

## The Benefit of Unions

According to a Statistics Canada report, being in a union makes a significant difference in one's income.

**Unionization 2010** by Sharanjit Uppal reports that the average hourly earnings of workers in Canada in a union are higher than those not in a union, by 16% for full-time workers and by 55% for part-time workers. Further, full-time workers not in a union work on average an extra hour per week. These differences are more marked for women. Clearly unions do offer some protection with respect to fairer wages and hours.

The report also shows that unionized workers in Canada bargained for a higher average annual increase in base wages than those attained by workers not in a union.

Ontario has the second lowest unionization rate (only Alberta is lower), with about 27% of the workforce in a union. Compare that with Newfoundland and Labrador, where about 38% of the workforce is unionized.

Unions have been bashed a lot lately in various places throughout the world, but if you look at how capitalism is dysfunctional, people clearly need some protection from these tendencies towards higher and higher profits for shareholders, higher CEO salaries, increasing numbers of part time positions with accompanying minimal benefits, and minimal regard for the resulting impacts on our communities.

To see more from this report follow this link:  
<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2010110/pdf/11358-eng.pdf>

## New Staff Representation on Trent Nature Areas Committee

Our Local now has one representative on the Trent Nature Areas Committee. Robert Loney of the Environmental and Resource Studies Program was recently elected to the position.

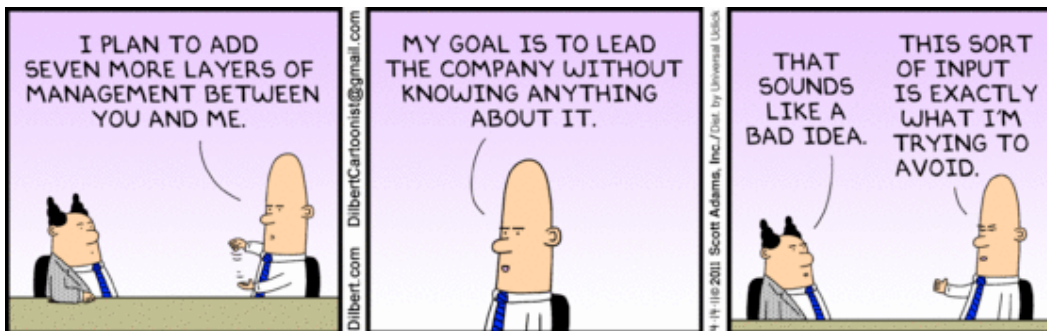
The Nature Areas Committee is responsible for overseeing and both short- and long-term management of the Trent Nature Areas. Some current activities include creating and implementing a plan to tackle invasive species, and implementing a system to manage and encourage more use of the nature areas for educational and research purposes. The Committee maintains a website at:

<http://www.trentu.ca/natureareas/>

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions about the Trent Nature Areas, feel free to contact Rob at [rloney@trentu.ca](mailto:rloney@trentu.ca) or ext. 7870.

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## Improving Trent as an Employer-Engagement With People

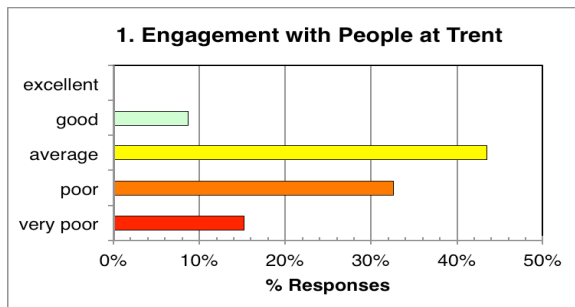
By Robert Loney

This is the first article in a six-part series looking at how Trent could improve as an employer. It follows from the December 2010 survey, where some of us rated Trent on six key factors that together evaluate an employer. These factors are based on research from AON Hewitt, which surveys for the best employers in Canada annually.

Here I will focus on the first factor, **engagement with people**. 'Engagement' refers to all interactions, from short personal conversations to formal meetings. 'People' includes senior leadership, middle management, and co-workers. This factor examines the frequency and quality of active engagement.

How does better engagement with people translate to a better employer? Engagement increases job interest, enthusiasm, and efficiency. Workers' input is sought and used in decision-making, which incorporates their experience, making for better decisions. Workers feel more valued and more involved with their work and local processes, which run better because more different perspectives are incorporated into the changes (the adage 'two heads are better than one'). It also makes management more aware of what the workers do.

Survey results indicate a perception that engagement with people at Trent is average to poor. Below the graph are some comments provided by respondents.



