

Rick Dalton, Business Manager

Business Manager's *Interim Report* January 2009

Pension at 55

Introduction

Every active and retired member of **IBEW Local 2330** should have received by now a letter from our pension plan's Board of Trustees outlining the decision to restore early retirement subsidies.

The pension benefit for members who retire early at 55 years of age, with full benefits, is reinstated after two long and difficult years, constantly discussing and working collectively with officials to address the many issues involved. Our members and their families wanted the benefit restored, and I am very happy to be able to provide you a successful outcome.

An important caution comes with the reinstatement of the subsidy. The financial strength of the plan has to remain stable to provide the **full** range

of pension benefits every member is entitled, now and when others retire. You make this possible with your contribution to the plan for every hour you work with a signatory contractor.

You may rightly ask how a stabilized plan can be projected in these current times. I would like to share my reflections with you how I believe it is possible not only to accomplish this, but also prudent to think this way, and the role that every one has to play.

1. Our Economic Position

Newfoundland and Labrador has a lot driving it in terms of major project investment. The province is in a very strong economic position, and as a result electricians can anticipate stronger employment numbers here.

The start-dates of some projects have been pushed back a bit. The province is now looking at an upswing, likely commencing this year with the anticipated signing for the Vale Inco project in Long Harbour. Longer-term prosperity should follow with Hebron and other projects. **IBEW Local 2330** also has reciprocal agreements within the IBEW which permit the pension and health and welfare contributions of travelling members to be forwarded to this Local.

The commercial and housing markets are stronger here than in most parts of the country. We have had much success in increasing market share in the commercial sector, and I continue to aggressively pursue work in that sector with your help.

Infrastructure projects have yet to be announced by both the federal and provincial governments. For example, an emphasis on environmental projects in the province, like wind farms, could give our members more work.

The vision I have for employment is more than being in survival mode, waiting for the next major project. We must remain proactive in getting agreements with project owners, no matter the size or location of the project.

Agreements don't happen overnight! They take time to organize, patience and a lot of negotiations. Owners sign on with us because it makes good economic sense. Our members offer exceptional value in return for fair and reasonable wages and benefits.

2. The Pension Issue

Many people have been rattled by news that financial markets have caused a lot of stress on pension plans. Most notable is the recent news that the provincial government lost one-quarter of the value of its pension fund in 2008.

Fortunately for government employees, legislation states that the provincial government must cover their shortfalls. The **IBEW Local 2330** pension fund is different. It has the strength and solidarity of our membership, and good governance, as our protection. For over 100 years, the IBEW as an organization has done very well for its members.

As the notice to you by the Trustees points out, an increase in the hours worked by our members, with the subsequent contributions to the plan based on the hours worked, ensures the financial integrity of our pension plan. It is how we are successful in meeting the pension obligations to our members.

Since March 2007 members who retired at age 55 received about 50% of a full pension. Before that, our plan provided a subsidy to the full 100% for all who qualified, based on their years of contributions. That subsidy has now been restored.

3. The Member's Role

By far, individual members of **IBEW Local 2330** play the largest role in ensuring the success of our organization and maintaining our benefits.

Members who work with signatory contractors and make contributions to the health and pension plans allow us to address the needs of our members and their beneficiaries. The more members who contribute mean there is more to improve those benefits.

Members working for non-signatory contractors, either here or away, can help if they truly set about with us in organizing that contractor to become part of the collective bargaining process. You would be worth your weight in gold if you could help us accomplish this.

It would be the easy way out, buying into the doom and gloom that circulate daily, but it is important not to let the negative messages, and some bad economic news, feed on us, and destroy our perspective.

Be smart about where and how you work. Acquire the knowledge necessary to ensure a better future for you, your family and fellow members. Whenever you can, please help the Local Union, your shop steward, executive and staff to do their job, wherever you are.

4. Clearance to Work in Other IBEW Jurisdictions

You must obtain clearance to work in each and every other IBEW jurisdiction.

As an example, if you decide to work in Alberta, your obligation, first and foremost, is to obtain clearance to work from the Business Manager of IBEW Local 424, Tim Brower.

IBEW Local 2330, under no circumstance, can authorize any of our members to work in any other IBEW jurisdiction.

5. Training

Now is a good time to train and upgrade your qualifications.

Please take the time to do some serious training over the next few months. You can contact Ann in the office and she will work with you towards achieving your training goals. Let her know as soon as you can.

Occupational courses we have scheduled for journeypersons, who are EI-eligible, this year, include:

- MI (Mineral Insulation for Heat Tracing)
- Welding
- Fibre-optics
- BST (Basic Survival Training)
- Explosion Proof/Hazardous Area
- Introduction to Computers
- Industrial Program Courses
- Industrial Instrumentation Program Courses
- QA/QC
- Conduit Bending
- Motor Controls
- Fire Alarms
- Electrical Code Review
- Blueprint Reading
- High Voltage
- PLCs (Programmable Controls)
- AC/DC Drives, and
- Analog Devices.

Safety courses scheduled which all members are eligible, include:

- H2S Alive
- Zoomboom/Forklift
- Fall Arrest
- Confined Spaces
- First Aid/CPR
- WHMIS
- Power Line Hazards
- Back Injury Prevention, and
- CSTS (Construction Safety Training Systems).

6. Support for Women in Trade

The provincial government provides support to **IBEW Local 2330** for an initiative to increase, to as much as 10%, the number of women registered as construction electricians, and successfully completing their apprenticeship training program.

The recent economic downturn means that fewer women (and all members) have been able to access employment both in the province and elsewhere, compared to the previous year. Every effort must be made to support women apprentices and journeypersons in meeting the demand for skilled electricians. Your support on-the-job for women in the electrical trade is very important.

Concluding Remarks

Despite the latest upheavals in the economy, the members of **IBEW Local 2330** have embraced every opportunity

for work that we can access, and I am proud to report that members continue to do that work competitively, productively and safely.

The result has been a necessary increase in hours, especially in the commercial sector that has given us more stability in both our pension and health and welfare plans. We need to carry that success forward in 2009.

Our jobs face difficult challenges, at the best of times, and they become even more challenging when there is an economic downturn. Be vigilant, stick together and work smart so we get more work and make a better future for us all.

Thank you!

Rick Dalton
Business Manager

January 2009

RE M I N D E R

Your monthly dues increased by one dollar (\$1) on January 1, 2009.

- Non-working dues increased to \$29, and
- Working dues increased to \$50.30.

Please note: You are credited with payment of your dues only when the **full** amount is paid for each month. Mary Lou would greatly appreciate your cooperation in filing the proper payment.
