



**RAVE
Winner
Jen
Arsenault**

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**Children's Wish
Ski-a-thon
raises \$5220**

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**Is LRT
Really
Rapid
Transit?**

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Negotiations Continue

By John A. McDonald, Editor

The question on everyone's mind is, "How are the negotiations going?" At the Union meeting on March 16, Vice-President Ted Dewsbury described the discussions as "frank, polite, but sometimes argumentative." As the chief negotiator, Bill Gibson put it this way: "Anyone can negotiate a strike. It is 100 times easier to walk out of negotiations than to get back to the bargaining table. It is our full intention to not bring back a contract to the membership until we are confident we have achieved the best possible agreement."



Perhaps it would help if we gave you a glimpse behind the closed door of the negotiating room.

Management's side is made up of:

- Glenn Roach, Director, Employee Relations
- Heather Larmour, Manager, Labour Relations
- Eric Gillespie, Director, Transit Services
- Bryan Tyrrell, Manager, Transit Operations
- Randy Steckly, Manager, Transit Fleet
- Tom Kurevija, Supervisor, Mobility Plus
- Doreen Gaiser, Senior HR Associate

The Union's side is made up of:

- Bill Gibson, CAW National
- Rick Lonergan, President
- Harold Klooster, Local Chairperson
- Ted Dewsbury, Vice-President
- Franz Peters, Chief Steward, Mobility Plus
- Phil Mayberry, Chief Steward, Dept. 2
- Monica Menner, Chief Steward, North Conventional
- Zeke Baker, Chief Steward, South Conventional

Both sides will continue to meet until April 7. At this point, it is too early to schedule a strike vote. Our negotiation team will keep you up to date via e-mail and the [Negotiation 2011](#) page on our secure website, where you will also find an FAQ on Strike Votes. Please bear in mind that, as usual, negotiations are held under a complete news blackout.

In the meantime, the best thing our members can do is to make sure our negotiating committee has their complete support. You can do this by sending them text messages and e-mails, letting them know that you are behind them 100%. It appears we are in the most serious set of negotiations since the formation of GRT. More than in any other previous set of negotiations, **member support is absolutely vital this time around.**

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informer@caw4304.ca

Next Submission

Deadline

Sun. May 22

Bereavements

Paul Doughty

Ricki Germann

Brenda Henderson-Fritch

Eileen Mannerelli

Bill Reed

Pat Rousom

Harold Ziegler



Fruit Baskets

(Some donations to charity in lieu)

Lauren Condie

Cheryl Defoe

Gurpeet Kanwal

Ken Noland

Gary Ungurain



Next Union Meeting

Wed. Apr. 20

11 a.m. & 8 p.m.

600 Wabanaki Dr.

Kitchener

Full-colour edition of *The Informer* is available online at

caw4304.ca/informer

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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.

Stand United

By Klaus Biemann

Union in Politics. Political Education.

Our Negotiating Committee and The Region are now in the early stages of what will probably be the most important contract talks ever. All of you must understand that there is much at stake. The outcome of these meetings and a subsequent new contract will have far reaching implications for everyone for many years to come.

I point this out particularly to our members who have been with us for only a few years, and to our part-timers who are yet to become full-time. You are the ones that this outcome will affect for many years.

I can't state strongly enough how vital it is for you to **stand united** behind our Union and our Negotiating Committee, particularly now. Our Negotiating Committee is attempting to hammer out a contract with your best interests at its centre.

To **stand united** means that it is imperative for 100% of the Membership to show support for its Negotiating Committee by voting in favour of a strike. Members telling other fellow members to vote no in a strike vote is extremely counterproductive and will only harm the Membership. Remember - the most effective way to avert a strike is a strong showing of support for the Negotiating Committee. We need to give our committee a 100% **YES** vote. This is a vote of confidence in our Union Executive, and this will give our Negotiating Committee the powerful mandate that it requires to obtain a good contract.

