



Business Manager John Germann, Gerry Sloan, steward, E.S. Fox; UA Canadian Director John Telford, Local 527 Vice President Boyd Rees, UA Special Representative Steve Morrison, John Kelly, steward, Aker Solutions

## Local Spotlight – Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 527, Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 527, located in Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, has a long, proud history that has had the benefit of strong leadership throughout the years. Business Manager John Germann, who took over the reins from Special Representative Steve Morrison, and Business Agents Russ Jessop and Chris Riehl, and President Greg Koehn are looking forward to February 2011, when the local will celebrate its 100-year anniversary. Within the past 10 years, the local's membership has grown from 799 to 1,420, which includes 240 apprentices and 300 retirees. Local 527's leadership has taken on the non-union with a vengeance, and has instilled a new philosophy in its members—"We will not stop fighting until we have what is rightfully ours." This new stance is working, and the union is closing in, having secured 55 percent of the market share over the past two years.

Since the downturn in the economy, Local 527 is proud to report that its members have maintained full employment. This has allowed its membership to assist UA brothers and sisters who are seeking employment. The officers of Local 527 are confident that this status will not change in the coming year.

Business Manager John Germann stated, "We have come to realize that the UA Local 527 administration must work hand in hand with contractors, owners, members and government officials in a true tripartite spirit to resolve and strengthen our position in this area. It is only by establishing a constant line of communication with all levels that we will succeed in our endeavors."

The members are fortunate to have a local positioned in an area that is booming. There is a strong commercial, industrial, and institutional market, with multiple schools, hospitals and universities. Three area hospitals are expanding, and work will last for at least three years on these projects. In addition, nuclear power, fabrication, pipeline distribution and water treatment facilities also provide a lot of work for the members of Local 527. Within the coming months, the local has secured over 123 jobs totaling 160,000 man hours—14 of which are at universities, 30 at public schools, and 10 at hospitals and long-term care facilities.

Brother Germann is proud of the local's fight against the non-union, and he reports that Local 527 members have completed 90 percent of the new construction of public schools and universities, which traditionally has gone non-union. The infiltration has not stopped there. Members from Local 527 built the new Toyota plant in Woodstock, Ontario, and they continue using their expertise to maintain the Cambridge Toyota Plant. Because of the strong non-union base in the local's jurisdiction, the members opted to increase the amount-per-hour they had allocated for the local's Market Recovery Fund. Brother Germann noted that he feels this has been instrumental in giving them a leg up in the ongoing battle for market share.

The local has had members at the Bruce Power Nuclear Plant and heavy water plant for well over 40 years. Bruce averages employment for 350 members, but at its peak there were 1,800 UA members on the job.

Today, members have been hard at work on the Bruce Restart Project, which entails returning Units 1 and 2 to service. New steam generators have been installed, and the team is now involved in a critical program to restore the many thousands of valves in the units. This is the first time there has been a boiler replacement on CANDU reactors, and work is scheduled for the remaining six units utilizing the same technology. The work has been a true challenge, and the leaders at Bruce Power knew the workforce had to be skilled, expertly

trained, and conscientious journeymen and apprentices. The work that was performed was often the first of its kind, and team members had to have the confidence to ask questions when problems or challenges arose.

Timely reactions to changes in trends have also been a strong point for Local 527. Because of the lack of available land to build on in the local's jurisdiction, numerous high-rises have been proposed. This issue prompted the leadership of Local 527 to assist in launching a new Residential Agreement in their area. With the help of this new agreement, the local has secured more bids within this sector.

Another project that will employ just over 100 members is the construction of the Quantum-Nano Centre



Bruce Power Nuclear Plant: Journeymen David Desjardins and Jonathan LeBlanc



UA Team at the Data Center

(QNC) at the University of Waterloo. The impressive, state-of-the-art building will house the Nanotechnology Engineering undergraduate program, as well as cutting-edge research on nanotechnology, biology, chemistry, and physics in conjunction with the Institute for Quantum Computing (IQC). The 261,000-square-foot, eight-story building will be the centerpiece of the university. Working on a project of this magnitude with precise specifications takes skill. The journeymen and apprentices from Local 527 fit the bill.

The underground concourse will contain a metrology lab, which will contain very valuable equipment that takes precise measurements to be used for physics, biology, and nanotechnology research. There will be a large, two-story clean room. The Nanotechnology Engineering undergraduate program will incorporate labs, lecture halls, tutorial rooms, as well as study rooms. Nanotechnology research will be performed on several floors. The top floors will incorporate the mechanical and infrastructure support for the QNC, such as a large number of fume hoods that will limit exposure to hazardous fumes generated in the labs. The hoods will work in conjunction with the numerous fans located on each floor. A large diesel generator will be present on the top floor of the north tower to power the safety requirements and key research equipment of the entire building, which cannot afford to lose power even for just a few seconds. The project is expected to exceed \$100 million, and construction should take approximately two-and-a-half years with a target completion date set for the fall of 2010.

Milton, Ontario is home to the new Halton Hills gas-fired cogeneration plant, which is the first of its kind in Local 527's jurisdiction. Currently 300 members are on the job building this plant. Natural gas is fired through two heat recovery steam generators, which in turn activate one large turbine to produce electricity. This power is transferred into the region's power grid during times of peak consumption. The government officials have been impressed by the expertise of the local's members. Because of this, they have been forthright in seeking locations for three to four more plants within the local's jurisdiction.

In addition, over 60 members are currently working on the construction of a top-secret data center in the local's



World Skill Competition: Business Agent Russ Jessop, and third-year apprentice and contestant Brian Martin

jurisdiction. This state-of-the-art facility will house crucial information and promises to be built with top levels of security in mind.

With all of the work on the books, the local has been intuitive to keep up with the criti-

cal training that keeps the UA's journeymen and apprentices ahead of the competition. The local is expanding its training facility by 6,200 square feet. To assist in this endeavor, the leadership of the local was able to secure one of the largest infrastructure grants given by the government in its area, which amounted to \$500,000. The expansion should be complete in November, and it will allow the members to take advantage of new, exciting programs that include green technology, orbital welding, and backflow protection. The new facility will also house a natural gas lab.

Local 527 members are involved in all aspects of the local. Partnering with the Building Trades Council, the members have been the driving force behind the juvenile diabetes golf tournament, which has collected over \$90,000 in the last five years for research. In hopes of introducing their trade to young people in the area, the members hold a one-day training session to spotlight their crafts. They hold seven sessions a year, which exposes roughly 300 students to the trade. They continue to be involved in Provincial Skill Workshops, and they work closely with the Provincial Organizing Team. This year was a particularly exciting year for the entire local, with third-year apprentice Brian Martin qualifying to participate in the plumbing category at the World Skills Competition in Calgary. This was a huge accolade for Brian and for the local as a whole.

The leadership of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 527 has been instrumental in pursuing Canadian Director John Telford's goal for the UA to change for the better by shifting the way we do business and, more importantly, by changing the perception people and members have about our union. It is clear that Local 527 is doing something right by securing work that has previously been unattainable. As the UA in Canada prepares itself for a bright future, the members of Local 527 can rest assured that their leadership is fighting hard for their rightful place as the labor of choice in their jurisdiction.