- People in "higher" positions do not interact and have no conception of what exactly an OPSEU worker does.
- We have only a couple of staff meetings a year and they only tell up what they want us to know (common among managers).
- Managers and Middle Management are territorial and not interested in promoting staff from within.
- I am not entirely convinced that the senior leadership is interested in our (OPSEU workers) opinions.

So, if better engagement means a better workplace for workers, better efficiency, and better and proactive solutions to problems, how do we get there?

One common theme in the comments is a lack of communication between workers and local management. What if each Trent work unit scheduled regular meetings that included all workers and managers? Work progress and problems would be discussed, and anyone could voice any issues. Successes could be congratulated, and problems jointly tackled by both the worker(s) AND

manager(s) involved in the work, who would then report back to the work unit. We have something like this in the Environmental and Resource Studies Program, and it works fairly well. I know some of you might be saying more meetings are the last thing we need, but I think you'll find these meetings actually save time by dealing with problems and improving processes together in the work unit. This emphasizes open two-way communication between worker and manager

Matching work to the person is also important. A person with an introverted personality might do very well as a clerk, but be very uncomfortable in sales. This quote says it all:

Mismatching people to their jobs is a lot like trying to teach a cat to sing. It's a waste of time and it annoys the cat.

Managers can encourage innovation. Involving employees working on a task improves the process of solving problems and finding new efficiencies. Instead of dictating a solution, ask front line workers how they would do it better. Trent made a little attempt at this by soliciting ideas on how to save money from people in the Trent community. This should be applied within work units as well. The emphasis is again on two-way communication between worker and manager.

Empowered workers, who are given the ability to make job decisions without asking permission, feel more ownership of their job, and more confident. Employees can be trusted with tasks once trained, and managers can delegate and trust their employees to do the job or get back to the manager if there is a problem. Micromanaging wastes both manager and employee time.

Approaches like this should be applied not just within each work unit, but also up and down the management chain, bridging multiple levels of management.

Here's an example of a procedure that would have been better implemented or even avoided if these ideas had been followed: switching from 3-number to 4-number course codes. This switch impacted dozens of Trent work processes- timetable, registration, student records, website updates, form designs... the list goes on. These impacts were not all studied, as admitted by Bonnie Patterson herself- various affected work units were not consulted. Instead the change was simply imposed top-down via one-way communication. If the above ideas had been followed, it would have been realized the size of the task, and maybe not followed through, or at least two-way consultation would have resulted in a much more efficient process, and the workers would have felt more involved.

We have to remember we are all working together for a common cause here, and you always get a better result if you involve people in decisions and operations than if you shut them out. People who are engaged are happier, more satisfied, and also better workers.

### References

- AON Hewitt. **Best Employer Studies Canada**.  
<http://was2.hewitt.com/bestemployers/canada/pages/index.htm>
- WCF Resources. **Improving Employee Engagement**.  
<http://www.workfamily.com/work-lifeclearinghouse/TipoftheMonth/tip0011.htm>

## News Release: Corporate tax cuts economically ineffective

*From the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives)*

The Conservatives' proposed 3-point reduction in corporate tax rates would cost the public purse \$6 billion per year, yet only stimulate about \$600 million of new business investment annually, says a study released today by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA).

The study, by economist Jim Stanford, examines historical data on business investment and cash flow from 1961 through 2010. Using econometric techniques, the study finds no evidence in the historical data that lower taxes have directly stimulated more investment. Moreover, the indirect impact of tax cuts on investment (experienced through corporate cash flow) has become much weaker over time.

"Business fixed capital spending has declined notably as a share of GDP and as a share of corporate cash flow since the early 1980s—despite repeated tax cuts that have reduced the combined federal-provincial corporate tax rate from 50% to just 29.5% in 2010," says Stanford.

After adjusting for other determinants of investment spending, incremental cash flow has elicited only small amounts of business investment in recent years: about 10 cents in new investment for each dollar in extra cash flow.

"Given this statistical evidence, the federal government would have a far more powerful impact on both public and private investment by investing directly in public infrastructure, rather than providing additional tax reductions for businesses," Stanford says.

If the federal government spent \$6 billion on public infrastructure instead of corporate tax cuts, the total increase in investment would be more than ten times as great as the increase in private investment from tax cuts alone. This includes the new public investment itself (\$6 billion), as well as an additional \$520 million in private business investment that would be stimulated through the positive spin-off effects of the resulting economic growth.

According to the study, Canadian corporations have received \$745 billion in excess, uninvested after-tax cash flow since 2001: cash flow that was not reinvested in real capital projects in Canada. This excess corporate saving reduces expenditure and purchasing power in the Canadian economy. A lack of business investment spending was the major source of Canada's recent downturn, and the sluggish rebound in business spending is a key reason why Canada's recovery from the recession has been uncertain, sluggish, and incomplete.

