreements — British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

The agreements will expedite the approval of employment of OFWs, provide programs for Filipinos working in Canada, promote equitable recruitment and employment practices, establish human resources development programs and create standards for credential recognition.

As Philippine and Canadian officials meet this week to dot the i's and cross the t's on a slew of new international labour agreements, B.C. also stands to benefit from the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) it signed with The Philippines in late January.

Roque said the two countries will collaborate on a pilot recruitment project wherein three Canadian companies will interview applicants already pre-screened by Philippine-licensed agencies based on the qualifications set by the employers.

According to the Philippines Department of Labour and Employment, among workers needed by the Canadian employers are hotel workers, food counter attendants,

and long-haul drivers.

The priority concerns for discussion include: recruitment procedures, employment contracts, a B.C.-specific orientation package for OFWs, identification of skills requirements, criteria for employers and sending agencies, and human resource development mechanisms.

Meanwhile, B.C. is hosting a "job fair" in Manila this week, where over 150 workers are expected to be recruited, mostly in the hospitality sector and construction trades in the lead up to the 2010 Olympic Games.

A Canadian team led by Michael Chew, manager of the Provincial Nominee Program, is conducting briefings on the B.C. nominee program for participating recruitment agencies and applicants.

Additionally, Manitoba is sending a recruitment team for nurses to Manila in November, while Saskatchewan has agreed to extend the two-year MOU it signed two years ago with the Philippine government. Saskatchewan has already been on four recruitment missions to Manila, three for nurses. Another is scheduled for November.

Also in November, representatives from The Philippines and the World Health Organization will be arriving in Saskatoon (Nov. 12-14) for a seminar entitled "Enriching our Worlds – A Meeting of the Minds on Workforce Migration."

Aside from the recruitment of OFWs, Roque said Canadian employers are also finalizing the details on setting up of training programs in The Philippines for Filipino destined for Canada.

Roque also said that illegal recruiters will have no place in the new employment programs forged with Canada.

In a radio interview, he said the Canadian employers included in the employment agreements will not require Filipino applicants to pay a placement fee – thus reducing, if not eliminating, cases of abusive illegal recruitment.

While Alberta as an "immediate need" for 10,000 Filipino workers, Alberta officials said they have a shortage of 30,000 workers for their oil and gas industry.

Janet Schroeder said that over the next decade, Alberta will be short 100,000 workers as the shrinking population continues to age. She said Employment and Immigration Minister Hector Goudreau is also

going to Australia, China and Korea in his hunt for qualified workers for Alberta.

For qualified Filipinos, the wages are excellent, said Philippine Labour Secretary Roque. He said that workers who qualify for work in Alberta will receive a monthly salary of \$6,000 for highly skilled welders and \$3,800 for pipe fitters. He said the amount is much higher than the salary offered for welders and pipe fitters deployed in Saudi Arabia, which ranges between US\$300 to US\$500.

But Roque clarified that the agreements do not facilitate applications for residency in Canada, adding these were only meant to expedite the processing of contracts for those who want to work in Canada.

### **Disputes Inquiry Board Makes Recommendations For Power Plant Labour Dispute News Release**

*Article/excerpts taken from the Government of Alberta newsroom [newsroom.alberta.ca](http://newsroom.alberta.ca) - September 5, 2008*

In Edmonton, AB a Disputes Inquiry Board appointed to help reach a collective agreement for 448 workers at three Alberta power plants, has made its recommendations in a report to Employment and Immigration Minister Hector Goudreau.

TransAlta Utilities Corporation and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), Local Union 254 received copies of the report and have until September 15, 2008 to respond to the board's recommendations. The report will be made available on Employment and Immigration's website at [employment.alberta.ca/dib](http://employment.alberta.ca/dib) on September 11, 2008.

If the recommendations are accepted by both parties, they are binding and will be used to form a new collective agreement. The agreement would cover planning, operating and maintenance staff at the Sundance, Keephills and Wabamun power plants.

If one or both parties do not accept the recommendations, the Alberta Labour Relations Board would conduct a vote of the party (or parties). If the recommendations are rejected after a vote, the parties can continue negotiating a settlement on their own or give a 72 hour notice to take strike or lockout action. Members of the union voted in favour of a strike in late June.

Under the Labour Relations Code, a Disputes Inquiry Board can be established to investigate the matters in dispute and to help two parties reach a settlement without resorting to a strike or lockout. Goudreau appointed Tim Christian to the one-person board on July 18, 2008. The recommendations for settlement are based on information provided to the board by both the union and the

employer.

**Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) - Challenging Bills 5 & 6** *Article/excerpts are taken from the September 2008 issue of the SFL Labour Reporter publication*

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour's (SFL) legal team filed a statement of claim against Bills 5 and 6 this summer. In other words, they sued the provincial government for violating their rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and international law. As of Aug. 13<sup>th</sup> 2008, 19 unions have signed on as co-plaintiffs. Why did they do this?