To **stand united** also means attending your monthly Union meetings. We've had very disappointing turnouts lately. What kind of message are you sending to our Union Executive, and perhaps more importantly, to Management? That you don't care? That things will be all right? What difference does it make anyway? These are defeatist attitudes that will come around and kick you in the pants in the end. The very least that you can do is attend Union

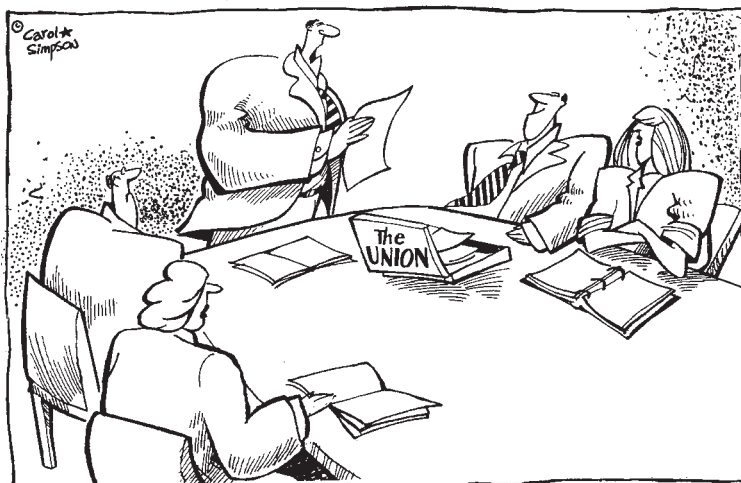
meetings regularly. It simply is not acceptable for anyone to ask another member about what was discussed at the previous day's Union meeting. Why don't those of you who are doing the asking come out to a meeting and become informed? That's why we hold two meetings - one in the morning and one in the evening - to make it easy for you to come out. There is no excuse for indifference, for a defeatist mentality, particularly at this crucial time. Attend your Union meetings! It demonstrates **solidarity**.

To **stand united** means ignoring rumours and fear-mongering that permeates our Membership on occasion. There is a lot of garbage being circulated among our Membership. Don't believe the rumour mill. Talk to your Union Representative to get straight facts. They are *rumour control* - they have the facts.

I would like to take this opportunity to state once again that your Strike Preparedness Committee is alive and well, primed for any eventuality, and is ready to respond to any labour actions, should the call come from our Union Executive.

Your Union Executive, your stewards, your committee people, these are your **front line** representatives. You, the Membership, are its **troops**. Your front line can only be effective if you **stand united** behind them.

Remember - your front line representatives are not, and never shall be, self-serving. **Your Union stands for your best interests. Please give it the support it needs from all of you.**



"Look, we really need your suggestions...
We're running out of excuses for stalling the negotiations."

My Brother's Keeper

By John A. McDonald, Editor

Choices. Life is made up of a long series of choices. What will I have for supper tonight? What will I do with my day off? Who do I want to spend my free time with? In short, how do I choose to invest the finite amount of time given to me each and every day? It seems our lot in life is really the final result of all the choices we've made up to that point in time.

The long-term consequences of some of the choices the members of this Local have been making was the subject of a telephone interview I had with our National Representative, Bill Gibson, on March 19. This was a follow-up to a conversation I had with Bill at the Day of Action rally in Hamilton in support of United Steel Workers Local 1005 against U.S. Steel. As the lone representative of our Local at this huge labour rally, I wanted to know how we could inspire our members to become more involved in the labour movement.

Bill's answer went to the real source of the labour movement's power. "Everything and everyone is interconnected. What affects the steel workers in Hamilton today will soon affect you in Waterloo Region. Unions are all about supporting each other. When I was president of a union Local several years ago, I knew I could count on the support of dozens of other Union Locals if I ever needed it because our Union had been there for them when they had needed our support."

Bill went on to explain that the CAW is a "social union." This means that our Union does much more than just lobby for labour related issues. With over 200,000 members, "the CAW is not only dedicated to fighting for workers' rights at the bargaining table, it's equally committed to taking on economic, political, and social issues that affect its members



*Hamilton Day of Action
John A. with Bill Gibson, CAW Rep. (on left)
and their families in the broader community."*

Our Union's real strength is based on our ability to network with large groups of people inside *and* outside of our Union. By being involved on the social and political front, we gain the support of society as a whole rather than just our own tiny bargaining unit.

But beyond earning the respect and support of outside organizations by being there on the picket line or rally with them, there is the added benefit of learning to work with each other in the process. No matter what the rallying point is, if our members spend time with each other outside of the workplace, it can only increase our solidarity. It is the very act of rubbing shoulders with each other while in support of a cause greater than ourselves that draws us closer to each other. In fact, I think this is the genius behind the CAW as a whole. By constantly being involved in a vast array of social, labour, and political issues, our members achieve solidarity. It is the simple fact that we are *active* that makes us the largest and fastest growing private sector Union in the country.



