

Canadian comment



Spring 2004



INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS
FIRST DISTRICT

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International Vice-President

EDWIN D. HILL
International President

JERRY J. O'CONNOR
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Canada's Health Care System Under Attack

The Supreme Court of Canada will hear a case on June 8, 2004, alleging that Medicare is unconstitutional. The Plaintiffs in the case are Jacque Chaoulli, a doctor, and his patient George Zeliotis.

They claim that the lack of timely access to provincially insured health care services and the restrictions on access to private care amounted to a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. To date, this argument has been rejected in two lower courts in Quebec but a group of ten senators are pushing this agenda in support of this case. The senators are led by Michael Kirby, and a group of for-profit health corporations. The senators asking for the legislation governing Medicare to be struck down are Michael Kirby, Marjorie Lebreton, Catherine Callbeck, Joan Cook, Jane Cordy, Joyce Fairbairn, Wilburt Keon, Lucie Pépin, Brenda Robertson, and Douglas Roche.

If the Supreme Court of Canada grants the appeal it will mean that the legislation governing public health insurance and the hospital system is unconstitutional. This will then allow for two-tier, for-profit health care and invites private for-profit and foreign investors into our health care system. This

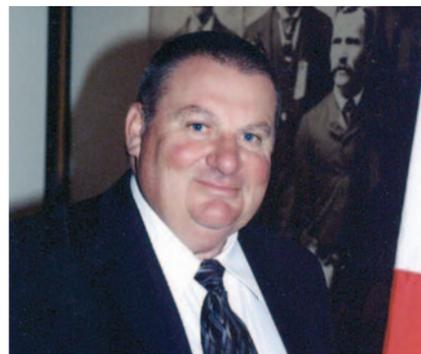
will be the death of Medicare in Canada. It is interesting to note that Senator Michael Kirby is also the Director of Extendicare Inc., which is a for-profit nursing home chain. As a director, he has a fiduciary obligation to act in the company's best interest. This is clearly a conflict of interest with his position as Senator and all of these senators are acting in a way that is clearly not in the best interest of all Canadians. The survival of Medicare is the most serious issue facing Canadians today and it is absolutely important that everyone get involved with this issue to ensure that this does not happen.

What to do? Please follow the lead of International Vice President Phil Flemming and write a letter to those senators demanding their resignation. (The mailing address is the "Senate of Canada," Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A4). What you also must do is write letters to your politicians at every level, federal, provincial and municipal, demanding that they protect Canadians and our Medicare system. If you do not act we will lose one of Canada's most valuable assets that we as Canadians have. We will lose this not only for ourselves, but for our children and our grandchildren. You must act and you must act now.

editorial



Phil Flemming, IBEW Vice President



Phil Flemming
International Vice President

I have certainly had an active and interesting six months since being appointed as International Vice President for the First District, Canada. Since then I have had the opportunity to meet with many of our local union leaders across the country and they have made it clear that the most significant issue affecting us today is the effect that our governments and our elected political leaders have on our day-to-day lives.

It doesn't matter if we talk about federal, provincial, municipal, school board trustees or any other elected official who has control over our tax dollar, they make the rules and laws that we live by. All of these people influence how we work and how we do business, which directly impacts the quality of life for us, and our families.

In Canada, we have 56,000 members in the IBEW and 2.3 million working men and women affiliated to the Canadian Labour Congress. This is a vast resource of working people who can make a difference.

So what should be the agenda items that we as a labour movement must pursue in the political arena? Advancement on health care, education,

day care, security for our seniors, reasonable labour legislation and a fair sharing of the tax burden by all of society are just a few of the issues that will make our life and our families' lives better. How do we accomplish this seemingly impossible task?

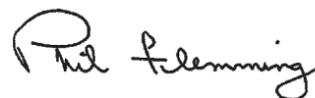
It really is not that hard. It all begins with becoming politically active. All of us, acting as individuals and as part of lobby groups, must take the time from our busy schedules to be involved in some way. Everything and anything you do will help make a difference. For example, when you volunteer for a campaign, whether you put up signs, drop leaflets in your neighbourhood, telephone other voters or even knock on doors with candidates, you establish a relationship with that candidate. Should that candidate be successful they will remember the work you did on their behalf and will find the time to listen to your concerns.

A long serving politician once said that while every voter is important, a volunteer campaigner who can deliver 50 or 100 votes is especially important. We need to be those especially important voters. We need politicians to remember hard working volunteers elected them.