The SFL's constitution describes their purpose:

To promote the enactment of provincial legislation that will safeguard and extend free and unrestricted collective bargaining and to promote the passage of such other labour and social laws that will provide for social security and welfare for all people.

To protect and strengthen our democratic institutions, to secure full recognition and enjoyment of civil rights and liberties to which they are justly entitled, and to preserve and perpetuate the cherished traditions of our democracy.

To preserve the independence of the labour movement from political control, to encourage workers to vote, to exercise their full rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and to perform their rightful part in the political life of the municipal, provincial and federal governments.

To encourage all workers to share in the full benefits of union organization without regard to race, colour, creed, religion, gender, marital status, disability, age, nationality and ancestry, place of origin, family status, sexual orientation or receipt of public assistance.

To serve as Saskatchewan's voice of labour in speaking on local, provincial, national and international issues, articulating fundamental union principles and policies.

The SFL is defending these principles in court against a government who is trampling on workers.

Trade unionists know that unions are a major contributor to the struggle for social justice and democracy in the history of our province.

Union-busting in 2008, with our strong economic climate, cannot be justified by any government. We

must take a stand.

Remember, our legal challenge is just one part of a larger struggle against these bills. We're educating the public and we're mobilizing our members.

**Contract Awarded to Out of Town Contractor Leads to Protest**

When the Cornwall Community Hospital Board announced that the much coveted 81.4 million dollar contract for the 95,000 square foot redevelopment of the hospital had been awarded to Quebec based General Contractor Pomerleau Inc., local Building Trades affiliates did not take the news laying down. Pomerleau's bid includes an electrical subcontract awarded to London area based CLAC contractor JMR.

A protest was quickly organized by IBEW Local Union 115 Organizer Dean Sinnott for Friday October 24, 2008. The protest was attended by over 200 Building Trades workers and Union Representatives from Central and Eastern Ontario. The protesters along with a supportive Police escort marched from a city arena to the Hospital front gates. Protesters carried signs demanding justice for local workers and received a great deal of support from passing motorists.

Upon learning of the protest along with the public outcry from this economically hard hit community, hospital officials agreed to meet with Building Trades representatives. Following this meeting, hospital officials announced that they would try to ensure as many local jobs as possible, However Building Trades representatives close to the situation do not hold out much hope for this to happen.

The contract being awarded to out of town firms has enraged the entire Cornwall community. Much of the money needed to secure this project had been raised through community fundraising and private donations. Some contributors have gone as far as to contact the hospital and request that their money be returned to them.

**RFI Industrial Contractors Signs Voluntary Recognition with IBEW Local Union 502 – Saint John, NB**

When Rodney Brown saw an opportunity for growth in the niche market of service and maintenance to the Industrial Sector in Saint John, NB his main concern was the availability of qualified workers during the current construction boom in the southern New Brunswick region. He approached IBEW Local Union 502 Business Representatives with his concerns and ideas on how we could work together to benefit IBEW Local Union 502,

RFI Industrial and potential customers. Local Union 502 made the commitment to provide the necessary manpower for RFI and if qualified workers could not be found locally they would be sourced from wherever necessary to ensure success. Impressed with the IBEW's approach Brown signed a Voluntary Recognition with IBEW Local Union 502 and immediately started bidding work. RFI's first job was a maintenance shutdown at Bayside Power. True to its word, Local Union 502 dispatched the necessary qualified workers and when more specialized workers could not be found in our ranks, we called on sister locals and took in several new members to ensure the shutdown was successful. Bayside Power Representatives were so impressed that they are continuing to provide employment for IBEW Local Union 502 members through RFI long past the shutdown.

*"The maintenance skill level shown by the trade's people in your employ was above average typically found...For Bayside this is an area of support which has been lacking...Bayside Power will continue to seek your support for our two EI&C Maintenance trades",* said Stephen Fairweather LP Manager at Bayside.

RFI Industrial Contractors made "...the **right** choice" with the **IBEW!**

### **N.B.'s Power Challenge**

*Article taken from the New Brunswick Telegraph Journal - Published Monday, October 20th, 2008 - commentary by Ross Galbraith, Business Manager, IBEW Local 37*

No question these are unsettled times, and by all indications things will get worse before they get better. We fully appreciate that for many New Brunswickers, how to pay for heat this winter is a worry. But while we empathize with our fellow citizens, we feel the Telegraph-Journal editorial of Oct. 7 ("What is N.B.'s Power Play?") is off-base and misses some crucial points.

The editorial suggests that NB Power rates are too high and that government has a responsibility to bring them down. It implies that our rates should be as low as Quebec's. While on the surface that sounds like a rallying cry we should all embrace, an examination of the facts shows it's unrealistic.