Bill went on to say that the national office was somewhat concerned that our Local didn't seem to be getting the full value of our Union membership. This intrigued me, as I always hate to think I'm being ripped off. So Bill quickly explained that as a highly democratic Union, our Local needed to be



About 10,000 people marched throughout downtown Hamilton on Jan. 29, 2011

involved in something called the “CAW Council.” “The CAW Council is the *democratic parliament* of the Union. Local Unions elect council delegates who meet several times a year to discuss and debate issues of importance to the Union. These councils ensure accountability of leadership and staff to Union Locals. They also educate and develop consensus on issues, develop leadership skills, and mobilize Union activists. CAW Council meets twice a year in April and December.”

Bill stressed that it was absolutely vital to our Local that we begin exercising the rights that our dues have paid for. The next CAW Council will be held



Some locals actually had their own Flying Squad bus

to introduce a motion at a Union meeting to hold elections for two delegates to attend, preferably the president and one other member.

When I objected to the fact that it has been years since anyone from our Local has attended, Bill stated that “The Union membership is the highest form of authority.” It is up to the members on the floor to see to it that our Local becomes

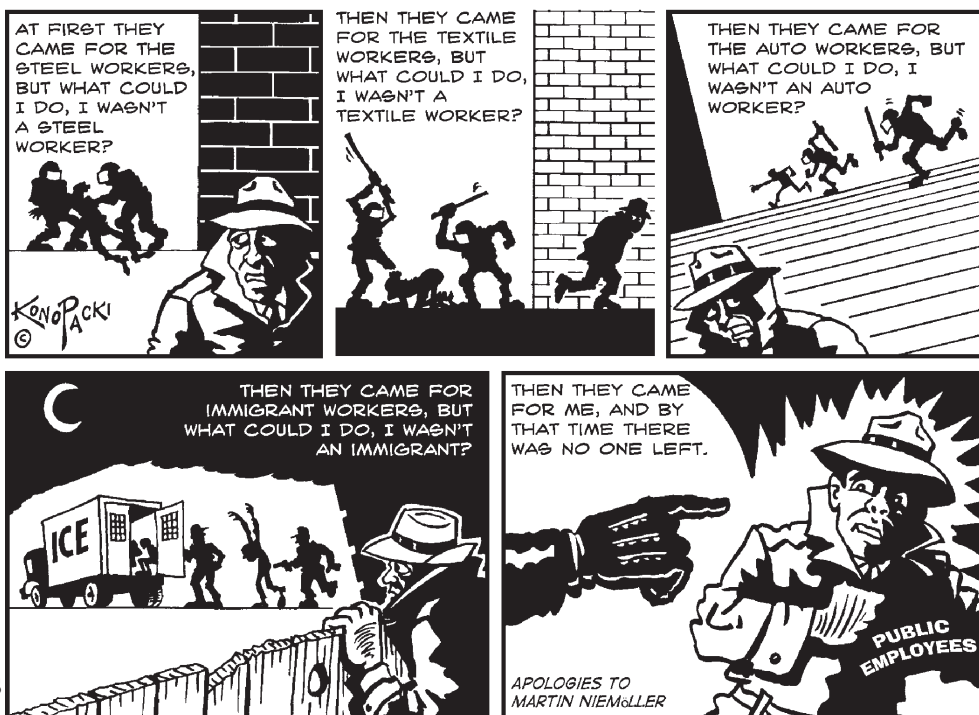
during the first week of December in Port Elgin. As soon as possible, we need

involved in the governance of the national body that ultimately controls our working conditions.”

Which brings me back to a conversation I had on the bus while returning from the Hamilton rally back on January 29. I was speaking with Murray Kirkpatrick, a very friendly gentleman in overalls who had just retired from the Euclid plant in Guelph. He’d been a member of the *flying squad* of his Local for years. When I asked him how we could form our own flying squad, his advice was to hold the organizing meeting on a Saturday. “You see, only those people who are willing to give up their own time will attend the meeting on their day off. Those are the kind of people you can count on. That’s the kind of selfless attitude you want in flying squad members.”

Soon you will be presented with a variety of choices when you receive emails from our Union in Politics committee. **You can choose to attend several labour rallies, or not.** You can also sign up for regular email updates at CAW Connected: <http://connected.caw.ca>

So that’s one of the choices the future of our Union comes down to. Is an “injury to one, really an injury to all?” Are we willing to give of our time and energy to defend the rights of others? **Because, if we really are willing to be our brother’s keeper, they will be there for us, too, when we need them most.**



Congratulations to Our First RAVE Values Award Winner!!

By Paul Eckmier

Please join me in congratulating GRT driver Jennifer Arsenault who won a RAVE Values Award at the Region of Waterloo's first annual RAVE event. This was held at St. George's Hall in Waterloo on Wednesday, March 9th.