The IBEW in Canada is building a training seminar to make our members aware of how they can make a difference by giving you the tools to become more involved in our political structure.

It's your future – get involved!

Yours in solidarity,


International Vice President

Organizing and Training Conference – A First in Canada

For the first time in Canada, two organizing training conferences will be held. The eastern conference will be held in Ottawa, Ontario from June 14th to June 17th and the western conference will be held in Kelowna, BC from June 1st to June 4th. Four International Representatives from Washington will be holding both construction and industrial organizing courses at the same time and at the same location!!! All indicators point to a large turnout for both of these events and we expect that this will be one of the best organizing training programs ever offered in the IBEW.

Coast to Coast Updates

Since last October, the First District office has been producing a monthly newsletter that highlights activities and events from all across Canada. These updates have been sent directly to the Business Managers of every Local Union but now you can view these updates right on the First District website at www.ibew1st.org.



INTERNATIONAL BROTHERHOOD OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS
FRATERNITÉ INTERNATIONALE DES OUVRIERS EN ÉLECTRICITÉ



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

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International Secretary/Treasurer
Secrétaire-trésorier internationale

March 22, 2004

Forwarded to Senators Michael Kirby, Marjorie Lebreton, Catherine Callbeck, Joan Cook, Jane Cordy, Joyce Fairbairn, Wilburt Keon, Lucie Pépin, Brenda Robertson, and Douglas Roche

Senate of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A4

Dear Senator,

It is with absolute shock that I have found that you are involved in a process that could adversely affect the Medicare system in Canada. It is with disappointment that I have read that ten senators are using their position in an attempt to have the Supreme Court of Canada grant an appeal on behalf of Dr. Jacque Chaoulli and his patient George Zeliotis. Regardless of the fact that the Supreme Court of Canada granted intervenor status to you on the basis of an individual Canadian, it is impossible to separate your status as a Senator and the weight that office carries from your status as an individual. I know this reality is not a surprise to you which makes your intervention in this Supreme Court case all the more abhorrent.

Certainly you must remember how the Medicare system helped you and your family throughout your entire life, and now at this point, when you are in a position to fix the Medicare system, you are looking to dismantle it, and allow profit to be made at the expense of Canadians.

This is truly a shameful act and it is with entire disbelief that you as a senator are acting in a totally different role than what a senator's role should be. Not only have you compromised the position of a senator but you are compromising your integrity, and as such I am demanding that you resign your position as senator immediately or totally withdraw from this matter and provide public apology to the people of this country. You are promoting your own selfish interests and the selfish interests of private companies, and not protecting the health care system for the people of Canada.

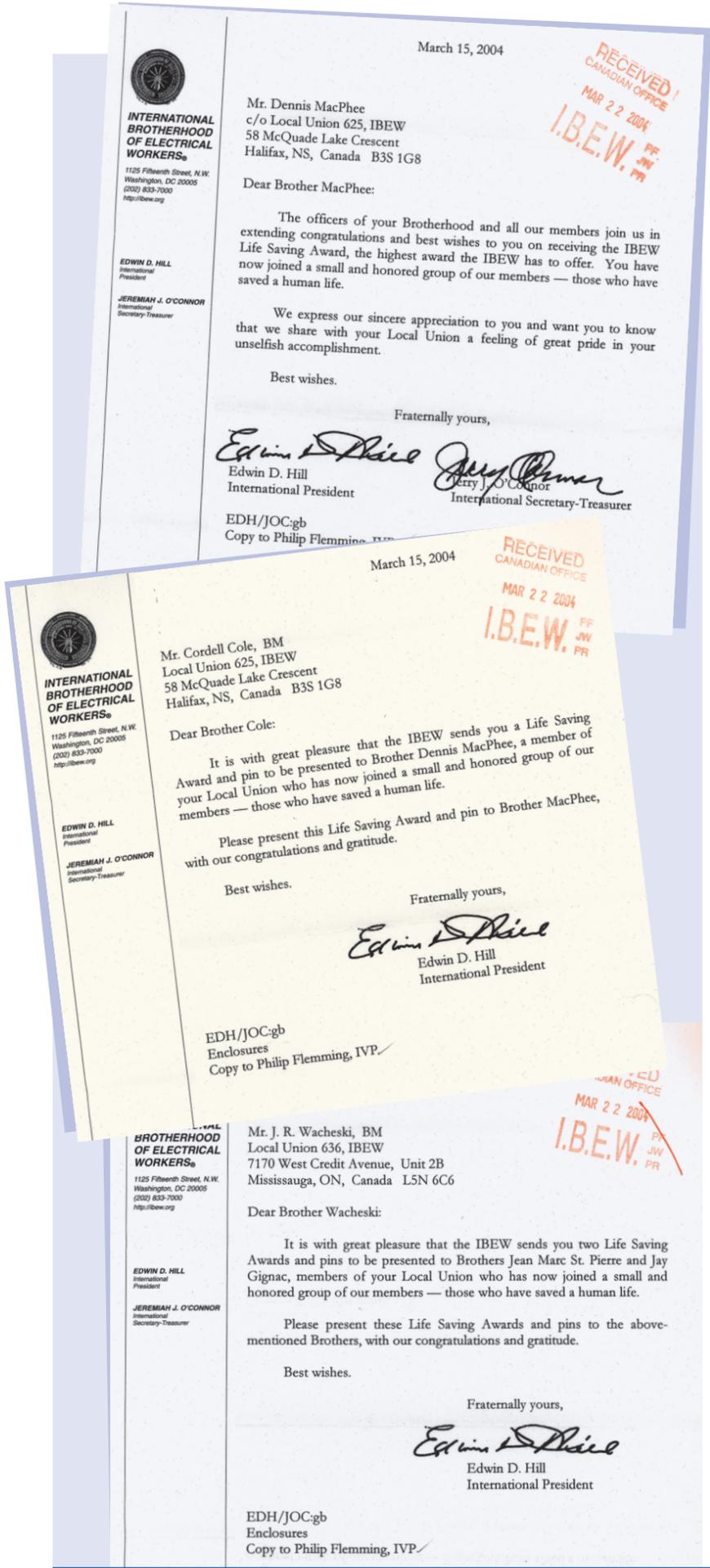
It is without doubt that the vast majority of Canadians support a publicly owned single tier level of health care and it is your duty as senator to support Canadian views and interests. It is not your duty to support the interests of private companies who make a profit at the expense of Canadians and their health care system.

