

The Canadian Comment is now being delivered to you attached to the IBEW Journal. Not only does this combine information into one convenient package but this is also a significant cost savings idea! Now that we have worked out our new publication processes, we expect to continue to deliver the Comment to you three times per year.

# Canadian comment



June 2003



## IBEW Essential Skills Needs Assessment



INTERNATIONAL  
BROTHERHOOD  
OF ELECTRICAL WORKERS  
FIRST DISTRICT

DON LOUNDS  
International Vice President

EDWIN D. HILL  
International President

JERRY J. O'CONNOR  
International Secretary-  
Treasurer

JOE FASHION  
International Executive  
Council Member  
8th District



THE IBEW'S ESSENTIAL SKILLS STEERING COMMITTEE FIRST MET IN NOVEMBER 2002. L-R: JOHN BRIEGEL, YVES ST. GERMAIN, DON LOUNDS, ROSS GALBRAITH, ROD GOY, PATRICK VLANICH, GARY LEHMAN, FERN TARDIF, RICK LOUSIER, ED NOTT AND JERRY WILSON. MISSING IS FACILITATOR CAROL MACLEOD OF CAROL MACLEOD AND ASSOCIATES INC.

Virtually all jobs require a mix of essential skills (e.g., problem solving, computer use) that enable individuals to perform job tasks and learn new skills. For example, electricians use reading and math skills to interpret the Canadian Electrical Code.

Customer service representatives use oral communication and computer skills to handle inquiries. Workplace changes, such as new technology, have raised the bar with regard to the complexity of essential and technical skills now required on the job.

Last year the IBEW, First District, Canada began a national research project to identify the essential skills learning needs of IBEW members. This project promotes continuous learning and will result in the development of related strategies and resources.

An extensive process of consultation with a wide range of industry stakeholders (e.g., instructors, journeypersons, apprentices, contractors, employers, provincial governments) is underway.

A blue-chip national Steering Committee was created to guide the research. They are meeting in June 2003 to finalize the report. International Vice-President Don Lounds has invited the Steering Committee to present their findings at the 2003 All-Canada Progress Meeting to facilitate discussion in caucus meetings.

The IBEW wishes to thank the National Literacy Secretariat, Human Resources Development Canada, for financially supporting this research.

# editorial



**Don Lounds**  
International Vice President

After reading this publication of the Canadian Comment, I'm sure you will again realize the benefits of collective strength. The obvious gains of being united are evident in collective bargaining, but through the CLC, we are now participating in two programs. The

first is a Compaq computer purchase, which not only provides great quality for a great price, but Compaq was also able to provide a national delivery and warranty program. The second program is the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada retiree benefits plan. Along with over 50,000 other CURC members, we are able to take advantage of a reasonably priced benefit plan because of our collective strength.

But collective strength does not stop at being able to purchase items or partake of programs, it is also evident in how we are collectively able to provide financial support to local unions like Local 1574 in Whitehorse. Donations from all across Canada amounted to over \$23,000.00 to assist their membership in a hard fought strike against their employer.

In addition, collective strength can be used for our political benefit. Although we in the IBEW have generally taken a non-partisan position in politics, the detrimental effects of bad political decisions are becoming overwhelming and we cannot remain ignorant of our ability to impact issues for our collective benefit. This month's article in the Educational Corner outlines the absolute need for all of us to be more aware about how important the impact of our vote really is. Please take the time to read this article and consider how we can make a difference with our collective strength.

And please remember, your vote counts.

Best wishes.  
Fraternally yours,

Don Lounds,  
International Vice President

## Retiree's Benefit Program

We are pleased to report that there has been a very positive response to the first notice, last fall, about the Retiree Benefit Plan, and a good number of IBEW retirees have joined the plan. The benefit plan is designed specifically for union retirees, who become members of the Congress of Union Retirees of Canada (CURC), the plan sponsor.

There are three types of coverage which can be purchased separately or in combination, and include:

- Life Insurance
- Extended Health and Dental Care
- Emergency Excess Hospital/Medical Travel Insurance

You would be eligible for the Life Insurance and Extended Health benefits on a non-medical basis, if you make application:

1. within 60 days after the date of retirement, or within 60 days after the termination of coverage through another group program, or
2. within 90 days following receipt of the current information package

For more information, please contact the benefit plan administrator:

Anne Spencer

CURC Benefit Plan Consultant  
Canadian Benefits Consulting Group  
2300 Yonge Street, Suit 3000  
Toronto, Ontario M4P 1E4

Telephone: 416-488-7755 or 1-800-268-0285, ext. 252

Fax: 416-488-7774

Email: [curc@canben.com](mailto:curc@canben.com)

## Winter School A Success!!!

Twenty-two business managers from across Canada attended a three-day Business Manager's Orientation Course at the Nottawasaga Inn in Alliston, Ontario, earlier this year. The course was a component of our Vision of Excellence 2003 Winter School Program.

