



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 2006

Greetings:

As time moves on, it's hard to believe that our Convention is now a month behind us. Naturally, there were some triumphs and disappointments and I have to say that everyone that had any part in the planning process of this year's Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, has to be proud of their first-class act.

Although it's never too late to say 'thank you', and I did say it many times during the Convention, to all the First District Delegates and International Representatives who so willingly and in the true spirit of union solidarity served on committees, facilitated our caucus, assisted other delegates, remained on duty during the Convention and social events, I do 'thank you'. Also, **thanks** to the delegates who articulated your viewpoints on the issues in a positive and competent manner. The First District was looked upon professionally and I know we were noticed.

Also thanks to the First District Local Union Retirees, the International Officers, and International Staff Retirees for participating and your words of encouragement during the Convention. You folks have all been there, done that, and can appreciate the enormity of the situation. Good health to you all!!

In order to move our Union to the next level within the First District and across North America, I am ready and willing to work hard and listen to your concerns and counsel. I understand from the conversations I had with many delegates at the Convention, you want the IBEW to be the best it can be and an organization our members are proud to belong to. We need to do it together and we need everyone pulling together, doing the right thing, and building this organization. Let's maintain the dialogue and keep the lines of communication open.

As you are all aware by now, Vancouver, BC has been selected for the next International Convention in 2011. As we were leaving the Convention on the Friday with the two Canadian Flags waving on the screen, I know that your pride was as great as mine. To get a jump start on our contribution and hospitality for this event from the First District, I suggest that we strike a committee as soon as possible in the New Year to begin our planning. Let me know your thoughts on this.

Best wishes to you and your families.

In solidarity,

Phil Flemming, IVP

Labour Must Look Forward

The conditions of New Brunswick's future prosperity are being forged now, by workers and employers

(This article is a Labour Day editorial by Ross Galbraith, Business Manager of IBEW Local Union 37, which appeared in New Brunswick newspapers):

-Times & Transcript | Opinion - As published on page D7 on September 4, 2006

-Daily Gleaner | Opinion - As published on page C7 on September 4, 2006

-NB Telegraph-Journal | Opinion - As published on page A5 on September 4, 2006

It was April 15, 1872, and 10,000 Torontonians turned out in the city's downtown to see a parade and listen to speeches that called for the abolition of a law that declared that trade unions were criminal conspiracies in restraint of trade.

The event was organized by the Toronto Trades Assembly, and the specific purpose was to push for the release of 24 imprisoned leaders of the Toronto Typographical Union, who were on strike to secure the nine-hour working day. They were in jail because it was still a crime to be a member of a union in Canada.

The Toronto Trades Assembly was successful, and the offending law was repealed by Parliament that same year. That demonstration, and a similar one in Ottawa on Sept. 3 of that year, organized by seven unions with a parade that stretched over a mile long, are accepted as the beginning of what we now recognize as Labour Day.

Today, as we mark Labour Day 134 years later, it's healthy to look back at where we came from, and not forget the sacrifices made by organized labour that have contributed to the quality of life that not just members of unions, but all of us enjoy today; everything from paid holidays and sick leave to pensions and workplace safety standards.

None of these rights we now all take for granted were handed to us. They were all won after hard fought battles. Organized labour has a proud history, but it's just that - history. And while it's important to understand it, it's even more important to look ahead.

Priorities have changed with the times and as with any organization, change is necessary to remain relevant. In the case of unions, there have been many changes over the years. Take my union, for example. When the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers was founded, its priority was improved safety measures because at the time, one out of two electrical workers was dying from electrocution. But that was more than a hundred years ago. Today, we've helped create safer workplaces, and it isn't saving lives but quality of life that defines what we do.

Co-operatively with NB Power, our members, like employees in many organizations, have Employee and Family Assistance Pro-

grams, flexible work hours, job-sharing options, wellness programs and any number of initiatives aimed at improving the workplace, and at the same time improving productivity.

The days of "us against them" underlined by a militancy that at the time was necessary to counter the exploitive company managements of the day, have in many cases thankfully given way to a "win-win" attitude, where more and more progressive unions are working hand-in-hand with enlightened managements to ensure corporate viability to the benefit of both. One recent example of this is the **IBEW Code of Excellence**, a program where both management and the union commit to a list of respective responsibilities that guarantees quality work and high productivity.

Today, among the main challenges both management and unions face are the related realities of an aging workforce and a shortage of skilled tradespeople. It's encouraging to see that in the midst of the current election campaign, both the Liberals and Tories are promising to beef up trades training. There's no question that's a priority.

