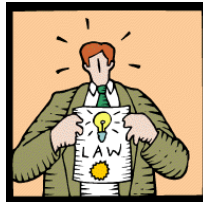




## When Called Aside

Know your rights

PAGE 14



## Transit Contradictions

How do we enforce Regional policy?

PAGE 11



## Curling

Scott Drinkwalter Rocks

PAGE 13

## Spring Elections

*By John A. McDonald, Election Committee Chairperson*

Election season begins with the election of your Election Committee at the February Union meeting (Feb. 21). Following nominations, there will be a vote by a show of hands, should there be more volunteers than positions. I will be asking the Union to increase the size of the Election Committee to six members to enable us to adequately cover our growing membership. I intend to run for this position again.

**Nominations** for all committees and the executive will be held at the April meeting (**Apr. 18**).

**Elections** will be held the following month on **May 16<sup>th</sup>**.

**Run-off elections**, if any, will be held on **June 20<sup>th</sup>**.

## Special Election Edition of the Informer

*(See Elections on page 3)*

## Dangerous Passengers

*By Scott Desjardins*

An important topic of discussion has been **OPERATOR SAFETY**, and what the Region is prepared to do to protect our safety and the safety of the people that we carry. The Region and the supervisors say that our safety is of the utmost importance, but actions speak much louder than words, in my opinion. More and more often, situations like the one that occurred to me are considered **“To come with the territory,”** to quote one North night-shift supervisor. Well, I, for one, disagree.



Recently, I was scheduled to do the 6:15 p.m. trip from the Charles St. Terminal on Rt. 20 Victoria Hills. As I was about to

*(See Dangerous on page 3)*

## Two Union Meetings

*By John A. McDonald, Editor*

Democracy is alive and well within our Union!

Under the capable leadership of our President, Rick Lonergan, more and more people are stepping forward to become involved within our Local. An example of this is the fact that we

*(See Meetings on page 4)*

## GPS Coming to Transit Soon

*By John MacKay, North Editor*

In the last couple of weeks, you may have seen service technicians busy at Strasburg road



*(See GPS on page 6)*

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Full colour edition of *The Informer* is available on-line at [caw4304.ca/informer](http://caw4304.ca/informer)

**This edition published by John A. McDonald.**

Comments to [caw4304@rogers.com](mailto:caw4304@rogers.com)  
(cell 519-241-5623)

**The April edition will be published by John Mac Kay:**  
**Submissions to:**  
[informer@caw4304.ca](mailto:informer@caw4304.ca)  
 (always send submissions here)

**Next Submission Deadline is March 23, 2007**

**Attend your Union meetings:**  
**Feb. 21, 2007**  
**2 meetings:**  
**(11:00 am & 8:00 pm)**  
**(3rd Wed., monthly)**

**Bereavements:**

- Carl Tickner
- Cheryl White
- Darlene Brown
- Gerry Nagle
- Lesley Heeley
- Michael Erison
- Perry Van Arsdale
- Peter Hewitt
- Richard Brazeau
- Robert McCully
- Scott Desjardins
- Wayne Henhoeffter



**Fruit Baskets:**

*(Some donated to charity in lieu)*

- Carol Garton
- Clarence Kitchen
- Don Gauvin
- Kathy Klein
- Khalid Khan
- Mike Davis
- Perry Van Arsdale
- Rob Urschel
- Sherri McMicheal



**Contributors**

*Local 4304 members helping out with this issue were:*

- Dorothy Halley
- John A. McDonald
- John Mac Kay
- Klaus Biemann
- Paul Eckmier
- Phyllis Hoch
- Phil Whitehead
- Scott Desjardins
- Sjean VanDincten
- Wilf Clegg

*Editorial assistance by Eleanor McDonald of [mcdonaldart.com](http://mcdonaldart.com)*

The Informer

**Publication Dates:**

The Informer will be published 5 times per year: February, April, July, October and December. The submission deadline is two days after the Union meeting.

**Policy Statement**

**The Informer** is a publication of CAW Local 4304 and is intended to educate and inform the members. The views expressed are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the CAW or Local 4304. The Newsletter Committee reserves the right to edit for clarity and fact. Material of a sexist, racist or defamatory nature will not be printed.

**(Elections from page 1)**

Since the next Informer comes out in April, we will be publishing a *Special Edition* of The Informer to contain nothing but **Election Platforms**. All candidates for any of the committees or officer positions will be encouraged to submit their platforms for publication in the Election Edition.

Committee candidates will be allowed to publish up to 200 words, plus their photo and contact information. Candidates for officer positions will be allowed 400 words, plus their photo and contact information. All submissions can be emailed to [informer@caw4304.ca](mailto:informer@caw4304.ca) as usual. **The submission deadline for this Special Edition will be Friday, April 27<sup>th</sup>**. As usual, this will be reproduced online as well.

Please participate fully in these upcoming elections. This will be the team that will be negotiating your next contract and affecting your working conditions over the next three years. It is my hope that we will have elections for each and every position, with none being decided by acclamation. Let's have a good and friendly debate on where we want to go for the next three years.

**(Dangerous from page 1)**

leave, several passengers came out of the building and indicated that they wanted to board my bus. One of these passengers is a known problematic passenger. This individual has been verbally abusive and threatening to me on a number of occasions since the beginning of the fall sign-up. At least two supervisors have had discussions with me regarding this individual. I was told six weeks prior that this passenger had been banned from the terminal. I did not receive a satisfactory answer as to why an individual is too dangerous to be allowed into the terminal which has security guards, yet not too dangerous to be on a bus with one driver and innocent passengers. Three weeks prior, I had been verbally abused and threatened so seriously that I filled out an Incident Report, and had a conversation with a supervisor regarding this passenger's mental stability, or lack thereof.