Victoria, British Columbia, was the setting of our second 2003 Winter School February 16 through February 18 where 20 IBEW local union leaders focused on the preparation and presentation of arbitration. This intensive three-day course was well received by the participants.

Both Courses were delivered by First District International Representatives.



# Building and Construction Trades

**T**he Coast to Coast B&CT Committee members met to discuss and consider improvements for our members in the construction industry. The Honourable Paul Martin, the former Minister of Finance openly discussed topics which included: the underground economy; the use of EI to ease east/west mobility; north/south mobility; the issue of Red Seal and the need for national standards; tax breaks for travelling workers.

Also in attendance was B&CT Secretary-

Treasurer Joseph Maloney and he spoke about the progress of the "Smart Card" initiative that would allow workers to carry all work related information that could be carried from job to job that would adapt to the security systems of existing nuclear and industrial facilities. He also reported that effective December 1, 2002, the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners had re-affiliated with the B&CT and that a proposal which would expedite cross border mobility has been submitted to the White House for consideration.

## Free Loader Club

I am opposed to all unions, therefore I am opposed to all benefits that unions have won through the years—paid vacations, paid holidays, sick leave, seniority rights, wage increases, pension and insurance plans, safety laws, workers compensation laws, Canada Pension, time and a half for overtime for hours in excess of eight in one day and 40 in any one week, unemployment benefits and job security.

I refuse to accept any benefits that were won by the unions and hereby authorize and direct the company to withhold the amount of the union-won benefits from my pay cheque each week and donate to charity.

### FACT:

As an IBEW member you are eligible for exclusive discounts of 10% and more on the most popular HP and Compaq products.



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Congrès du travail du Canada  
Canadian Labour Congress

\* Additional discounts may apply - check web site or call

## Educational Corner

### Politics Is Your Business

Before election time politicians and political parties begin flooding the media seeking support for their election. Unfortunately, many people base their election choices on newspaper headlines, short sound bites or one-issue campaigns. The fact is that selecting the right political party is a very important decision. Issues such as health care, human rights, education, fair wage provisions, organizing and essential workers legislation are some examples of how political decisions affect your work life and your pay cheque.

Here are some guidelines to follow that may help you make an informed election decision.

1. Find out who is running in your riding and learn more about their background.

2. Find out which parties they represent and what policies they support.
  3. Ask your local union about what issues are most important to them.
  4. Ask the candidates in your riding what their positions are on those points.
  5. Get out and vote!
  6. Follow up with the successful candidate to ensure those pre-election comments are kept.
- Initially, this may take some effort but, over time, it becomes increasingly easier as you become more familiar with the political issues and the process that has a major impact on your life.

## “PMSPEAK”

Prime Minister Jean Chretien, well known for his confusing statements on major issues, had this to say yesterday when asked in the House of Commons about old money versus new money in the health care deal:

“They say that the money that we had promised three years ago to be new money this year is not more new money. We have not paid it yet and it is old new money versus new new money. For me, new money is new money. If paying in \$5 or \$10, it’s the same money.”

### Bill Cathcart Awarded 65-Year Plaque & Pin

NEW WATERFORD—Bill Cathcart of New Waterford was recently presented with a 65-Year plaque and pin from the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. He was the only Canadian to receive this honour this year, which made this occasion even more special. Eric MacDonald, E-Board member, Brian Matheson, International Representative and Alfie Sheppard, a retired member of the IBEW, were on hand to make the presentation to Mr. Cathcart.



65-YEAR MEMBER OF THE IBEW: BILL CATHCART WAS THE RECIPIENT OF A 65-YEAR PIN AND PLAQUE FROM THE IBEW. HIS PLAQUE READ, "IN SINCERE AFFECTION AND DEEP GRATITUDE, WE PRESENT THIS CITATION AND PIN IN HONOUR OF YOUR LOYAL AND FAITHFUL YEARS OF MEMBERSHIP IN OUR BROTHERHOOD. PICTURED ABOVE WITH CATHCART ARE THE PRESENTERS, ERIC MACDONALD, BRIAN MATHESON AND ALFIE SHEPPARD.

Cathcart started his involvement with the IBEW in 1937 when he began working for Dominion Utilities. At this time they were running 25-cycle power compared to the 60-cycle power we now have today. In the '30s and '40s even the simplest things like travel to and from work were a lot more

complicated. Cathcart reflected on his first few years of work and said he used to leave his home in New Waterford by horse and wagon and travel to Donkin each day for work. With 42 years of active service in the IBEW (1937-1979), he was a very dedicated employee who vastly improved the working conditions for his co-workers and workers who came on board after his tenure with the company. Although he has been retired the past 23 years, he still remains an active member of the IBEW and

is viewed by today's work force as a pioneer in this industry. Alfie Sheppard, one of the presenters, actually worked with Cathcart for some 33 years before he retired in 1979. Cathcart was thrilled to receive this award and thanked Sheppard, Matheson and MacDonald for making this possible.