Related to this, one of the issues the next government needs to tackle is pension reform. The Public Service Superannuation Pension Plan in this province needs attention. One example of necessary pension changes involves workers who have at least 30 years service. If they could take their pension at age 55 without penalty, it would create training and job opportunities for our youth, while allowing senior workers to retire with dignity.

Our hope is that the new emphasis on trades training will serve to replace the ongoing boom and bust cycle of retirement packages followed by years of hiring freezes, with a program that provides New Brunswick youth with opportunities to gain experience in their chosen trade and at the same time allow for a smooth transition of older employees into retirement. A program like this would allow young apprentices to supplement our older workers, particularly in those jobs that are physically demanding. This is something the IBEW will continue to fight for.

My intention though, isn't to dwell on this specific issue. I mention it simply as an example of the way organized labour continues to play a role in creating a better standard of life in our society. Keep in mind that while unionized employees tend to get paid better than non-union people, and enjoy better benefits, all workers tend to benefit over time as other employers realize they have to do better by their non-union workers to retain them. As a result the employees do better, but so do the communities they live in, because of the increased tax base and increased economic activity.

So as we mark yet another Labour Day, it's good to reflect on the fact that the prosperity we enjoy in New Brunswick is directly attributable to the strength and dedication of our labour force. It is after all, the engine that drives our economy. So no matter what role you are fulfilling in our workforce, or whether you carry a lunch can or a briefcase, take pride in the fact you are one of the cogs in the wheel that keeps us moving forward.

By Ross Galbraith - *International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union 37*

System Council #11 – 4th Quadrennial Convention

During August 10-13, 2006, the Fourth National Convention of System Council #11 was held at the Fairmont Queen Elizabeth Hotel in Montreal, Quebec.

At the Convention which is held every four years, delegates from the 19 Local Unions from across Canada deliberate on proposed changes to the System Council Bylaws, elect two General Chairmen, and an Executive Committee.

Prior to the Convention, committees on law and credentials are formed and they meet to prepare the resolutions that are submitted by the Local Unions to be voted on at the Convention.

The first day of the Convention commenced with an opening speech from retired Regional Chairman for CN Eastern Canada, Raymond Ayotte. International Vice President (IVP) Phil Flemming who was in attendance for the two day convention also addressed the delegates. The deliberations on the proposed by-law amendments, as held on the first day, were chaired by incumbent System General Chairman Eastern Canada, Richard Hunt.

The elections for Officers and Executive Committee members were held on the second day, chaired by incumbent Senior System General Chairman, Kevin W. Kearns. Re-elected to their positions were Senior System General Chairman Kevin W. Kearns and Regional Chairman for CP Rail Western Canada Brian Strong with all other positions won by newly elected delegates as follows:

Stan C. Dembinski-System General Chairman Eastern Canada, Chris Melo-Regional Representative Toronto Terminal Railways, Norm Provencal-Regional Representative Ontario Northland Railway, Steve Graham-Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Phil Watt-Regional Chairman Eastern Canada CP Rail, Yves Seguin-Regional Chairman CN for Eastern Canada, Ron Hewson-Regional Chairman for Central Canada, Mike Clancy-Regional Chairman for Western Canada, Robert Leduc and Donnie McLaughlin-System Council trustees.

Congratulations to the newly elected Officers and Committee members. The membership of System Council #11 will be looking forward to many accomplishments from their newly elected Officers over the next four years.

The Convention concluded with IVP Phil Flemming fielding questions from the delegates. The Delegates many of whom were attending their first convention asked questions on a variety of topics. The Officers and Delegates were very appreciative of IVP Flemming's willingness to field their questions, and thoughtful responses.

Following the very successful Convention a banquet was held for the recently elected Officers, Committee members, Delegates, along with their families and their friends. All of the newly elected Officers were sworn in by IVP Phil Flemming.

Fair Wage Policies – Not a Union – Non-Union Issue

The Ontario Construction Secretariat (OCS) recently released a report entitled **Impact of Fair Wage Policies on the Construction Industry**. This report examined the historical evolution of Fair Wage Policies in Canada and Ontario and further explored the relationship between fair wage policies and con-

struction costs. The information contained in the report is intended to help dispel some of the misconceptions about fair wages and to provide the necessary information to promote the implementation of modern fair wage policies at the provincial and municipal level.