When the known problematic passenger entered my bus, I politely informed him that I would be unable to take him where he was going due to his behaviour the last time he was on my bus, and the ban from the Charles St. Terminal. First, he claimed that he didn't know what I was talking about. He then told me it was "B.S." and informed me that he had a pass, so I had to give him a ride. He then said: "What do I need to do to get a ride? Bribe you?" I told the passenger that he needed to exit

the bus until I was able to verify that he could ride. He yelled, "This is F\*\*\*ing B. S." and asked me when the next bus was due. I advised him it would be thirty minutes, and he walked away. I did not have time to tell him that the next Rt. 20 was to be driven by me as well!

As I left the terminal, I called Transit 4, to let him know about the situation. He told me I could not refuse a passenger no matter what their past behaviour had been. He told me I had to transport the passenger if he showed up at my bus again. I told Transit 4 of the past threats and his rudeness today. The supervisor said he would **catch up with me later**. I told him that I did not feel safe with this passenger on my bus, and asked if he would ride along on my trip until I dropped him off. **I received no response**.

My next trip from the terminal was 6:45 p.m., and, sure enough, the same passenger was waiting. When I opened the doors, he said "You again?" I told him that I did not want any problems from him, and that if there were any, he would need to leave the bus. Once on board, he stood right beside me, hindering my ability to board other passengers. I asked him to have a seat and he reluctantly complied.

I called security to my bus to verify that this was indeed the individual who had been banned. They said it was, but the ban had been lifted. I then called Transit

(See *Dangerous* on page 4)

(**Dangerous** Cont'd from page 3)

4, and once again, voiced my concerns. I asked if he was forcing me to take this individual. The supervisor gave me a big speech about how they could protect me if I gave him a ride and did not have an explosive confrontation. I am not sure how I could be better protected out on route 20 than with two security guards standing right beside me, but he is my supervisor, and I am supposed to follow his instructions, even when his logic seems flawed.

David Driver, my Union steward, had been alerted to the situation, and informed me that although it was not an ideal situation, which he would look into it later, that I still had the emergency button and should not hesitate to use it. While driving out on the 20 with a potentially violent passenger on board, I realized that bus 2613 did not have a panic button. I stopped the bus and called my union steward for instructions on what I should do now. We both went to North 2, and David tried several times to get a supervisor, yet none replied. David identified himself, stated the nature of the problem, yet still received no response for approximately 20 minutes.

Luckily, there was no problem with this passenger that day. Despite that, I feel that the management at GRT, specifically Transit 4, and to a lesser degree, Transit 2, endangered my wellbeing that day. They knowingly instructed me to carry

a dangerous passenger on a bus with other passengers. I do not believe that they knew that the bus had no panic button, but even after I finally got Transit 2 on the radio, he still wanted me to finish my trip to the terminal and do another trip out to Highland Hills Mall before getting a change-off bus.

2613 is a new bus. What is it doing on the road if all the components are not installed? Was the button never installed in the first place? The bus has been driven in service. How many other drivers may have been at risk?

When is the management at GRT going to take our safety seriously?

If I entered any other establishment, be it a bank, variety store, etc., and told the people there to F\*\*\* off, or that I would kill them if they did not provide what I wanted, how long do you think I would be there? Do you think the police might eject me?

At GRT, I am expected to carry these people every day. This is the second time in six months that a passenger has intimidated me, and the supervisors were **too busy** to do anything. I suppose making sure that we all do proper railway crossings, or that all the fare boxes collect the money is more important than the safety of the operators and passengers of GRT.

(**Meetings** from page 1)

had five candidates vie for the position of Vice-President during the recent by-election.

In order to give everyone within our Local a voice in the affairs of our Union, we have introduced a second Union meeting, to be held in the morning. This will help accommodate all of our night-shift workers. The next morning meeting will be at 11:00 a.m. on Feb. 21<sup>st</sup>. The night meeting will remain at 8:00 p.m., although this is up for discussion.

Holding two Union meetings does introduce some logistical difficulties, however. The first problem is, How do you keep Minutes? It has been decided that we will keep a common set of Minutes, encompassing both meetings.

The second question is, How do we pass motions, when there are two meetings in which votes need to be taken? For the moment, it has been decided that most motions will be converted to *notice of motions*, which will be voted on during the next month's Union meeting. While this does introduce a one-month delay in making decisions, we feel it is important to involve all of our members in the decision-making process. At the same time, it is important to avoid competition between the morning and evening meetings.

It needs to be stressed that good attendance is crucial in

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4) maintaining two meetings. At the moment, however, it seems that interest is keen, and we have had a quorum at both of our meetings during this past month (a quorum is 15 members). Our members are encouraged to use the "each one, bring one" method of encouraging each other to attend. Word of mouth remains the best way to advertise. During the morning meeting this past month, there were 22 in attendance. At night, we had 17 members present. Ideally, we are looking for about 50 members at each meeting.

It should also be noted that part-time employees are welcome to attend. This is particularly important for new employees who have not worked in a Union environment before. Attending a Union meeting is often the best way to get to know your fellow employees and have some of your questions answered. By the way, including all of our part-time workers, this Local now has 464 members.

## New Location for Union Meetings

Some other

changes are that we are changing our meeting location to a more central spot.

## Starting Wednesday, February 21st, both meetings will be held at the new CAW offices at 5 Executive Place, in Kitchener.