"Corporate Canada has been consistently receiving far more after-tax cash flow than it is reinvesting in Canadian capital spending—to the tune of \$745 billion since 2001," Stanford says. "Supplementing that cash flow through further tax cuts is like pushing on a string. Those tax savings would only add to the large sums of uninvested cash flow Canadian businesses already possess."

### *Commentary on this issue by Robert Loney*

During the Federal election I didn't see any party really tackle the problem of the widening gap between the rich and the poor. The NDP was the strongest in this regard, with proposals such as limiting credit interest rates and implementing tax

breaks to provide greater benefit to people with less income. But even they didn't tackle the real problem.

The disagreements between the parties about corporate taxes were

frustrating. For several years the Conservatives have been decreasing corporate taxes, to the point where Canada now has one of the lowest tax rates of the G20.

The Conservatives said they wanted to keep lowering corporate taxes, which would encourage more business in Canada, which would result in more jobs for Canadians, and not really result in a tax revenue decrease because more business would compensate for everyone paying lower taxes.

The opponents of this said that a few percent tax change makes little difference to the bottom line of the business, and so would not dictate where a company would locate. And the lower tax cost would translate to higher company profits, which would not be passed to the consumer, but to upper management salaries and investors.

The Liberals and NDP both wanted to bring the increase corporate tax rate a bit, and use that money to fund social and other programs. They claimed this was a way to address the rich-poor gap, but taking money from business in the form of higher taxes and using that money for social programs.

Opponents of this approach claim that higher corporate taxes will simply be passed on to the consumer via higher prices, so there will be no benefit.

There is a common denominator in both approaches—the companies have total freedom to pass costs to consumers, or not pass savings to consumers, in order to protect their profits. There has been a lot of reporting on higher Canadian prices for many products and services. We've seen many mergers and less marketplace competition. And at the same time investors seem to now expect higher investment returns compared to traditional mid 1900s thinking. And no one seems to be interested in dealing with these problems. Companies have a lot of power and minimal accountability in our society.



## Save Your Bucks

By Robert Loney

First, I have a follow-up from my last article on protecting your digital information. If you have or know someone who owns a Playstation 3, this is for you.



On April 20 the Playstation 3 network went off line. Several days later Sony admitted that its Playstation network had been hacked and customer data had been stolen. Names, addresses, passwords and possibly even credit card information are all suspected stolen.

If you have a Playstation 3 or know someone who does, you should immediately:

- 1) Replace the credit card used for the Playstation network with a new one. You could risk keeping the old one and watch your account closely, but why deal with this aggravation when getting a new credit card from your bank is quick and easy.
- 2) Change your passwords (to new, secure ones) associated with:
  - your Playstation account (when it is live again)
  - the email address associated with your Playstation account
  - any services you use with your Playstation (e.g., Netflix)

Here is a link to Sony's statement on their blog:  
<http://blog.us.playstation.com/2011/04/26/update-on-playstation-network-and-qriocity/>

Now, on to this issue's topic- fighting increasing expenses! Inflation's latest numbers are 3.3% (March 2011 vs. March 2010). I don't know about you, but my inflation is a lot more than that. Let's review a few things you can do to reduce the cost of the more expensive and common household costs.

Insurance is an expense every home and car owner has. Insurance costs in Ontario have risen substantially in the last few years. For the same policy from the same company, my 2010 insurance costs were 15% higher than they were in 2009.

My advice? Get quotes a couple of months before renewal. Quotes are free and take just a few minutes. I just did this for auto and the price range was huge- \$861 to \$1732 (the two lowest prices are less expensive than I am paying now). You can get quotes from companies individually, or go through brokers. Remember, a broker doesn't represent everyone, only a few companies, so get quotes from 2 or 3 brokers to get a wide sampling. The link below lists insurance brokers in the Peterborough area (via web Yellow Pages):  
<http://www.yellowpages.ca/search/si/1/Insurance+Brokers/PETERBOROUGH+ON>

Energy is another fast-increasing expense. Between the smart meters, the actual cost of the electricity, cost of transport and other bill components, and application of the HST, electricity has risen 20-25% per kWh. Oil has risen dramatically in the past few months. Natural gas has remained relatively inexpensive, but is rising and expected to climb substantially in the near future.