This report was put to immediate use in assisting the Essex and Kent Building and Construction Trades Council in preparing a deputation to City Council on July 24, 2006. Although Council did not vote in favour of implementing a fair wage policy, they have left the door open by striking a committee to study the issue further. Council was clearly divided on the issue of whether or not a fair wage policy would add to the cost of municipal construction projects and ultimately the vote ended in a tie. Mayor Eddie Francis could have broken the tie by voting in favour of the fair wage motion, but chose not to do so. On a tie vote, a motion is lost.

Sol Furer, IBEW Business Manager Local Union 773, Windsor, Ontario, is somewhat optimistic that the issue will be re-visited by Council before the municipal elections in November. As one of the local councilors remarked "This is not a union, non-union issue. It's about fairness. It's about ... making sure people have a level playing field."

Making the Case for Fair Wage Policies:

1. Fair Wage Policies are a necessary counter-balance to cut-throat competition in the construction industry.
2. Fair Wage Policies support productivity and innovation in the construction industry.
3. Fair Wage Policies encourage the use of more skilled and better qualified labour and thereby support industry and worker investments in skills training and apprenticeship.
4. Contractors that do not invest in apprenticeship and skills development have a cost advantage over contractors that do. *(Although governments advocate the expansion of the apprenticeship system and industry investment in skill development, the absence of Fair Wage Policies gives a competitive advantage to employers who do not contribute to the apprenticeship system and who make no direct investment in skills training.)*
5. Contractors that compete on the basis of cheap labour are notorious for weaker health and safety standards.
6. Contractors that compete on the basis of cheap labour are more likely to cut corners on quality thereby increasing long-run costs.
7. Fair Wage Policies can curtail underground practices and create a level playing field for competitive bidding.
8. Fair Wage Policies are incorrectly criticized for radically inflating costs. The evidence does not support these claims.
9. Fair Wage Policies are not union preference policies. Fair Wage Policies limit competition only from those non-union contractors that base their competitive advantage on cheap wages, independent operators and lower safety standards.
10. Fair Wage Policies protect local employment and thereby increase the benefits to the local economy from construction that is financed by local funds.

By: Katherine Jacobs
Director of Research, Ontario Construction Secretariat

The OCS report is available online at:
www.iciconstruction.com or in hard copy by calling 416-620-5210.

Unions Are Still Our Best Hope

WHEN it comes to workers and labour unions, there is good and bad news. The good news is that polls show Canadians' approval of unions is increasing. Most Canadians think that unions make a positive contribution to society and overall prosperity. And many workers would join a union if given a chance.

Unions are the most democratic institutions when it comes to giving workers a say in the economy. They provide workers with some clout when it comes to challenging increasing corporate dominance of our economy and society. Unions increase earnings and benefits, but they are also strong promoters of social programs that provide services to all Canadians, regardless of their income or where they live. Unions are well ahead of the curve, compared to the corporate sector, in taking a stand on the need to move to a more environmentally sustainable economy and to struggle against discrimination.

Unions can make businesses and economies more productive. They pressure employers to invest in new technologies, and invest in upgrading skills. These investments enable workers to create more goods and services with the same amount of labour.

Unions have an important role to play in making the Nova Scotian economy more productive. The provincial economy is disproportionately creating low-wage jobs. Economic productivity is low by Canadian standards. Investment in research and development is falling behind the rest of Canada, which is already low by international standards. Too many employers in Nova Scotia are relying on low wages and extracting longer hours from their employees to keep their businesses profitable.

In a recent survey of collective agreements, Statistics Canada has found that agreements between unions and companies are increasingly focusing on making workplaces healthier and safer, on employment security and on education and training. These measures support workers in adjusting to and taking advantage of technological changes, and increase the productivity of companies. Eighty per cent of the employers involved in the survey of unionized companies concluded that labour-management relations were good and none felt that the relations were poor.

Here's the bad news. Workers in Nova Scotia are falling behind economically, and governments and corporations are trying to undermine efforts by unions to support workers.

The overall picture for workers in Canada is not pretty. Corporate profits are "skyrocketing," according to Statistics Canada. Employers are raking in a record portion of the wealth being created in our economy. The creators of this wealth, workers, are being left out in the cold.

Real earnings across the country have barely kept pace with the cost of living; and in Nova Scotia, earnings are actually declining. The standard work week is eroding, as many predominantly low-income earners are struggling to make ends meet through part-time, low-wage jobs. Meanwhile, an increasing number of people are working more than 40 hours a week, from just under 20 per cent in 1976 to almost 30 per cent in 2001. Low-income folks are slipping further behind, as income inequality increases.