This is just off of New Dundee Rd, right beside the 401. To get there, turn South off Homer Watson Blvd, opposite Conestoga College. New Dundee Road has two bends and ends up running parallel to the 401. Executive Place is the second

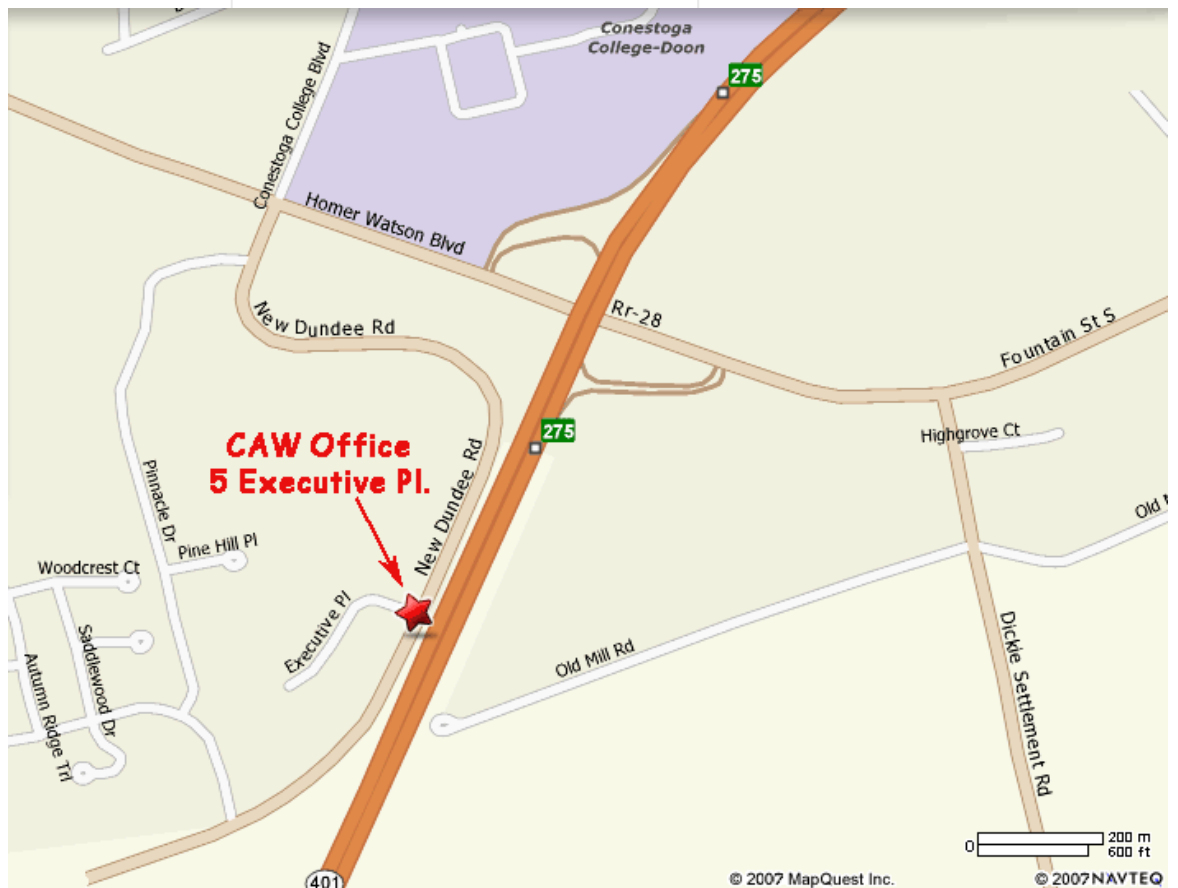
right off New Dundee Rd.

Lastly, just in case you've forgotten, we always hold our meetings on the third Wednesday of each month.

Another challenge that we face in our Union meetings is achieving a good mix from all departments within Transit. We would like to encourage more of our Mobility Plus brothers and sisters and those from Department Two to attend on a regular basis.

In fact, this is also a challenge with regards to submissions to this newsletter. We all share the same contract, and so we all need to be involved.

We'll see you at one of the next Union meetings on Wednesday, February 21st.



(GPS from page 1) installing hardware and software in the computer room for the GPS system. When will it be up and running? Well there's a lot of work to be done. Talking to project leader, Blair Allen, this past week, I realized just how big this project is. According to Mr Allen, there are already two buses with the hardware installed, 2410 and 2416. These will be the test buses as the project progresses.



## GPS Budget at 3.2 Million

The region has allocated \$3.2 million dollars for this project, which will take approximately two to three more years, and will be an ongoing project.

With a total capacity of 350 buses, the system will be able to handle the constant expansion of our fleet. **The iXpress will be the first test route**, and as the kinks are ironed out, the system will be expanded. The aim is for a **spring launch** on the iXpress. We don't have an exact date for expanding beyond the iXpress

fleet at this time.

Features such as a *Touch It* screen will be in front of the driver, within easy reach. This will also eliminate the hard-to-get-to luminator systems that have caused problems with the driver's ability to do their work. It will be more hands friendly. The system will have a touch screen with icons which are easy to read, having day and night time screen readability.

## Tip of the Iceberg

This project is just one of the many that the Region is tackling. One of the other projects is the Smart Card Swipe Fare System, which Blair Allen is also working on.

Another, is the security camera surveillance system, although this one is only being studied at the moment.

These are all capital projects that are on paper for transit in the next couple of years.

## Silent Running

Eventually, the new GPS system will largely replace our radio system for communications. When installed Region-wide, there will be no inter-bus communication between drivers. This means that you will not be able to call another driver for connections. Connections will be made according to schedule only. The radio link to dispatch and 911

will remain.

It is my belief, as a driver, that an increase in customer complaints in the short run will lead to scheduling changes. These will likely force Scheduling to finally change some of our most troublesome routes. The data will clearly indicate where schedules need to be adjusted, without all of the political intrigue we currently have to go through.

## Advantages

There are some other hidden advantages to having a GPS system. When a passenger complains that their bus never arrived, the data base can prove that the bus did, in fact, pass by, and exactly when it did so. No more, *He said, She said*.

Even our panic button's effectiveness will be increased, since they will know within seconds exactly where the bus in distress is. GPS gives the location of a vehicle within 3 metres, as well as its speed and heading.

Lastly, the time on the GPS monitor is the most accurate time available, as it runs off of an atomic clock. No more *time checks*. On the other hand, if dispatch asks you why you were parked at Tim Horton's, just explain that the bus was overheating, and you *had* to park for a couple of minutes. Oh my!

This is a developing story, so as we receive more information, we will keep you **Informed**.

## Out On a Limb

With “Grey Owl”

I - Express myself

- The iXpress has been operating for over a year now. Is it time for some changes / upgrades to the service?