The Values Awards provide recognition to Regional staff from all departments who have demonstrated actions that exemplify the values of **service, integrity, respect, innovation and collaboration** in their day-to-day work with colleagues, customers, or community partners.

From GRT, there were three drivers nominated for a Service Category Award: Jennifer, Kris Lederman, and Joe Ferneyhough. Congratulations to each of the nominees. As the winner, Jennifer was awarded a beautiful trophy for her commitment to providing value-added service to bus passengers as documented in several *thank you* letters the Region received about her. "Way to go, Jenn!"

The keynote speaker who addressed the large audience of nominees from all departments was Sami Jo Small – Olympic gold medal champion with the Canadian Women's Hockey Team. Her motto in life is, "You don't always get to choose the role you play, but you do get to choose HOW you play it." This theme parallels the nominees who have CHOSEN to behave in ways that make a difference in the community.

May we all aspire to being selfless, positive, accommodating, and respectful so we can enjoy our work experience "to the max" and **not allow ourselves to be drawn into the boring behaviour of selfishness, negativity, sarcasm, bitching and complaining.**

We commend Jennifer, Kris, Joe...and all the unsung heroes at GRT who go above and beyond the call of duty.



Gerry Nagle Retires

By John A. McDonald, Editor

At age 61, Gerry decided it was time to retire. When I asked him why he picked this particular time, he didn't hesitate to tell me it was because of the way he sees Transit heading in terms of management relations with their employees. Gerry said that in the 26 years he worked for CN Rail previously, he never witnessed such chastisement from that company. So he decided now was the time to get out.

It was almost 18 years ago that Gerry began driving for Transit. He says it is the drivers he has worked with that he will miss the most. But, after some prompting from his wife, Agnes, who retired last year, he decided that he didn't need the daily grind any more. Eventually, he plans to get a part-time driving job somewhere, but, for now, he's just enjoying his freedom.

Gerry has an old 40-foot Mallard trailer in the Woodland Park RV Resort in Bornholm that he plans to spend most of the summer at. He can't wait until the opening date on April 29 to get back to the serenity of his trailer.

Gerry's advice to new drivers is that you should always do your job right, and treat your passengers as real human beings, not just *the next customer*. If you treat them the way you want to be treated, you will almost never have a problem with anyone.

And so, Gerry, we wish you well in retirement, and we look forward to seeing you at the next retirement party.



Gerry's wife Agnes finally convinced Gerry to retire



Gerry gets the Union watch from Harold Klooster



Supervisor Karen Herter will miss Gerry



Time to Say Goodbye

By Len Thurnell

I didn't think this day would ever come, but I was wrong. After eleven wonderful years at GRT, I shall be retiring March 31, 2011. It will be strange, as I've been working full-time since I was fifteen. I've loved being a bus driver, and I think Grand River Transit is a good place to work.



I intend to buy a small pop-up trailer in the spring and do some serious camping. My wife, Karn, loves the great outdoors. I love driving, and we both love travelling.

If I could offer any advice to the newer drivers, it would be: treat your passengers with respect and politeness, and 97% of the time it will come back to you. Having a sense of humour helps a lot. Sometimes, just a smile is enough to brighten someone's day.

Don't drive recklessly to make time points, especially in bad weather. Politely explain to your passengers that you will try to get there as soon as you *safely* can, but you have no control over weather or traffic. Nobody enjoys disappointing people, but if you get into an accident, it's on your shoulders.

Finally, don't give in to negativity. We tend to find what we are looking for in life. If you look for the bad, you *will* find it, but there is a lot of good out there, too, for those who have eyes to see it.

Safe driving, every one. It's been a blast!



Len is congratulated by Chairperson, Harold Klooster



Len's wife, Karn, with Len



HAVE A HAPPY



RETIREMENT

My Pet Peeve:

Emergency Signs

By *Phyllis Hoch*

Once while I was training a new driver and showing him how to check the emergency sign on the front of our bus, I explained that we were unable to check the signs for many years, and I always wondered if they would work should I require help.

One day our Union got on the bandwagon and pressured GRT to hook the signs up in a manner so operators can check them every day. I explained how important this is to me. I am usually finished my work day by 2 p.m., so chances are that I will not require assistance. Then my mind goes to the Greyhound bus out West... and I recall that the catastrophe occurred in daytime hours. I would feel terrible if a night operator, or anyone, was in danger in the bus I had checked out of the garage in the morning and the sign was non-functional... and I hadn't checked it. Every day, I check my emergency sign for my brothers and sisters that I work with.... and for passengers travelling in our buses. After all, the Ministry says our number one consideration should be the safety of the passengers.