By more than doubling my attic insulation and insulating the basement, I have reduced my heating costs by over 35%. These efforts pay for themselves in a short time, and the more energy costs, the more you will save. Also, be on the lookout for standby or

'vampire' electricity consumption, which refers to devices that are plugged in and consuming energy while doing nothing. Examples include battery chargers, devices with remote controls, and those with electronic 'soft-touch' controls. An example: a modern washer has these electronic controls, and thus is consuming electricity all the time. Think of what proportion of time in a month you run the washer. Well, the rest of the time the washer is still consuming several watts of electricity. Over its lifetime, about 40% of a modern washer's energy consumption comes from when it is not being used! The answer- unplug it when not using it. Or put on a switched outlet and turn off the outlet when not in use.

If you have a house with a sunny roof, you could consider taking advantage of the Ontario microFIT Program. Under this program, the homeowner installs solar cells on the roof, the electricity from which is fed directly into the electricity grid. The homeowner signs a contract with the Province of Ontario to sell the electricity at a guaranteed price of 80.2 cents per kWh for 20 years. Currently we pay about 5-10 cents/kWh for our electricity, so this generates a high income. If the house is suitable and approved, a bank will loan the money since the income is guaranteed, so the homeowner isn't out of pocket. Payback time varies, but averages around 7-8 years; thereafter the homeowner gets all the income from selling the electricity- as much as \$4000 annually. And the clean energy is great for the environment. For more information, visit the microFit site at:  
<http://microfit.powerauthority.on.ca/>

Finally, have you looked at your cable or satellite bill lately? Base prices are pretty high, and most are paying as much as \$1000 annually or more. For that you get a lot of channels you probably don't watch and 20+ minutes of commercials hourly. There are alternatives.

You can use the old-fashioned aerial. Television signals are still broadcast over the airwaves, and depending on your location, you could pick up many stations with a good aerial. There is some confusion about Canada TV airwaves going digital (on August 31 this year). Antennas will still work fine- you just need to ensure you have a digital tuner.

CRTC's information about the change to digital:  
[http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/info\\_sht/bdt14.htm](http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/info_sht/bdt14.htm)

**TV Fool-** shows you what TV stations you can receive, their signal strength and direction:  
[http://www.tvfool.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=1](http://www.tvfool.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=13&Itemid=1)

Free plans for a good digital TV antenna you can build yourself:  
<http://www.diyvantennas.com/sbgh.html>

There are other options. You can subscribe to **Netflix** (\$8/month; <http://ca.netflix.com>) and watch commercial-free as many movies and shows as you want (their selection is growing but still somewhat limited). Netflix can be watched on the web or on any of several devices you hook up to your TV (requires internet). You can also watch many shows on the web, such as at CFTO's website (<http://shows.ctv.ca/>). And of course you can buy DVDs new or used and sell them when you're done.

## OPSEU Local 365 Executive, Committees, and Stewards

*Names, Trent U. Email Addresses, and Work Units (keep for reference)*

### OPSEU Local 365 Executive:

<b>President:</b>	Rose Dunford (rdunford; Physical Resources)
<b>Vice President:</b>	Gerry Mason (gmason; Physical Resources)
<b>Chief Steward:</b>	Doug Brown (dbrown, Athletics & Recreation)
<b>Secretary:</b>	George Fogarasi (georgefogarasi; Academic Skills Centre)
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Jean Kirk (jkirk; Bata Library)

### Local Committees:

<b>Action Committee:</b>	Elizabeth Wilson (ewilson; Bata Library) Inge Lovell (ilovell; Bata Library)	Julie Crook (jcrook; Physical Resources)
<b>Bylaw Committee:</b>	Craig Kelly (cwkelly; Physical Resources) Bruce Shearer (bshearer; Physical Resources)	Rob Ferguson (robferguson; Physical Resources)
<b>Communications Committee:</b>	George Fogarasi (georgefogarasi; Academic Skills) Dana Capell (danacapell; Academic Skills)	Robert Loney (rloney; Environmental and Resource Studies)
<b>Grievance Committee:</b>	Marty Barrett (martybarrett; Physical Resources) Sean Daniels (sdaniels; Information Technology)	Jean Kirk (jkirk; Bata Library) Doug Brown (dbrown, Athletics & Recreation)
<b>Health &amp; Safety Committee:</b>	Adele Devlin (adeledevlin; Physical Resources)	Debbie Lietz (dlietz; Biology) Catherine Leahy (cleahy; Financial Services)
<b>Nominating Committee:</b>	Elizabeth Wilson (ewilson; Bata Library) Betty Clark (bclark; Physical Resources)	Nancy Elliott (nancyelliott; Physical Resources)