Here are some thoughts on areas I would like to see examined.

Running Times – Let’s look at a increase in the amount of time given to complete the trip from Ainslie Street Terminal to Conestoga Mall. During the midday, the drivers have very little time to have washroom breaks, which puts added stress on their system. Something they don’t need. Now is the time to rethink the times.

Delays and Traffic Congestion -

One area that tends to give us problems is the 401 / Hwy. 8 corridor. At times, the back-up on the Fairview-bound Highway 8 can significantly delay a Conestoga-bound bus. Maybe we need to break up the route into two sections: A.S.T. to Fairview, and Fairview to C.S.T. That would insure that the Fairview-to-Conestoga would run on schedule most of the time. As for Fairview to A.S.T., we may need to look at alternative routings.

Making Connections / Transfers - As more of the riding public start using the iXpress to speed up

their movement around the Region, the planners and schedulers should look at making sure that passengers are able to transfer from the iXpress to regular routes wherever they cross.

In Cambridge, that seems to be the BridgeCam Centre. Almost every day, I hear iXpress busses trying to make connections with the northbound route 51 to the Hespeler Terminal. Although some of the transfers happen too often, the iXpress driver states that BridgeCam Centre is not a transfer point, and the passenger will have to take about 15 minutes longer to get to their destination.

I guess the point is to inconvenience the passengers so much that they will call their Regional or municipal councilor and tell them how poor the service is, or complain about the uncaring drivers who go out of their way to make the passenger trip on G.R.T. as unpleasant as possible.

Unfortunately, the passenger does not see the inadequacies of the system, but assume that the drivers don’t care.

*Food for thought* - When we are driving out there, what is more important? Getting ourselves and the bus to the terminals on time or getting the passengers to their destination in a timely manner?

This is asked as a MINI POLL, so let me know which is more important to you. You can leave

your comments on my email at [wclegg@rogers.com](mailto:wclegg@rogers.com) and I will publish the numbers and those comments that are permissible.

With winter now upon us, be careful out there, and keep the dirty side up and the greasy side down!

Have a great winter!

*Grey Owl* (Wilf. Clegg)

## Heads-Up, Ski-a-Thonners

By Klaus Biemann

Our annual fund raiser for the Children’s Wish Foundation is fast approaching. Snow conditions have vastly improved over the last several weeks, and as of this printing, all cross-country trails and downhill runs are open and in top condition at the Blue Mountain resorts.



The weather outlook until at least the middle of February calls for more snow and seasonably cold conditions.

In order for our event to be a success, we need as many participants as possible. So, if you haven’t decided yet, make that commitment, and come on out for a fun-filled day in Collingwood. It won’t disappoint you!

# OMERS

By Phil Whitehead



The income provided by the OMERS pension benefit is essential to the financial well-being of municipal employees following their retirement. However, many employees do not understand how the plan operates, or how an individual pension is calculated.

As an OMERS member, I have received ten annual updates from OMERS, but never bothered to read the reports in detail, or to learn about how the plan works. I made an attempt to rectify this deficiency by attending an OMERS information session in December that was open to all members.

## OMERS Meeting

Information meetings are held regularly across the province, with this meeting being held at OMERS headquarters in Toronto. The approximately forty members in attendance included police officers, paramedics, and library workers. Although the City of Toronto is the largest participant by far in the plan, it was surprising to learn that 50% of the municipal employers in the plan have fewer than 15 employees.

The meeting provided a barrage of information. In order to avoid participants from becoming overwhelmed, a booklet was handed out that contained all of the information discussed.

The meeting was conducted by an OMERS employee member who was skilled at public speaking, adept at answering effectively every question directed to him, and well informed about all things OMERS. Like all other employees, he was required to enroll in OMERS as a condition of his employment.

## Getting the Most from a Session

Attending an information session is recommended because of the quality of the presentation heard and the relevance of the information provided.

To obtain the most beneficial result from attending a session, it is recommended that a member read through the OMERS

material sent to members, and become as familiar as possible with the all of the terms, calculations, and abbreviations used.

Perhaps the most important concept to understand prior to attending a meeting is that of the “bridge benefit,” formerly known as the “CPP offset.” Numerous references were made to it.

Most of the questions asked by attendees concerned their individual employment and pension plan status. Those questions could not be addressed in the group meeting, and, instead, the speaker volunteered to stay for a few minutes after the meeting to talk to individual members. Furthermore, he recommended the use of the telephone information service. OMERS management has devoted considerable resources to training a team of qualified individuals to answer questions over the phone in a prompt and thorough manner. As a result, as he said, “We’re awesome over

*(Continued on page 9)*

Another brutal day on the 51 makes for one desperate driver...



(Continued from page 8)  
the phone!”

### Contribution Rates

Mention was made that contribution rates for 2007 will remain the same as for 2006, but rates for 2008 could increase.

### Inflation

Much has been said about the pension benefit being protected against inflation. And while this is true, what has received less emphasis is the fact that the inflation protection is limited to 6%. Between 2000 and 2006, inflation averaged 2.1% (officially, at least). Should hyper-inflation occur, retired members will see only the first 6% of their OMERS pension income protected.



Plan for the Future

### Comments about the future of OMERS

Several comments and concerns were prompted by the meeting and later events:

**Strategy.** OMERS is shifting its investment strategy away from the public equity markets and into investments that are privately arranged, and where the returns on investments are generally higher. In other words, the OMERS heads at One University Avenue are reducing the plan's exposure to the flim-

flam world of the stock market, and increasing its investments in properties that have value, and in assets that produce revenue, all the while keeping a watchful eye over the corporate managements that administer both.

**Deficit.** 80% of pension revenue comes from investment returns, not contributions from employees and employers. This amount of revenue requires consistent success in investing. In 2005, the rate of return was 16.0%, which was greater than the objective of 13.2%. Even so, the plan remains in an actuarial deficit of \$2.8 billion. When the “dot com” turned into the “dot bomb” in 2000, it dragged down the entire stock market, including the shares owned by OMERS.