I pointed out to the trainee that the CVOR sheet that we sign has a line on it that we commit to, saying we *checked* the sign. I then told him that almost every time I check the sign, someone will walk over to my bus and ask me if I am aware that my EMERGENCY sign is on.

A couple minutes later... lo and behold, along comes a fellow driver who asks if we were aware our Emergency sign was on. I think the trainee believed I had staged that.... but I hadn't.

Please, for everyone's safety, and because the Union fought for this right for us.... let's check that our EMERGENCY... CALL POLICE signs are functioning... **every** day!

1. Make sure your radio is turned OFF, and remains so until you have returned the sign to "Out of Service," otherwise you will be setting off all the bells and whistles.



Phyllis with granddaughter, Chloe

2. Press the little black button with the silver ring around it, and hold it for a few seconds. (It's OK. The bus will not blow up, and you will not be fired.)
3. Go outside the bus and make sure the EMERGENCY sign activated.
4. To reset the sign.... here is the tricky part.... any 2400 or newer model needs to be shut down and restarted to reset. Anything older can be done without shutting the bus down. (This works in very nicely while doing the outside circle, and then shutting down like we were taught in "Smart Driver," and we can protect our lungs in the process!)
5. Press *PR "0" Enter*. You should now have a sign that reads OUT OF SERVICE.

In the event that it hasn't changed, please try *Destination "3" Enter* after doing the PR, as there are a couple of buses that require that extra step.

Thanks for considering this. It is something I feel strongly about. **Thank You to our Union members who dug their heels in and insisted we have a way to check the EMERGENCY signs.**

Ski-a-thon Results

By Paul Eckmier

On Tuesday, Feb. 15, 21 downhillers, 3 cross-country skiers, and 1 snowshoer enjoyed great snow and sunny blue skies in Collingwood, Ontario.

Our 12th Annual Charity Ski-a-thon at Blue Mountain and the Scenic Caves Nordic Centre **raised \$5,220.10** for the Kitchener and area sub-chapter of **The Children's Wish Foundation.**

On behalf of the Ski-a-thon Committee, I want to thank the following sponsors who year after year help make our event so successful:

- Blue Mountain Resorts Ltd. in Collingwood
- Ski 'n Cycle Hut on King near Ottawa St., Kitchener
- Select Sports on Paulander Dr. in Kitchener
- Adventure Guide on King North in Waterloo
- Local 4304 CAW's generous support, which provides funds for major door prizes and refreshments



Craig Purvis is such a good sport.!



The Top Fund Raiser was Paul Eckmier

Some of the other businesses that contributed door prizes were Farmers Plus Hardware Store in Elmira, Starbucks in Waterloo, Gospel Lighthouse, Waterloo, City Halls of Waterloo & Kitchener, Oktoberfest Souvenir Store, and Golf Steak House. Special thanks to Ricki Germann for her Avon door prize. If I missed anyone, please forgive me.

A unique highlight this year was three raffle draws on various ski equipment and clothing items donated by retired driver, Neil Bricker. THANKS SO MUCH, NEIL! Thanks also to Guy Walpole who raised some donations at his 60th birthday party! A pleasant surprise was seeing Craig Purvis who made the trek up to Collingwood. Craig, recuperating



L to R: Paul Eckmier, Dave Glover, Dave Meyer, Bill Reed, Mike Hogue, John Neufeld, Lloyd Hurlburt



X-country buffs, Linda Paluveer and Klaus Biemann



The two organizers: Petra and Paul

from two major surgeries, came along to take some pictures of the event. His participation and positive outlook was an inspiration to everyone.

How nice it was to work with Petra Hanzelkova who helped so much, and, hopefully, will be able to take over the Ski-a-thon in future years. Thanks also to Klaus Biemann, Steve Huebner, Linda Paluveer, Jackie McKie, Bernie Schubert, and Mike Hogue's wife, Kathleen, who all helped in various ways. THANKS TO ALL THE SKIERS who raised donations, and THANKS TO THOSE WHO DONATED!

The monies we raise in our September golf tournaments and February Ski-a-thons help provide local children with life-threatening illnesses the opportunity to realize their most heart-felt wishes.

(More photos: <http://picasaweb.google.com/caw4304/2011Skiathon>)



Mike Hogue on the slopes



John A, Steve Huebner, Dave Scheifele, son Benjamin



John Neufeld, Paul Eckmier & Bernie Schubert

GRT Xmas Bazaar 2011

By Joyce Stirling

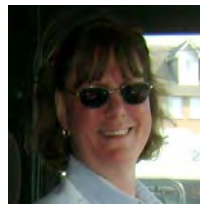
If you are interested in renting a table as a vendor at the Bazaar being held on **Sunday, December 4, 2011**, please be advised of the April 30th deadline. Forms are hanging on the bulletin boards at STC and Ainslie Street giving further details. After April 30, remaining tables will be available for outside vendors. Remember that proceeds from the common tables will go to Mary's Place and our Bereavement Committee.