First, electricity is a complicated commodity, and it costs a lot of money to produce. Hydro electric dams are by far the least expensive method of production, with burning oil on the other end of the spectrum as the most expensive.

Power companies have to work with the hand they are dealt or, put another way, with the luck of geog-

raphy. The simple fact is New Brunswick can't compete with Quebec. This has nothing to do with how NB Power is managed and has everything to do with the fact that Quebec is blessed with an abundance of rivers on which to build hydro dams.

We produce as much of our power from hydro as we can, but we are limited by what we have for rivers. So when the Telegraph-Journal editorial says we need to have rates as low as Quebec's, it's like saying you have to be able to go as fast as your neighbour, even though she has a car and you have a bicycle. You can make it the most efficient bicycle in the world, but you're not going to win that race. It's an unrealistic expectation.

The only way we could match Quebec prices would be to sell electricity at a cost less than it takes to produce it. NB Power would have to go further into debt, or the government would have to make up the difference. In either scenario, rate payers, who are also taxpayers, would lose.

The editorial says we need competitive rates, but the fact is our rates are already better than most. When you compare us to the rest of the continent, nearly 90 per cent of people in North America pay more for their electricity than NB Power customers do. And of those jurisdictions that have cheaper rates, it's usually because they have cheaper ways to generate power, like Quebec and Manitoba with their mighty rivers.

Want comparisons closer to home? Look at Nova Scotia. Rates there will go up 9.4 per cent on Jan. 1, and they already pay more than us. Across our other border in Maine, rates are a staggering 80 per cent higher than ours.

While it is popular to bash NB Power, the truth is that our electricity company serves us better than most others serve their customers. New Brunswick's fossil fuel generating plants are among the most efficient in the country, because NB Power has invested in infrastructure and in its people.

For example, Belledune has been rated the No. 1 power plant in North America for efficiency by the Electric Utility Cost Group. This recognition is more than just a plaque on the wall; it means less pollution and less expense, and is a tribute to a highly trained and dedicated workforce and the use of state-of-the-art technology. The simple fact is, New Brunswickers know that in the dead of winter, when extreme weather strikes, NB Power's plant staff and line workers will be on the job, doing what they do best - keeping the power flowing.

If you feel your power bill is too high, consider the al-

ternatives. CBC Television in New Brunswick recently broadcast an in-depth series looking at the most inexpensive way to heat your home this winter. It concluded that electricity was by far the least expensive. Anyone saddled with heating by oil, even with the recent price drops, will be paying considerably more than their neighbour who is using electricity.

Granted, this may be small consolation for those who are struggling financially and are worried about the coming cold weather. But interfering with NB Power is not the way to go. Our electricity company is already serving taxpayers well by fulfilling its responsibility to generate power as efficiently as possible, with costs geared toward breaking even.

This said we cannot leave our less fortunate in the cold. As a society we have a responsibility to ensure no one faces a New Brunswick winter without sufficient heat. We agree with the Telegraph-Journal that the government has to do something, and while we don't presume to be able to speak for everybody, we think it's safe to say that you'd be hard-pressed to find one New Brunswicker who doesn't expect the government to step up and help those who need it, with a heat subsidy or some other type of relief.

**\*\*\*\*\* REMINDER \*\*\*\*\***

**Effective January 2009, there will be an increase of \$1.00 in Per Capita dues for all IBEW members.**

**2008 Projected Meetings**

**12/1 – 5/08 IBEW Nuclear Conference  
Golden Nugget  
Las Vegas, Nevada**

**2009 Projected Meetings**

**01/12 – 16/09 Business Managers Training  
Week #2  
TBA**

- 01/12 – 14/09 Telecom. C.O.E. Training  
Naples Beach Hotel  
Naples, Florida**
- 01/29 – 30/09 IBEW NECA Employees  
Benefits Conference  
Hyatt Reg. Coconut Resort & Spa  
Bonita Springs, Florida**
- 02/16 – 17/09 Western Winter School  
TBA  
Victoria, BC**
- 03/2 – 3/09 Eastern Winter School  
TBA  
Halifax, NS**
- 05/3 – 6/09 BT Legislative Conference  
Crowne Plaza Hotel  
Ottawa, ON**
- 05/14 – 16/09 IBEW Construction Conference  
Hyatt Regency Capitol Hill  
Washington, DC**
- 05/30 – 06/7/09 Utility Department Conference  
Hyatt Regency Denver  
Colorado Convention Center  
Denver, Colorado**
- 06/15 – 19/09 Broadcasting, Manufacturing and  
Telecommunications Conference  
Sheraton Downtown  
Nashville, Tennessee**
- 09/1 – 3/09 All Canada Progress Meeting  
Charlottetown, PEI**

**A Quote to Think About from Coast to Coast**

“Union does everything when it is perfect—it satisfies desires, simplifies needs, foresees the wishes, and becomes a constant fortune.”

— J. D. Zeik