### Attack against public pensions.

A report prepared by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and released on January 18, 2007, argued that public funds should not be contributed to pension plans that are more generous than the plans offered in the private sector. Catherine Swift, president of the CFIB, said, “Those of us who work in the private sector will not have the same means as our counterparts in the public sector, and, to add insult to injury, we are subsidizing their retirement lifestyles.” Should this sentiment gain wide support within the public, governments may be pressured to reduce their contributions to our pension.



[omers.com](http://omers.com)

## The Politics of Global Warming A Canadian Perspective

By Klaus  
Biemann



Globally, within the last two decades, we have witnessed wildly fluctuating weather patterns.

Canada has by no means been immune to “weird” weather. We, as Canadians, love talking about the weather, often relating stories about unusual occurrences and how it has affected us personally.

These are light-hearted discussions, the “Gee-wiz, did you know...” topics that we all enjoy talking about from time to time. However, there is a more sinister side to weird weather, in part brought on by global warming.

The difference between the last ice age (which ended some 10,000 years ago with a mile of ice over Southern Ontario and much of Canada) and our present day climate was a natural rise in average temperature by only one degree Celsius per thousand years. Yet, mankind has managed to raise average global temperatures by at least that much within the last one hundred years.

We are only beginning to experience the climatic changes that that one degree increase is generating. Since the turn of the

(See *Warming* on page 10)

(**Warming** from page 9) last century, mankind has continued to pump greenhouse gases into the atmosphere at an ever accelerating pace, in part due to ignorance of the consequences, in part due to government and big business indifference because of the negative economic consequences of implementing tough environmental standards to curb pollution, and in part due to the rapid development of third-world economies.

The greenhouse gases that are continually pumped into our atmosphere at an ever accelerating pace will result in global temperatures increasing geometrically over the next several decades.

We are already seeing our Arctic ice melt at unprecedented rates.

At present, average Arctic ice measures about ten feet. Yet within a decade or two, that will be reduced to two feet or less, with the Arctic becoming largely ice-free in the summer months. Several years ago, the North Polar Region was observed to be totally ice free for the first time in modern geologic time.

That should be a wake-up call.

With less ice in our Arctic, the summer sun will heat the Arctic region to unprecedented levels. Not to mention the disastrous outcome that that would entail to wildlife and the Arctic economy, a warmer Arctic will ultimately mean a rise in sea-level, with associated coastal flooding, warm, snow-free winters in Canada, and hot, perhaps dry summers,

particularly in our Prairie provinces. We will become increasingly prone to severe storms such as those experienced in Tornado Alley in the States.

Imagine, if you will, the economic consequences such climatic changes will have on the Canadian economy, and on our pocket books, as the cost to the insurance industry skyrockets due to storm damage. We need look no further than hurricane Katrina and the economic and social impact that that one storm generated when it devastated New Orleans. The impact was even felt here in the form of higher gas prices at the pumps – remember? And, the intensity of this particular hurricane was attributed to global warming.

If one storm can wreak such economic and social upheaval, imagine how global warming will impact us very soon in the form of many more such events.

We are only seeing the tip of the iceberg. That one-degree global rise in temperature will rise geometrically to perhaps two degrees over the next decade or so, and continue to further accelerate, until we reach the point of no return, where there is so much greenhouse gas in the atmosphere that planet Earth will be completely unable to cleanse itself in an attempt to reach equilibrium. This will ultimately lead to a runaway greenhouse effect, or, if you will, the Venus effect. The atmosphere will continue to heat up..

Even before the human race faces this possibility, imagine the consequences to Canadian

society as more and more people are forced to migrate to this country from other parts of the world that have begun to dry up (desertification) or have become simply too hot to live in, or are forced to relocate due to coastal flooding.

Even to this day, in the face of mounting evidence pointing towards a looming global environmental catastrophe, there are those “right-wing” elements within our government that still refuse to acknowledge that there is a problem. Witness the asinine comments coming from Stockwell Day when he publicly ridiculed the concept of global warming, or the oil-patch policies of the Bush Administration which continues to curry favour with corporations at the expense of our environment, while still remaining in a state of denial over the menace of global warming.

The bottom line is simply this: Although the time is late for dealing effectively with global warming, and to ultimately stave off global catastrophe, it is never too late to attempt radical solutions. For this to happen, society must rid itself of pro-corporate right-wing ideology within our governments, and elect governments that are fully cognizant of the looming environmental catastrophe, and to have the power and courage to enact reforms and actions to prevent the doomsday scenario from happening.

Remember, it only took one degree Celsius globally to make the difference between an ice age and what we have now.

# Transit Contradictions

## *If The Shoe Fits The Other Foot, Wear It*

By Klaus Biemann,  
Political Education

Typically, all government organizations are top-heavy with management which frequently becomes ensnarled in bureaucratic actions that are filled with contradictions. This is most notably true in organizations that deal with the public. GRT is no exception.

Decisions are made by the Region which sets standards in the form of rules and regulations, governing the daily operations of our transit fleet and setting behavioral norms for its employees.

Unfortunately, all too often when GRT employees attempt to implement Regional standards in the workplace, management contradictions become glaringly obvious. On the one hand, we are expected to follow Regional rules and regulations, and, on the other hand, if there are customer complaints while we attempt to enforce those rules and

regulations, it comes back to us in the form of handwritten complaints, and supervisors wanting an explanation from you.

Flabbergasted at being questioned by a supervisor for doing your job, be it as an operator on your bus or elsewhere, you offer the explanation that, as an employee, you are required to follow Regional policy, only to be told by a supervisor that perhaps you could have handled it differently in order not to upset the public.

So, not only do you have a written complaint in your file for doing your job, but now you are faced with a bureaucratic contradiction: Do you continue to ensure that the public adheres to Regional policy as required in the workplace, or do you bend or even break the rules in an effort to soothe the ruffled feathers of an irate passenger, and to keep from being written up?