So...don't be shy. This is an opportunity to get a little payback on your favourite hobby. Share your talents with the rest of the GRT family by supporting this event.

The Bazaar will be well advertised and open to the general public.

See Joyce Stirling or Elizabeth Allen for further information, or contact us at joystirling@yahoo.ca or ralphsbus@rogers.com



Rapid Transit System In Region Waterloo

An Inside Voice from the Front Line

By Boleslaw (Bo) Czernewcan



BASICS

Definition of Rapid Transit by Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2009:

Fast passenger transportation (as by subway) in urban areas.

An individual means of transportation will always be the preferred one as it provides more flexibility and convenience for those who can afford it.

The tri-city and Waterloo Region are totally unprepared to handle any effective transit system regarding road structure and design as well as handling the legislative areas.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

A massive investment in road reconstruction and also in new construction, applying the newest possible technologies and solutions, is essential.

A massive education campaign must be launched to improve the driving culture in this area, followed by strict enforcement.

Transit, especially "rapid," must be an integrated part of the general "Master Plan."

The current proposal is not even close to the term "Rapid."

Current actions in planning for future transportation in the Region are split between rapid system and a master plan. It seems they exist as separate units, which is the wrong concept from the outset. When the first meetings and workshops started, I was under the impression that the eventual rapid rail would run on an exclusive corridor. Now the official plan has switched to putting street cars/trains/trams on the surface of regular roads, on which there is currently not enough space for buses. This faulty idea is from an era of 100 years ago, and will not adequately service future demands. If trains are put on our streets, one can forget about the term "rapid"



immediately. You have to realize that any little obstacle/disturbance on the roads totally unrelated to transit (automobile collisions, broken pipes, repairs to any infrastructure under the rail, civic events, negative impact on existing infrastructure) **will shut the line down**. Thus reliability of the service is reduced to zero.

Therefore, regardless of the mode of rapid transit (LRT, BRT, Sky Line, Subway, or any effective combination), such a system must be built on totally separated corridors/lines and not mixed with general traffic. Its stations must be supplied by a redesigned bus route system, and must be easily accessible.

In order to achieve such a goal, a very complex plan must be developed. Professionals with very open minds and visionary images are needed for something that will really work in the future.

I am afraid that today's political and government leaders, in collaboration with their associates, are more interested in big-bang spending than actual positive effect. That is my impression so far. The driving force for this undertaking is made up of politicians, some bureaucrats, some developers, and companies that smell easy money, as well as a small group of citizens who got involved in the process. That accounts for a maximum of 5000 people out of over 500,000 citizens living in this Region. In other words, 1% of the population is making the final decision that will heavily affect the whole regional population. What kind of democratic decision is this? In my opinion, such a decision should be confirmed/approved by a **mandatory** referendum with a two-thirds majority.

For the time being, this group represents very flat, two-dimensional thinking, limited to the surface of the Region's terrain. In order to build a rapid system, very creative and progressive thinking in four-dimensional measures is a necessity, and, as such, must be applied from the outset. Missing factors are sub-surface, up in space (elevated) and PTT – passenger travel time. It is not sufficient just to look around the world for various solutions. A better approach would be to take them all as examples, and, based on them, create a truly rapid system that will work for years to come.

Examples of modern solutions are:

- tunnels and bridges

- multi-level collision-free intersections with no lights and no left turns (road knots)
- under and overpasses fully accessible to pedestrian traffic
- bicycle roads/trails separated from the regular roads so that bicycles are not mixed with motor vehicles (the current trend of pushing bicycles into the way of motorized vehicles, especially into the way of Transit buses, is stupid and dangerous)
- exclusive Transit roads and lanes with total preferences
- traffic engineering must apply green waves and traffic-streaming technologies to create flow of traffic (not *stoppage* as it is now)
- new road informative and regulatory signs preferring Transit must be designed and implemented
- repeated widening by itself for bigger capacity is not enough
- construction of road knots in the most sensitive/busy points is a necessity
- constant satellite traffic monitoring in the entire Region (especially in the peak hours) with mobile electronic signs and automatic directional barriers would be very beneficial
- elimination of all railway crossings is already urgently necessary
- fast modernization and upgrades for general traffic
- adaptations to accommodate Transit on the existing expressway is URGENT!