Coinciding with these changes is the decreased ability of workers to influence economic activity and society. The percentage

of workers represented by labour unions, the traditional promoters of workers' interests and social programs, has been on the decline. Twenty-five years of attacks by the corporate sector and governments on unions' ability to promote the interests of workers have left their toll. The proportion of the Canadian workers belonging to a union has decreased to 31 per cent, from 38 per cent in 1981. In Nova Scotia, the overall number of union members continues to increase, but the percentage of the overall workforce that is unionized has decreased from 34 per cent to 29 per cent. Nova Scotia has the second lowest rate in Canada of unionization in the private sector (12.4 per cent).

Canadian academic research has concluded that declining unionization is not due to changes in the economy making unions out of date, or even because workers don't want to join a union. In fact, the popularity of unions has been increasing. No, the research shows the primary reason for declining unionization in Canada is anti-union initiatives by governments and employers.

Rather than support union efforts to improve work lives, most provincial governments have introduced U.S.-style labour legislation that makes it harder for unions to negotiate. Governments have lengthened and complicated the process of organizing a union in a workplace. Management has jumped at the opportunity to intimidate workers and put legal obstacles in the union's way.

Unions aren't perfect. But they offer the best opportunity to promote workers' interests in the workplace and they do help make the economy work for all citizens. Indications are that many more workers would join a union if given a chance. The province needs to provide legislation that ensures all workers get that chance.

John Jacobs, Director of the Nova Scotia Office of the Cdn Centre for Policy Alternatives (www.policyalternatives.ca), an independent public policy research institute.

At the Progress Meeting there were requests for access to the above article; the following link should bring you to the column:

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/Editorials/2005/09/Editorial1178/index.cfm?pa=AE5DAA5F>

Union Fights Foreign Hiring

Ironworkers rally against importing workers instead of hiring Canadians

© *The Vancouver Sun* 2006. Thursday, September 21, 2006

LOWER MAINLAND - More than 200 unionized ironworkers walked off the job Wednesday, to attend a rally one union official described as "the first shot across the bows" in labour's fight against foreign workers being hired to replace Canadians.

Besides Local 97 of the Ironworkers union, the rally also involved members of the B.C. Government Employees' Union protesting what it called a threat to use foreign workers to replace regular and part-time employees at Windsor Manor care centre in Kelowna.

But most of the tough talk was from Local 97 business manager Perley Holmes, who said his members are not prepared

to see foreign workers brought in to work on the Golden Ears Bridge by the German company Bilfinger Berger Canada.

Asked if the move would result in labour unrest, Holmes said, "that's putting it mildly."

Holmes said the company has applied to Human Resources and Development Canada to bring in 345 foreign ironworkers.

He said he believes the process is being expedited by the federal government.

"This concerns me greatly, because I'd provided plenty of letters to show there are lots of unemployed ironworkers in Eastern Canada and I've repeatedly told this contractor that if he wants to sit down and sign an agreement with me he could have any number of ironworkers," said Holmes.

Bilfinger Berger is part of the Golden Crossing Constructors Joint Venture that is building the \$800-million bridge across the Fraser River between Langley and Maple Ridge.

Patti Schom-Moffatt, an official with Golden Crossing Constructors Joint Venture, said Bilfinger Berger is not seeking to hire foreign workers instead of Canadians.

She said the company has asked for a licence to bring in up to 345 foreign skilled trades workers in the event that Bilfinger Berger can't find sufficient Canadians to work on the project.

"Our policy is to first hire locally and from Canada. Any foreign workers will be paid the same rates as union workers, so there will be no advantage to us in bringing them in," said Schom-Moffatt.

She said the licence for foreign workers would be an insurance against contractors not being able to recruit sufficient local workers when there is a need for them.

"We need to be flexible, as we have to build this bridge on time and the workers have to be available when we need them," she said.

She said construction hasn't reached the point workers are needed and Bilfinger Berger is in the process of "identifying appropriate candidates."

Holmes, with the International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental and Reinforcing Ironworkers, said there are upwards of 1,500 unemployed ironworkers across Canada who should be hired before foreigners.

"This could destroy us," said Holmes, adding one union official in Eastern Canada is already threatening to "close down every bridge in the country during rush hour" if foreign workers are hired.

B.C. Federation of Labour president Jim Sinclair said, if there is a shortage of workers in Canada, the government should bring workers in as citizens and not as "second-class citizens to be sent home once the job was over."