Two recent examples illustrate my point:

1. You are operating a bus with a standing load of passengers when someone decides to get on your bus with a stroller (in this case a *Cadillac!*). You advise this person that in order to get on, she must fold up her stroller as required by Regional policy. The individual becomes irate, and refuses to get on, and files a complaint against you. As far as you are concerned, you've done your job within the framework of Regional policy. A day or so later, a supervisor with a complaint demands an explanation from you. You relate to your supervisor the story,

whereupon you're told that maybe it could have been handled differently. Excuse me?

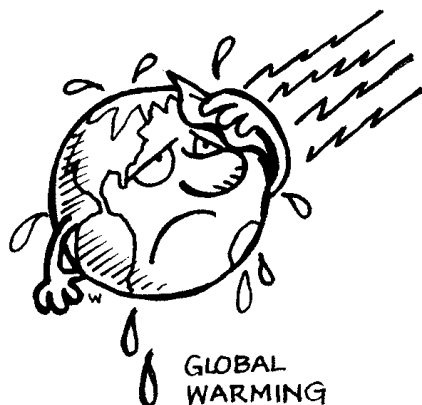
2. A passenger gets on your bus with an expired monthly bus pass. You refuse it, advising this person to get a new bus pass or pay. By now it's early afternoon on the first day of a new month, and you are at one of the main terminals. This person now has a choice: Go back inside and purchase a bus pass, or pay. Simple, right? Not so, according to our supervisory people.

This person refuses to do either, and walks away in a huff, and files a complaint against you. Under Regional policy, you've done your job. Yet, next day, a supervisor, with a written complaint in hand, approaches you, and asks you what the problem is. You offer an explanation, only to be told that perhaps you could have handled it differently. Hello?

This is yet another example of Regional policy that is being implemented by the operator – the proverbial shoe – and if the customer complains, according to your supervisor, why not take that shoe then and put it on the other foot if it fits? In other words, try to look the other way and ignore the problem, rather than upsetting your customer by implementing Regional policy.

What it boils down to is simply this: Our supervisory people should be supporting us by advising the complainants that this is Regional policy, and that operators have every right to implement those policies without question. And it should end right

(See *Contradictions* on page 12)



(**Contradictions** from page 11) there. In my opinion, supervisory people and management shouldn't be playing politics whenever a complaint is filed. It upsets our operators by questioning our professionalism and integrity, and further, it certainly does not make for an efficient transit system. There is no room in our organization for political correctness.

My word of advice to supervisory people and management is simply this: Stand behind your employees, especially when they try to do their jobs by implementing Regional policy.

## The Towel Lady

By Phyllis Hoch

Over one year ago, it came to my attention, through a friend whom I go to church with, that Mary's Place in Kitchener, where she works, is very short of towels. They have no funding to cover the costs of some of the things for their residents that we consider to be essentials.

Mary's Place, for those who are unaware, is a shelter for women and children. The women who turn to this shelter are destitute for various reasons. At any one time, the capacity they house is 65 residents (including children). The monthly turnover is about 25 people.

So let's talk about Tara Lea, (my friend) and towels. How do you work in an environment such as

this, without being able to offer people a shower?

No towel, no shower. And what about soap, toothpaste, shampoo.... and deodorant? If they offer each new person ONE towel, then it stands to reason that they require 25 new towels a month.

After doing an initial fundraiser of \$200 for towels, I very quickly realized that was not good enough. There is an on-going need.

At that point, a TOWEL-A-MONTH club was started. Many of the towels have been donated by my friends at transit, (as well as other sources). Some very faithful members donate one towel a month at the large cost of \$3.25. Yes, \$3.25 buys you a decent sized towel of good quality at either Zehrs or Wal-Mart.

Adding to this, some trusting folk give me straight cash donations of \$5 a month, (more or less). Since our first contribution, our group of angels often give up to \$100 worth of products to Mary's Place each and every month.

Am I proud of this effort? Absolutely! A HUGE THANK YOU TO EACH OF YOU WHO HAVE GIVEN ONCE, TWICE, OR 15 TIMES! Together we have accomplished so much.

(I am now known as the *towel lady* at Mary's Place. Is that a good thing?)

Anyone wishing to contribute, on a one-time or regular basis, feels free to tap me on the shoulder. We will always have the poor among us.

I deliver to the shelter a couple days prior to the first of each month.

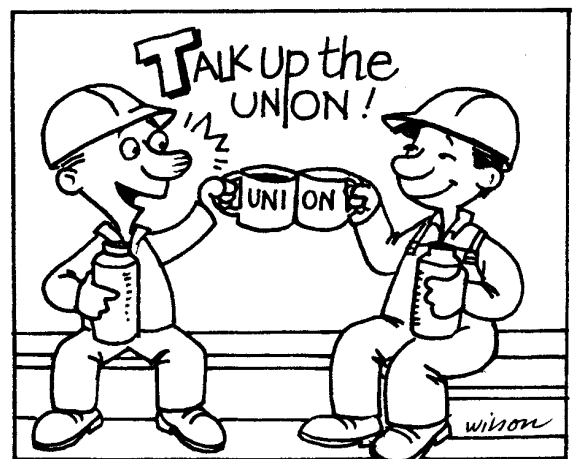
As you can see by the lists, the need is varied, and almost anything is welcome. With the renovations at Mary's Place, there is not much storage. Any clothing donations should be made to St. Vincent's on King Street, as they have an agreement with the shelter to help supply the women with necessary clothing. The other donations are delivered right to Mary's Place.

I'll leave you with this thought...

Have you ever considered life without a towel,... or tampons (for you females, or those lucky enough to live with a female?)

Or what about raising your toddler without diapers?

Thank you all for your past...or future support... and may you always have enough.



# Scott Drinkwalter “Rocks!”

By Paul Eckmier

North bus operator, Scott Drinkwalter, throws a mean rock or two! And I don't mean he chucks rocks at bus shelters like some characters do to see if the glass panels will explode into a heap of devastation!