In regard to Transit, new solutions must be applied in service **to speed it up**:

- **PTT – passenger travel time - must be the most important factor in design that can be compatible or even competitive to cars/individual traveling**
- passenger self-service in the fare structure must be introduced and enforced to speed up on/off movement (the current fare structure and its collection is time consuming and very

Continued from page 13
easily defrauded)

- Transit system must become a separate department in the Region's structure with operational decisions left to professionals
- future professional personnel for the system must be academically prepared (there are no schools in Canada on any level offering programs or courses for urban public transit systems)
- a Transit police force (special constables) must be established in order to relieve the first-line supervisory staff for operational duties only
- centralized video surveillance in all Transit vehicles and facilities is needed to ensure a safe environment for all users
- general on-road parking along bus routes must be prohibited and strictly enforced to allow smooth flow for Transit vehicles.

And what about proven HPBs (hydrogen powered buses)? Why hasn't anybody looked into this when an abundance of information is available? If electric vehicles were to be employed (LRT), independent power station supply is a must to secure reliability.

As the mixed LRT/BRT combination seems to be the best option so far, putting any mode on rails into the existing roads and interfering with other traffic will be a disaster for the system, and, as such, must not be allowed. Only a separate, exclusive corridor with double-line rails can secure the rapid goal we strive for.

All this and probably a few other factors and elements must be combined in order to design, create and build a rapid system in this Region, a region that has a huge potential and opportunity to avoid mistakes that others have already made in developing their systems.

I am very, very afraid that this won't happen, judging from the first few steps and the unprecedented rush demonstrated and manifested so far.

Somehow I cannot see their proposed plan as being realistic, or that the system will be in service in only 4-5 years. That is utopia. In such a timeframe, only a solid *plan* could be developed.

Conflict of interests and differences of opinions among all levels of government (federal, provincial, and local) will not allow us to achieve this goal. Only a united team of professionals from all related areas may prepare and develop such a plan (possibly with some alternatives) . In the end, citizens in the Region should decide by referendum on what is finally built.

Some of our Regional and provincial leaders have tried already (through mass media) to glorify their limited vision with public expressions and hope for praise from future generations.

Judging by today's actions, it won't happen. Unfortunately, the current proposal is offering a very crappy but *not* a rapid system.

Now, why am I so afraid and critical, and why am I risking reprimand or disciplinary consequences as a front-line worker in our Region by outlining my observations and offering suggestions?

I have 38 years of experience in the passenger transport industry as a driver (in Poland, Germany and Canada). Foremost, however, I am also a citizen of this community, which so benevolently became my home when my family and I looked for a place to settle more than 20 years ago. I am totally convinced that I owe this warning and advice to this community. I choose this format to enable me to reach a larger audience than I could reach so far through meetings and workshops. I also know that I am not alone in my criticisms in this matter, even though the critical voices are somehow suppressed and downgraded.

I also know that some day, with thousands of people in this Region, I will be totally dependent on Transit service to maintain my mobility. That gives each of us the full right to express opinions and criticism, regardless of current employment or associations.

This Region surely needs a *rapid* transit system. What it does not need is a crappy one.

So what options are available to me? **I pray God will save us from the biggest screw-up in our community before it is too late.**

Environmental Issues

By *Laszlo Bori*

You have all heard about Al Gore, an American Environmental fanatic, who went around the world scaring people into believing that the end is near. One of his goals was to run for the Presidency. To get votes, he convinced the Senate to fund the production of ethanol in his State of Tennessee and the neighbouring State of Iowa.

On MS, NBC, Al admitted that he pushed through “environmental legislation” at taxpayers’ expense so he could buy votes in the 2000 Presidential election. He further admitted that it was a mistake to give massive funding for first-generation ethanol production. **It takes more energy to make ethanol than the energy ethanol gives back. It has half the BTU of gasoline, and it is corrosive.**

In the April issue of *Scientific America*, Matthew Cimitile wrote: “Corn ethanol will not cut greenhouse gas emissions.” The first statement says, “California regulators are poised to declare that corn ethanol cannot help the State of California reduce global warming. In their opinion, ethanol is no better, and might even be worse than gasoline when total greenhouse gas emissions are considered.