"We know what the companies are doing, they want cheap labour -- we all get it -- but the fundamental issue here is the gov-

ement of Canada should be bringing people in to build our nation, not to exploit them," said Sinclair.

Meanwhile, George Heyman, president of the B.C. Government and Service Employees' Union, accused Kelowna-based AdvoCare Health Services Ltd. of using the threat of cheap foreign labour to force 70 care aides in Windsor Manor to accept "crap wages."

Beginning today, AdvoCare has taken over the running of Windsor Manor, as the BCGEU's contract was terminated under provisions of Bill 29 that allowed contracting out.

Heyman said AdvoCare told the Windsor Manor workers they could have their jobs back if they accepted a 20-per-cent pay cut, as well as cuts to their health and benefits plan.

He said the company is recruiting nurses in the Philippines, India and Colombia to replace workers in Windsor Manor, using a "bogus immigration process to drive down wages and working conditions of Canadians and exploit foreign workers."

John Manton, president of AdvoCare Health Services, denied the union's claims.

He said 45 jobs are affected, not the 70 cited by the union. All Windsor Manor employees were offered jobs with AdvoCare, he said, and about 60 per cent accepted. The others have been replaced.

He said the union wage rate for an aide is \$19.24 an hour and his company is paying \$18 with a pension and benefits package.

Manton's company supplies aides to various health care facilities and has trouble recruiting people to do the work, he said. He has started a school to train aides but can't get enough people to train, he said.

The application for 25 foreign workers was made over a year ago, months before the bid to take over running Windsor Manor, Manton said.

Gerry Bellett, Vancouver Sun - Published - gbellett@png.canwest.com

Training Centre Infrastructure Fund (TCIF)

It is with great disappointment that Finance Minister Jim Flaherty has terminated the TCIF beginning in Year 2. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) officials stressed that the government's decision was attributed to its desire to focus on its trades policies which are designed in accordance with their preference to provide funding support directly to individuals and employers. As TCIF had yet to undergo the evaluation originally planned after Year 3, there is no basis to deem that it wasn't providing good value for money.

The following summarizes the key points associated with the impact that this decision has on TCIF Year 1 recipients and Year 2 applicants:

- Year 1 agreements will be honoured.

- HRSDC is immediately starting to call all Year 2 applicants to advise that the program has been terminated and they are not proceeding with any commitments made for Year 2. They plan on following up with a letter.
- The original program evaluation process will be amended to assess the outcomes of the Year 1 agreements.

Federal Government Abandons Working Families Spending cuts to jobs and skills programs a backward step

Tuesday, September 26, 2006

OTTAWA – The Canadian Labour Congress says the new federal government is wrong to abandon its role in helping Canadian workers improve their skills and find good jobs.

"They've got their priorities all wrong on the jobs front," said Ken Georgetti, president of the Canadian Labour Congress.

"Canadian employers are talking about skills shortages. Everybody agrees that investment in skills is crucial to building both a productive and an inclusive society. Yet the new federal government has decided to cut funding and abandon programs aimed at raising the skill levels of our workforce," he said.

Included in the \$2 billion in spending cuts and "efficiencies" announced earlier this week was funding to youth employment programs, the beginnings of an attack on federal government employees, and supports for industrial development in the midst of a major crisis in the manufacturing sector.

Pointing to the OECD's latest Economic Survey of Canada, which highlights the country's high proportion of adult low-wage workers who lack basic skills and cannot access training, Georgetti says the spending cuts are a backward step.

"Raising the basic numeracy and literacy of these workers – which means investing in adult learning and literacy programs – would do more to raise overall productivity and address the shortage of skilled workers than any tax cut in the next budget," said Georgetti.

He also questions the logic of the decision to shut down the Canadian Labour Business Centre, which represented the only forum in Canada where business, labour, the federal government and the provinces came together and were working toward solutions to the shortage of skilled workers that is already hobbling economic growth.

"This is an old style, arrogant government approach that completely disregards the input and expertise of real stakeholders," said Georgetti.

Georgetti said working people should seriously question not just these cuts, but also the lack of advance consultation. He says the labour movement will redouble its efforts to stop any further shift away from their responsibility to help ordinary working people.

"We won't allow this government to cut and run from the promises it made in the last election campaign about improving the lives of ordinary working families," he said.

The Canadian Labour Congress, the national voice of the labour

movement, represents 3 million Canadian workers. The CLC brings together Canada's national and international unions along with the provincial and territorial federations of labour and 135 district labour councils.