Sincerely,

Phil Flemming
International Vice President

PF/ks

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Sexual Harassment – a Union Issue

Unions historically have protected workers where laws affecting the workplace do not exist, are poorly enforced, or are compromised. Unions have been, and will continue to be defenders of workers subjected to all types of workplace abuse. Therefore the protection of workers from sexual harassment by persons in positions of authority or co-workers is an important service that unions must provide. Sexual harassment can damage a worker's physical, psychological and economic well-being.

What is it? Sexual harassment is any form of unwelcome, unsolicited or unwarranted behavior that is sexual in nature, such as repeated comments about physical appearance, or sexual activity and includes unwanted touching.

Sexual harassment creates a climate of intolerance and division among our membership. By eroding our unity and strength, it can weaken our effectiveness at the bargaining table or when we legally take job action against an employer. It is the responsibility of employers to ensure our workplaces are free of sexual harassment, but just leaving that issue to our employer is not good enough. As a union we must take a lead role and make it our goal to help create workplace environments free of sexual harassment. That means not only dealing with complaints when they arise but also watching for instances of sexual harassment and confronting the source.

Addressing sexual harassment is not new for labour unions. There have been anti-sexual harassment policies and awareness training available long before laws addressed sexual harassment. Your Union, the IBEW is no exception - it has an Anti-Sexual Harassment policy in place and training available from the 1st District Office.

Just because you're a member of the IBEW

Providing money saving programs for Canadian Union Members

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| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| "Lower interest rate, lower fees credit card with more benefits including CashBack on everything you charge." | "Best mortgage rates available and complete guidance in obtaining a mortgage." | "Substantial savings on travel packages not available to the general public." |

1 Union Affinity Credit Card Program www.cuabpunionsavings.ca or 1.800.263.2263

"Lower interest rate, lower fees credit card with more benefits including CashBack on everything you charge."

The CUABP Mosaik BMO Bank of Montreal MasterCard has benefits negotiated exclusively for union members. The CUABP Mosaik MasterCard actually pays your members to use it with two Loyalty reward programs from which to choose. Choose free **Air Miles** or **Free CashBack** with no annual fee—subject to card utilization. There are two interest rates to choose from: 16.9% with no Annual Fee, or 12.9% with a \$10 Annual Fee. Other features include:

- > Emergency Strike skip payment privileges.
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Total flexibility allows your members to build the card they want—including choosing how many AIR MILES they want to receive. Website: www.bmo.com/mosaik



2 Union Mortgage Consulting Service www.cuabpunionsavings.ca or 1.866.599.9799

"A mortgage with the best rates available in the market and complete guidance in all aspects of obtaining a mortgage."