Environment Canada released a report about ethanol fuel. They tested four different vehicles of various makes and models for emissions under varying temperatures and driving conditions. Greg Rideout, the head of Environment Canada’s toxic emission research, stated that there is no difference in the emissions between gasoline and ethanol. They did find

a reduction in carbon monoxide, but an increase in hydrocarbons. Bill Rees, a professor of ecology at the University of British Columbia stated, “People are being conned into believing in a product and paying for it through their tax monies when there is no justifiable benefit.” The last statement sounds like what happened at Transit, when a fleet of natural gas buses were purchased, and the taxpayers had to pay millions of dollars to keep a dream going.

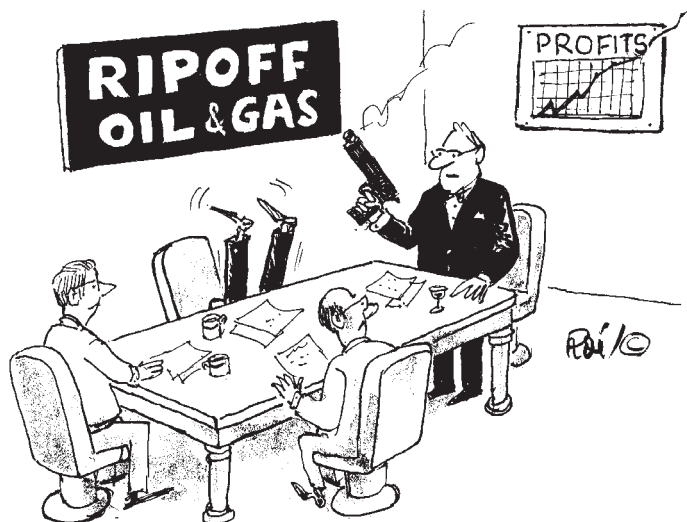
Last year, the U.S. Government paid out \$8 Billion of taxpayers’ money in ethanol subsidies. This year, 41% of the U.S. corn crop will be used to make ethanol. That is about 15% of the entire global corn crop. Millions of people in Third World countries are starving because the corn destined for them is now being turned into fuel.

These people now have to grow their own food. To do this, they have to cut down thousands of acres of forests and conservation land to plant crops. Due to the poor soil and poor farming techniques in these countries, their crop yield is only a fraction of what U.S. farmers can produce. Their efforts actually increase the production of greenhouse gases, and reduce the very valuable oxygen supply that we all need.

Even as you read this article, the U.S. is going full-steam ahead and bribing farmers (with tax dollars)

into corn production. Studies do not mean anything as long as the dollars and the bribes are coming in. Since corn is in just about everything we eat, and has been used for animal feed, its costs are about to soar.

Food prices will rise to new levels that many poor people will not be able to afford.



“ANYONE ELSE FOR LOWERING PRICES?”

Bicyclists Must Obey Rules of the Road

By Wayne Bell

The title says it all. We have all encountered the cyclist who doesn't obey stop signs or traffic lights, and those who do not equip their bikes or themselves with lights during the evening and early morning hours. I believe that the police must step up and issue tickets to these offenders.

The introduction of bike lanes has created its own situation. Is the lane for cyclists to ride in either direction or in the direction of the flow of vehicular traffic? Is it an attempt to get car drivers and bicyclists to share the road?

The fact is drivers are legally bound to share the road with people on bicycles.

I had a very scary encounter with a bicyclist who was riding in a bike lane going against the flow of traffic. On meeting another cyclist in the lane going

with the flow, he decided to take the traffic lane in front of me. Fortunately, there was room for me to go into the adjoining lane. But what if I didn't have room?

According to bicycle interest groups on the Internet, most experienced cyclists do not go against the flow of traffic in these lanes. However, there are some who avoid them completely. In some cases, because the bike lane is adjacent to parked cars, i.e. door zone, they say it is a potential hazard.

Recently, I travelled to Montreal, and got a glimpse of their bike-lane system. It makes perfect sense to have a double lane just for cyclists divided by a cement curb from vehicular traffic. It gives both drivers and cyclists their own road. They share the traffic signals and signage, and have the security of their own space. Drivers seem to be at odds with sharing the road space, and this may very well be the answer to it. I have also seen separated bike lanes in Amsterdam, and it seems that this is the way to go.

I am in favour of lessening our ecological footprint on the earth, and encourage the use of alternate transportation such as bicycles. Montreal has just introduced a bike rental system (Bixi) that is reasonably priced, and has 300 stations and 3000 bikes. More information is available on line:

<http://montreal.bixi.com>

Drivers in Training, March 2011



Front row: Miroslav Stojahovic, John Alve, Keith Donnan, Joe De Sousa

Back Row: Nicole Terry, Sarah Wynette, Roberta Orosz, Steve Reevls, Crystal Switzer Colleen Knight