Web site: www.canadianlabour.ca

Foreign Construction Workers Unionize

Claim they're paid \$4.50 an hour while Canadian workers make \$20

A group of foreign workers in British Columbia have joined a Canadian union in what one immigration lawyer sees as a wake-up call for governments and employers looking to fill construction positions as Canada's domestic labour supply dwindles.

"I think employers will be more leery about bringing in groups of workers," said Zool Suleman, of Vancouver law firm Suleman and Co. "This isn't a problem that's going to go away. With our labour shortages, more and more we want to bring in large groups of workers. It's an area that the federal and provincial governments need to work (on) to make sure there's a seamless effective web of governance for these foreign workers."

Italian tunnel-boring firm SELI brought about 45 Latin American workers to Vancouver to do tunnelling work for the Canada Line, a 19-kilometre rapid transit line that will connect the suburb of Richmond with Vancouver and the airport.

The Construction and Specialized Workers Union Local 1611 approached the workers, mostly from Costa Rica, Columbia and Ecuador, after it found out they were being paid about \$4.50 an hour while their Canadian colleagues were earning \$20 an hour.

"When a foreign worker comes to this country legally, they're entitled to the same rights and protections as any Canadian worker," said Kevin Blakely, the union's lawyer. "If they're not paid the local market rate, all it will serve to do is drive down labour rates. If we flood the market with cheap, foreign labour, there will be no market for Canadian labour."

SELI initially advertised for the job in Canada last December and listed the wage as \$18 to \$21 an hour, but couldn't fill all 40 jobs. To hire a foreign worker, a company must show that it can't meet the need domestically and that the worker will receive wages comparable to Canadians in similar jobs. Approval from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development, known as a positive labour market opinion, makes it very likely the foreign worker will get a work permit.

At the labour board hearings, held in July after the union was certified on June 30, SELI produced contracts in English stating the workers were hired at no less than \$20,000 US a year tax-free. But Blakely strongly questions the contracts' authenticity.

"If you talk to any one of these guys, they will tell you with absolute certainty that they did not get hired at \$20,000 US a

year, that they were hired at \$1,100 US a month," he said. He added the fact the contracts were in English was especially telling since most of the workers can't speak or read English.

Blakely said the union has pay stubs proving the workers, who arrived in Canada at the end of April and beginning of May, were only paid \$1,100 US (\$1,250 Cdn) for the month of May. With the workers putting in 66-hour weeks, according to the union, that amounts to about \$4.50 Cdn an hour.

Steve Crombie, vice-president of public affairs for InTransit BC, the private-public partnership that is in effect the project manager for the construction of the rapid transit line and that subcontracted the tunnelling project to SELI, said he has seen the signed contracts himself.

"Each employee has a written contract that is signed by the employee and the company," said Crombie. "When you take the package of the salary and all the benefits plus all the accommodation and all the meals, it's comparable to what a local worker would get."

Benefits include vacation pay, plus extended medical and dental. The company also gives each worker two round-trip plane tickets home and pays their room and board, an extra \$2,250 Cdn a month by SELI's estimate. The fact the salary is tax free is another important factor when compared to workers who are paying Canadian taxes, said Crombie.

Citing the workers' pay stubs, Blakely disputes the company's claim that it's paying the workers \$20,000 US a year. Even if the company adds the room and board to the calculation of wages, it is well below the market wage, said Blakely. He said the union has members working a similar tunnelling job on Vancouver's north shore who are making between \$8,000 and \$10,000 a month (or \$96,000 to \$120,000 a year). Those who live outside the metropolitan area get a \$75-a-day "living out" expense.

Whether or not the employer's extras can be included in wages, thus making them compliant with the minimum employment standards, is up to the courts, said Blakely.

However, if the company wants the extras to be included in the wages, Blakely said it would be best to pay the \$2,250 up front and let the workers get their own lodging and food.

"If you asked these Latin American workers whether they would rather live in a hotel and eat at a restaurant every day, or whether they would rather have \$2,250 in their pocket every month, I think the answer would be abundantly clear," he said. "Give these guys the \$2,250 and let them do with it what they will."

Immigration lawyer Suleman agrees. He said the Canada Line case is one of the first significant examples where a foreign worker's contract must be examined to determine what they're really being paid and what might be padding to help get the positive labour market opinion. When a contract states the worker is paid \$3,000 a month, but only \$1,000 of that is in cash, it's hard to quantify how the remainder is spent, he said.