### University Committees:

<b>Joint Job Evaluation Committee (JJEC) (2 year term):</b>	Angela Sikma (angelasikma; Associate Dean of Science) Ron Fox (rfox; Associate Dean of Science) Deborah Earle (deborahearle; Concurrent Education)
<b>Trent Univ. Senate Representative Trustees:</b>	George Fogarasi (georgefogarasi; Academic Skills) Mary Louise Brooks (mbrooks; Financial Services) Angela Sikma (angelasikma; Associate Dean of Science)
<b>Human Rights:</b>	Dana Capell (danacapell; Academic Skills)
<b>Pension Committee:</b>	Robert Loney (rloney; Environmental and Resource Studies) Craig Kelly (cwkelly; Physical Resources) Catherine Leahy (cleahy; Financial Services) <i>Shadow Member:</i> Brown, Doug (dbrown, Athletics & Recreation)
<b>Nature Areas Committee:</b>	Robert Loney (rloney; Environmental and Resource Studies)

### OPSEU Local 365 Stewards (alphabetical by last name)

Arnou, John (johnarnou; Housing Services)	Earle, Deborah (deborahearle; Concurrent Education)
Barrett, Marty (martybarrett; Physical Resources)	Elliott, Nancy (nancyelliott; Physical Resources)
Brown, Doug (dbrown, Athletics & Recreation)	Fogarasi, George (georgefogarasi; Academic Skills)
Clark, Betty (bclark; Physical Resources)	Fox, Ronald (rfox; Associate Dean of Science)
Crowe, Jeannine (jeanninecrowe; Canadian Studies)	Kirk, Jean (jkirk; Bata Library)
Dack, Robert (rdack; Information Technology)	Martindale, Jeff (jmartindale; Information Technology)
Daniels, Sean (sdaniels; Information Technology)	Mason, Gerry (gmason; Physical Resources)
Devlin, Adele (adeledevlin; Physical Resources)	McKay, Dale (dalemckay; Biology)
Dunford, Rosemary (rdunford; Physical Resources)	Wilson, Elizabeth (ewilson; Bata Library)

## Canada Federal Election Fast Facts

Number of seats won in 2011:

Cons	NDP	Lib	Bloc	Green
167	102	34	4	1

Net seat count change from 2008 election:

Cons	NDP	Lib	Bloc	Green
24	65	-42	-46	1

Percentage of votes won in 2011:

Cons	NDP	Lib	Bloc	Green
39.6	30.6	18.9	6	3.9

Seats won if Liberal and NDP were one party (sum Liberal & NDP votes within each riding):

Cons	'left'	Bloc	Green
121	182	4	1

Percentage of eligible voters who voted: 61.4%

Percentage of eligible voters who voted in 2008: 58.8%

Federal election with lowest voter turnout: 2008

Federal election with highest voter turnout: 1958 (79.8%)

For more election results see Elections Canada:

<http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=ele&dir=41ge&document=index&lang=e>



## OPSEU Convention Videos

OPSEU has made available a videos showing highlights of the 2011 convention. The video is entitled "A Century Strong"... OPSEU is celebrating its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year!

The videos can be viewed at this web address:

<http://www.opseu.org/convention/2011-videos.htm>

## Average Canadian Weekly Earnings Up February 2010 to 2011

According to Statistics Canada, average non-farm payroll employees earned 4% more in February 2011 compared with February 2010. Some of that increase is due to a 0.9% increase in average number of hours worked, while the rest is an increase in actual average salary. This average is across all of Canada.

We should continue to monitor these indicators, as they will help us set what kind of increase we should be asking for when we re-negotiate our contract in spring-summer 2012. It is possible that in the next contract we'll go back to paying all of our long term disability costs (in our current contract the university is paying some of it), and we could also see a requested increase in pension contributions. In order to see a raise, we may have to ask for a considerable base salary increase.

The full report can be viewed at Statistics Canada's website (it was reported in April 28 edition of The Daily):

<http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/110428/dq110428-eng.pdf>

### About THE VOICE and Submissions

The Voice is created and distributed by the Communication Committee of OPSEU Local 365.

Contributions about issues that allow us to come together and move forward are especially welcome. Members, this is your forum. Please send your submissions for The VOICE newsletter by mail to Robert Loney (ERS Program) or (preferably) by email to: rloney "at" trentu.ca. All submissions are subject to editing for grammar, spelling, and/or space. As guidance, a one-page article typically has 500-600 words (we'll accept any size article).

This is a forum for information, discussion and debate. Opinions expressed in The Voice are those of individual members and not necessarily those of the Communication Committee, OPSEU Local 365, or OPSEU unless signed by the Executive.

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Some graphics from Canadian Association of Labour Media (C.A.L.M.); <http://www.calm.ca/>.

Visit our OPSEU Local 365 web site at <http://www.opseulocal365.com/>