No, this three-year driver of GRT plays lead on his Renfrew Curling Club team, which last weekend (Jan. 13/14) won the “B” side of their Region 1 play downs in Ottawa. This qualifies his rink to compete in the Ontario Men's Curling Championship to be held in Sarnia from Feb. 12 to 18, which will be televised on the Rogers Community Channel!

**CONGRATULATIONS TO SCOTT AND HIS TEAM-MATES!**

Another qualifier for this event is Glenn Howard's rink out of Coldwater. (You may know that Glenn's brother, Russ Howard, has won the Brier many times, and was gold medalist at the Turin Olympics in 2006!) The winner of the Ontario Championship will represent Ontario in the Tim Horton's Brier in Hamilton in March, which is the Canadian National

Championships!

Qualifying for the Ontario Championships means that Scott, who is an avid downhill skier, will not be skiing this year in our annual Charity Ski-a-thon. Scott, who achieved Level 2 instructor's rating with the Canadian Ski Instructors Alliance, and taught at Devil's Elbow Ski Resort near Peterborough from 1993 to '96, will instead be “throwing some rocks” to get ready for Sarnia. We will miss him on the slopes, but will certainly cheer him on when his rink plays in the Ontario “showdown!”

While Scott plays lead, his skip is Damien Villard from Cambridge, whose long, blond dreadlocks turn some heads at the rink, and maybe even distracts the competition! (See photo) His other team-mates are: 2<sup>nd</sup>, Derek

Visutski from Renfrew, and 3<sup>rd</sup>, Brian Chick from Toronto.

Scott began curling in 1986 in Grade 4. At Crestwood Secondary School in Peterborough, he began competing in tournaments. During his time at Mohawk College, Scott and his rink won the Ontario College Provincial Championships in Thunder Bay in 1998! This guy knows about winning!!

Having a real passion for the game, Scott gets pumped for exciting competition. He also really enjoys the social aspect of the sport, and meeting many interesting people.

**WE WISH SCOTT AND HIS TEAM-MATES ALL THE BEST IN THE UPCOMING ONTARIO CHAMPIONSHIPS!** Throw some mean rocks, Scott!



*Scott Drinkwalter on the right*

# When Management Takes You Aside

By Al Maine, Steward (S)

Over the months in the stewardship, I have been made aware of an increasing number of incidents involving operators that are not



aware of their rights when having to talk to Management. Whether or not a Union rep should even be contacted is not well understood by some of our membership. The most serious consequences to these members includes being given warnings, and not knowing “if” or “how” to challenge any demerit points they receive from their accident reports.

Almost all these incidents and others involve our newest operators. Even though our Union Executive talks to each new course of trainees, their time and impact are limited by the time constraints set out by Management. In the December Union meeting, this issue was

raised in discussion as what to do about this ongoing problem.

After all, a Union rep cannot be with every Operator every time Management takes one of us aside to talk to us.

This article then is to first address the needs of our newest Union members. However, any member can benefit from keeping the clip-out provided here as a reference. To my surprise, even some of the more senior operators are not fully aware of all the points outlined in this article. The most important point is that you, the member, do have choices - and you do have rights - when Management takes you aside to talk to you.

To begin, it is your right to first ask whether or not the matter may lead to disciplinary action. Do not be shy, coy, or cryptic when asking this question of Management, or you may receive an equally shy, coy, or cryptic response rather than the actual

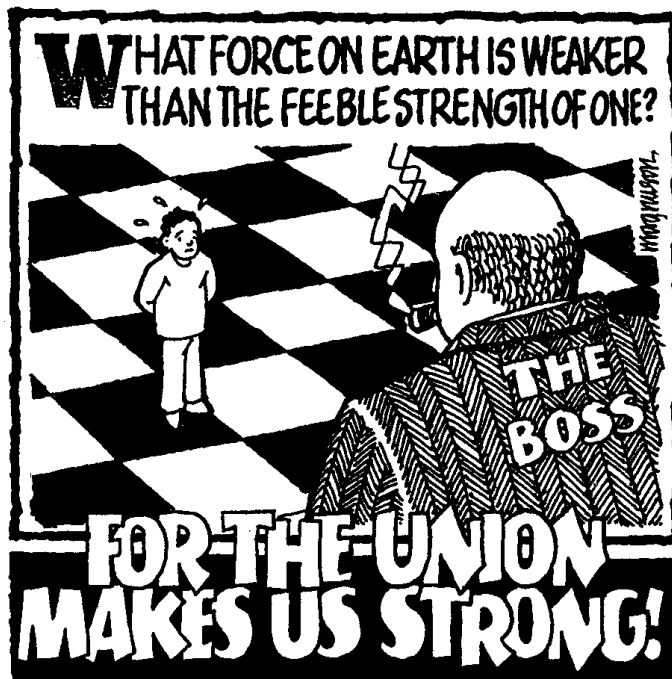
answer you need to hear.

Ask in a firm, civil, and direct manner: “Can this matter lead to disciplinary action or not?”

Next, ask “Will this matter go on my file?” If the answer is “Yes, it may” to one or both questions, you should first request to have a Union rep present before any conversation begins. In actual fact, the Collective Agreement states that the employer *must* offer you Union representation. As for the meeting time and place that a Union rep will be made available to you, that is up to Management to arrange. You don’t have to attend on your own time unless you want to. Your own time is paid at straight time, so keep that in mind.

It is also your right to first ask what the matter is about. This is important, should the matter be a [serious] complaint made against you. Regardless of whether you already know what the complaint is about, it is your right to first ask whether or not the complaint has been made in writing and signed by the complainant.

If the complaint has not been made in writing and signed, you can reply that “I will deal with this once you have received the complaint in writing and signed.” With written complaints, a Union rep *must* be made available to you so a proper investigation of the matter can be completed.



(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14)  
Do not assume any piece of paper in Management’s hands is a written complaint, such as their own “Occurrence Reports,” or whatever else it is they may be holding in front of you. So, before speaking out, always ask first to make sure.