"How do you ascertain the value of the other \$2,000? Is it real? Is it padded? We just don't know," he said.

All of the foreign workers on the Canada Line project have

worked for SELI before. Some have been with the company for as long as 25 years, said Crombie.

“Keep in mind that most of the workers don’t speak English, so there’s a cultural barrier,” he said when asked why the company doesn’t pay out the room and board allowance.

The Construction Sector Council estimates that, over the next nine years, the industry will need about 191,000 new workers. In response to this prediction, the Canadian Construction Association asked the federal government to change immigration policy to make it easier to bring in skilled construction workers.

By Shannon Klie - Canadian HR Reporter, August 14, 2006

Congratulations Nexans

Nexans, formally Fergus Cables, a subsidiary of Canada Wire and Cable, is celebrating forty-years of business in Fergus, Ontario.

The first sod was turned on September 16, 1965. The first piece of wire was made on August 6, 1966, on what was then, Fergus Highland Games Day.

Fergus Cables became one of the largest employers in Fergus, bringing over \$100,000 in municipal taxes in their first year. This sum enabled town council, in 1967, to make no increases in house hold taxes.

The official opening of Fergus Cables took place on June 9, 1967, followed by an Open House to the public on June 10. The formal opening included Members of Parliament, top Executives from the business world in Canada and the United States, and top Officials from Canada Wire and Cable and Noranda Mines, parent companies of Fergus Cables.

In the summer of 1967, one newspaper report stated that 150 employees worked at the factory, and that by the end of the year, 50 more employees pushed the number to 200. Today, the Fergus plant has 240 employees.

The other eight subsidiary plants in the 1960’s were located in New Westminster, BC; Prince George, BC; Weyburn, SK; Fort Garry, MB; Toronto, ON; Simcoe, ON; Montreal East, QC; and Lancaster, NB.

The Fergus plant distinguished as being the second largest factory amongst the Canada Wire buildings to be constructed (240,000 square feet originally and now 250,000 square feet), exceeded only by the Toronto plant and offices, destined to stretch over a million- square-feet.

Internationally, Fergus Cables, in the 1960s, had manufacturing affiliations with similar companies in New Zealand and several countries in South America. They also had agents in 32 countries outside Canada.

Although the physical plant size of Fergus Cables has only increased by 10,000 square feet in its forty-year history, new technology, which includes multi-tasking machinery, has aided in increasing production and a continued future for the factory.

Nexans, with all of its subsidiary factories, has become a

multi-billion dollar operation. In 2004, for example, sales peaked at \$6 billion USD.

The IBEW has proudly represented the employees at Nexans (Fergus Cables) since they opened their doors. Local Union 636 looks forward to working in partnership with the company to ensure its ongoing growth, and our members will continue to play a key role in their future success.

Closure of the CLBC and the future of the Work and Learning Knowledge Centre

On Thursday, September 28, 2006, the Board of Directors of the Canadian Labour and Business Centre (CLBC) voted unanimously to dissolve the organization in light of the funding cut by the federal government to CLBC’s Workplace Partners Panel (WPP) initiative, to take effect on December 1, 2006. Over the next few weeks, we will be working towards an orderly closure of CLBC.

The closure of CLBC brings to an end Canada’s longest standing business and labour forum, which included the full participation of the provinces, territories, education organizations, and the federal government. Since 1984, CLBC has been Canada’s only on-going national forum for partnership and dialogue on labour market and skills issues.

The development of partnerships among these various stakeholder groups takes time to nurture, and the effect of the federal government’s decision leaves a vacuum at the national level.

Throughout CLBC’s 22-year history, the Centre has been recognized for its balanced and inclusive approach. Whether exploring human resource issues in different sectors of the economy, analyzing new workplace arrangements, or surveying private and public sector leaders about their policy priorities and practices, it has engaged all parties constructively.

Alberta Building Trades Vote for a Conservative Candidate as King Ralph’s Replacement

Lyle Oberg has met with a number of Building Trades Unions; IBEW Local Union 424 is one looking for support in his bid for Premier.

The Conservative Party allows all its members to cast a vote for selection of the party leader. The last time King Ralph was elected he received 15,000 votes on the first ballot. We are capable of producing those numbers and more.

The two leading the race in this contest for Premier are Jim Dinning and Lyle Oberg.

Jim Dinning has a lead player running his campaign from Merit Shop, that being Rob Love.