First Affinity Financial Corporation is a mortgage consulting service with the lowest mortgage rates in the market. First Affinity Financial Corporation is dedicated to providing members of CUABP affiliated unions with guidance in obtaining a mortgage. Never leave your home—submit your application to their secure website at www.faf.ca. What **FIRST AFFINITY FINANCIAL CORPORATION** will do for your members:

- > Provide residential or commercial mortgage consulting services.
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- > Provide step-by-step guidance for first time buyers, and pre-approved mortgages.
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- > Provide the service at **NO CHARGE** to individual Union Members of a CUABP affiliated Union/association.
- > Provide the best available mortgage rate by arranging for the financial institution to compete for their mortgage.
- > **No risk, no fees, no obligation.**

Website: www.faf.ca



3 Union Benefit Travel Program www.cuabpunionsavings.ca or 1.866.735.2964

"Substantial savings on travel and destination packages not available to the general public."

Union Getaway Inc. is your union benefits travel plan. Members of the CUABP affiliated unions and associations can enjoy substantial savings on travel and destination packages not available to the general public. Special prices are offered on airfares, hotels, cruises, resorts and destination packages. Union Getaway harnesses the buying power of the millions of working men and women across North America to obtain the most attractive values on travel and vacation needs. Website: www.uniongetawaycanada.com



To find out if your union/association participates in one or more programs go to the CUABP WEBSITE at www.cuabpunionsavings.ca

For general inquiries about the CUABP program, its many benefit programs, and for copies of this information bulletin, call Chuck McCormick, Director Marketing of CUABP at Canada toll free 1.877.231.1889.

Continuing with our Vision of Excellence, our winter school program continues to be well received. This year our training focused on some much needed construction organizing training featuring COMET Train-the-Trainer courses. Our first training course was held on February 10th to

the 13th in Vancouver, BC and was attended by 16 members. The second course had 22 in attendance and was held in Toronto, Ontario from February 16th to the 19th. Seventeen members attended the third course in Halifax, NS on March 1st to the 4th. All of those in attendance received training on the objec-

tives for organizing, increasing market share and different teaching methods. After the COMET program, these participants actually demonstrated their newly acquired skills. Congratulations to all of our enthusiastic participants for making this a success.

Scholarships

The IBEW Founders Scholarship is for IBEW members who have been in continuous good standing for four years preceding May 1 of the scholarship year. If a member has been on Honorary Withdrawal at any time during the period, he/she will not be eligible to participate. Please visit www.ibew.org/library/scholarshipfounders.htm for more information. Although the Founders Scholarship is not available to spouses or children of members, Union Plus has a scholarship, which is available for IBEW members as well as their spouses and dependent children. For more information visit www.unionpriv.org.



The Labour College of Canada is sponsored by the CLC and union organizations to provide labour specific education for union activists. The four components of the four-week program are economics, political science, labour sociology and labour history. Pictured above is Local 636 Executive Board Member **Linda Georgiu** being congratulated by Local 636 Business Representative **Allen Gates**. For more information on the Labour College please visit their website at www.labourcollege.ca.

What is the latest on VDV/IBS?

Once again at the Voice Data Video/Integrated Building Systems (VDV/IBS) Conference held in Las Vegas from March 9th to the 12th, 2004, it was easily proven that this is the fastest growing sector in the electrical industry.

The focus was on Open Systems Technology, Making Intelligent Buildings Smarter, Advancement in Security, Networks Management, Growing Market Share, Residential Sector and Organizing.

There has been a surge in homeland security and when combined with telephone systems, PC networks,

monitors/cameras, entertainment (home theatres and whole house audio), this structured low voltage wiring is by far surpassing the value of the typical electrical installation in the majority of new and existing homes. That means for existing homes that originally were not wired for VDV, there is a tremendous market in low voltage retrofitting. Of course the surge in growth is in all sectors of the industry, not only residential.

President Hill and Director of Membership Development Buddy Satterfield reported that less than 7% of this rapidly growing electrical work is

being done by the IBEW. Thus, it is incumbent upon our Locals, along with the employers to work together to develop a plan to ensure we have the skills to enter and capture this market where we do not now have a presence. This could be with a combination of training and organizing.

Electrical contractors should sell the whole installation and not just the electrical by bringing the electrical and low voltage together. Our members won't get to do this work without successful bidding by the employers. Locals, Joint Apprenticeship Councils and Contractor Associations should all work together on this.