If the answer is “No, it is not a written complaint,” then until such time arrives, if ever, that is the end of the matter *should you choose not to discuss it*. Your Union has earned this protection for you in the Collective Agreement.

Be aware that once you’ve acknowledged the matter / complaint and begin discussing it, you have *waived the ‘written complaint first right’* automatically, unless Management agrees that no discipline will occur without the signed written complaint. Even so, regardless how you choose to handle it, it is still your right to have a Union rep present from the beginning before discussing anything that may lead to disciplinary measures being taken against you now or later on.

Should Management ever forget in such instances outlined here to provide you with your Union rep, *you may demand your Union rep first before speaking at all to them*.

No exchange should ever become verbally abusive against you. After first being careful not to give any verbal abuse yourself, even in retaliation, you do not need to take any verbal abuse from any superior. Should you be subjected to anything you deem to be unprofessional on the radio, document the time and the channel it occurred on, and contact your Union rep immediately to review it. If the supervisor’s conduct is deemed to have been unprofessional, the Union will talk to Management to correct it.

Should verbal abuse happen to you in person, we suggest you walk away and find a nearby witness that can validate all or any part of the incident. If that is not possible, and you are still on shift, just go back to work. Management would have to take you off work to pursue the matter further, or they must let you go. In either event, contact

your Union rep immediately. You deserve respect.

Finally, when you are filling out any Incident or Accident Report, you may first ask for assistance from your Union rep to help you in this endeavor. These are legal documents that are used towards deciding the outcome of your involvement in the matter at hand. Going over the writing of every critical detail and answering any questions you may have *beforehand* is a service your Union rep provides. We also provide assistance on appeals.

Want a second opinion on something? A Union rep can help.

Remember that your Stewards, your Union Executive, and your Committee members stand behind you to protect you and your interests in the workplace. We are, by law, your legal representatives for work related matters under the Collective Agreement. Knowing what your rights are when talking to Management is the first critical step you must take for yourself towards protecting your rights.

**PLEASE CUT THESE REFERENCE CARDS OUT AND KEEP THEM IN YOUR WALLET.**

Ask **“is the complaint in writing signed by the complainant?”**

If not, you may refuse to talk about it until such time, if ever, it’s written. If yes, you must be offered a Union rep first to talk to for an investigation. **Incident / Accident reports** are legal documents. Seek assistance.

Ask **“can this matter lead to disciplinary action against me?”**

Ask **“can this matter go on my file?”**  
If “yes” to one or both questions, it is your right to have a Union rep first before you say anything.

# New Cell Plan for Executive

By John A. McDonald, Editor (519-241-5623)

Unlimited incoming cell phone calls. This is the **new cell phone plan** that your executive now uses to stay in touch with the membership. Your executive feels that it is vital to be accessible to the membership, and what better way to do this than by cell phone?

Taking advantage of the new Rogers wireless Mega-time Unlimited Incoming Cell Phone plans, all Union cell phones were upgraded this past December. The point here is that it is not enough just to equip our executive with cell phones. They must have adequate air time to be able to stay in constant touch with our large membership. The cost was roughly the same as the previous plan, but now we can have cell phones that we are not afraid to use.

## Rogers to Rogers

Previously, all executive cell

phones enjoyed what was known as a *calling circle*. This meant that all 10 cell phones within the Union could call each other for free. However, Rogers has just introduced what is known as free Rogers-to-Rogers Calling. This means that anyone who owns a Rogers cell phone with Rogers-to-Rogers Calling can call another Rogers cell phone at no charge. Effectively, this means that we are now part of a gigantic calling circle. The cost to add Rogers-to-Rogers Calling on an existing plan is only five dollars a month (*that's a hint*) and comes free with the Mega-time Unlimited Incoming plan.

Currently we pay \$42 plus the system access fee for each cell phone. Other features that our executives now enjoy are:  
**200** daytime minutes  
**1000** minutes free evenings and weekends after 6 p.m.  
 100 minutes free long distance

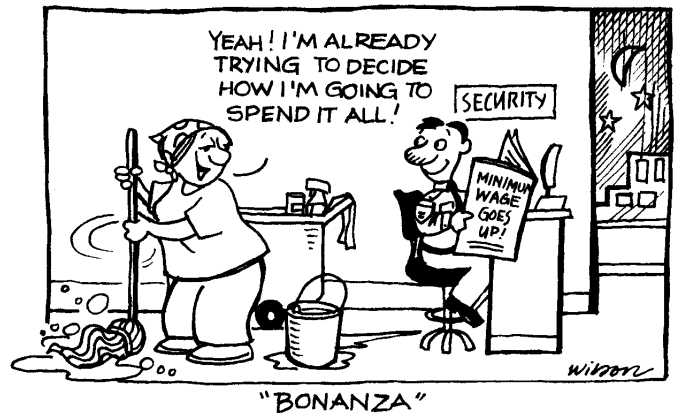
The Union has also opted to add the Communicate Value Package at \$10 per month. This includes

voicemail, caller ID, 125 text messages, etc. With discounts, it comes to \$60/month for this plan. This is the difference between being an occasional user and being a "power" cell phone user.

Currently the executive is looking into going hands-free. This would involve the purchase of Bluetooth headsets, and possibly new handsets for some of our executive. No decision has yet been made, and we would appreciate your input. (Your editor swears by his Bluetooth, and wishes everyone had one!)

Communication is the lifeblood of this Union. Please don't hesitate to call any of your executive, should you need help or have information to share.

**Remember, it is now free when you call them!**



**PLEASE CUT THESE REFERENCE CARDS OUT AND KEEP THEM IN YOUR WALLET.**

Chief Steward North:	574-9270	President:	574-9170
Chief Steward South:	574-9470	Vice-President:	574-8970
Chief Steward Mobility:	574-9670	Local Chairperson:	574-9370
Chief Steward Dept. 2:	___-___	WSIB:	500-3553