The question becomes why vote for Oberg, simply put, he is the best of a poor lot. We know Dinning will bring Merit legislation in to outlaw Market Recovery Plans and Salting.

When you consider this, Oberg is an easy choice.

On Thursday Sept. 5th 2006 the Building Trades made the front page in the Edmonton Journal with their campaign to sign up

conservative memberships, paying the \$5.00 on behalf of each member or family member signed.

The objective is to place 10,000 or more votes for Oberg of the 4000 Building Trades members in Alberta.

IBEW Life Saving Award

It is with congratulations and gratitude that two of Local Union 636 members are awarded the highest award that the IBEW has to offer, the *IBEW Life Saving Award*. Congratulations to Brother Greg Brass and Brother Todd Stover in their unselfish accomplishments in saving a human's life.

The Heroic Story

On January 18th, 2006 at 2pm, linesmen Gregg Brass and Todd Stover witnessed a two vehicle accident at the corner of Major Mackenzie and McCowan road. They stopped to offer assistance to the couple whose mini-van had gone off the road into the ditch.

The driver of the vehicle, an older man, obviously dazed and shaken from the accident was walking around in the intersection. Gregg spoke to the man and calmed him down and led him out of harms way. The man told Gregg that his wife was still inside the van.

Todd immediately went to check on the woman still inside the van. Through the passenger window, Todd could see that the woman was hurt quite badly and could not get herself out of the vehicle. While talking to her, he noticed smoke coming out from under the dashboard of the car. Todd courageously pulled the woman out through the window of the vehicle and carried her up the bank to the Emergency Services that had just arrived on the scene of the accident. When Todd looked back at the van, it was fully engulfed in flames. If it wasn't for Todd's actions, reacting quickly and responsibly, the woman could have been severely burned, if she survived at all.

Both Gregg and Todd acted in a heroic manner assisting people in need. The Town of Markham has presented PowerStream and Gregg and Todd with letters of commendations for their actions.

IBEW Local Unions with "A" Membership

At the 37th International Convention, the Delegates approved several changes to the IBEW Constitution. Included amongst those changes were revisions to Article XI. Of immediate concern to IBEW members who are considering retirement, there is a change in the IBEW Pension Benefit Fund (PBF) pension payment rate.

Effective January 1, 2007, the rate used to calculate pension payments has been established at \$4.50 per month for each full year of continuous "A" membership. This change eliminates the \$3.50 rate which has been used on all time prior to 1998, and increases PBF payments for all years earned prior to 1998 to the same \$4.50 rate used after 1997. Please remember these payment rates continue to be subject to the applicable reduction for early retirement, Optional Spousal Benefit and all other provisions of Article XI. Inasmuch as there was no provision for retroactive PBF benefit increase at the 37th International Convention, it is recommended that

you contact members considering retirement during the months of September, October, November and December of 2006, asking them if they wish to postpone retirement until January 2007 to receive the improved PBF pension benefit change. Members with pension effective dates prior to January 2007 will continue to be calculated using the old benefit rate.

Habitat for Humanity

Halifax Regional Municipality

The members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local Unions 625 and 1928 are proud to announce the IBEW is again providing support and volunteers for Habitat for Humanity in their BUILD 2006. The electrical material needed in the construction of two houses in Dartmouth is furnished by Unionized Contractors and local suppliers, the labour is provided by Local Union 625 Electricians, and permit fees and additional support is provided by Local Union 1928 members. For info on volunteering or making a donation, call 464-0274.

We would like to remind the public of the opening of the new ReStore at Unit 121 Ilsley Ave., Dartmouth. This Home Improvement Outlet has new or gently used building supplies and home furnishings. Hours are Wed., Thurs. and Fri. 9:30am – 5:30pm, Sat. 10:00am – 2:00pm. For details on donating items call 405-3755.

Proceeds help fund Habitat build projects.

For more details and information, please click on the following links: Info@IBEWLocal625.ca or IBEW1928@eastlink.ca

Projected Meeting Dates 2007

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| 1/11-12/07 | IBEW/NECA Employee Benefits Conference Phoenix, Arizona |
| 3/22-24/07 | IBEW Construction Conference Washington, DC |
| 3/25-28/07 | BCTD Legislative Conference Washington, DC |
| 5/7 – 11/07 | Broadcasting, Manufacturing & Telecommunications Conference Wyndham Miami Beach Miami Beach, FL |
| 6/11-15/07 | Utility Conference |
| 8/27-8/30/07 | First District Progress Meeting Victoria, B.C., Canada |