

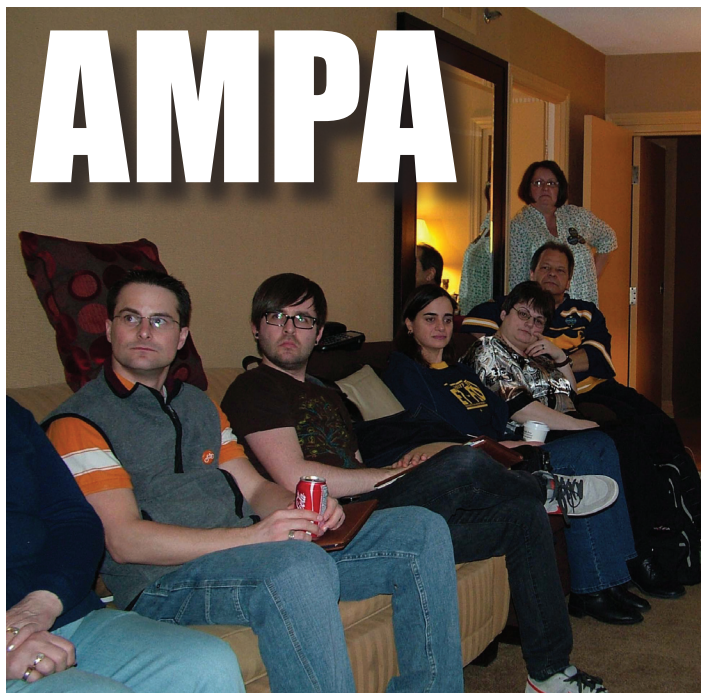
# INSIGHT 21

April 2011

Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation - District 21 Teachers

[district21.ca](http://district21.ca)

*Let us not take thought for our separate interests, but let us help one another.*



The District 21 AMPA Delegation listens to a candidate for Provincial Executive in the D21 Suite. AMPA happens from the Friday until the Monday of the first weekend of March Break every year. *photo by Peter Wiwczaruk*

## The Core Issue was Equal Representation

**Dave Delville**

The 2011 AMPA ended without support for a Council of Representatives. The Strategy and Structure Review Committee, established at AMPA 2009, recommended that our provincial organization adopt a governance that reflected a representation by population model. The concept proposed was to eliminate provincial council (and therefore equal representation) and replace it with a Council of Representatives (C.O.R.). The votes of the council members would be weighted according to the number of FTE in the district.

The S.S.R.C. proposed to pass 76 motions, en bloc, that would alter our Constitution to reflect the new structure. Delegates became bogged down in the process when numerous people were ruled out of order while trying to debate individual motions within the bloc. As a result, the motion did not receive the two thirds majority required and it was defeated.

### Election Results

An exciting race for Executive ended in disappointment for our delegation as Cindy Dubue edged out D21's Anthony Marco on the third ballot to take the last

position on Executive. Leslie Wolfe won on the first ballot and Scott Marshall on the second. The rest of our provincial executive are as follows;

President: Ken Coran (Acclaimed)

Vice Presidents: Harvey Bishof and Paul Elliot

Treasurer: Earl Burt (Acclaimed)

### Our Annual General Meeting

The District 21 Annual Meeting will take place at Lunna Station on April 28th. There are several Constitutional changes being put forward for members to vote on. Branch Presidents have the details and sign up sheets.

**Teachers' Unit Annual General Meeting**  
**4:30pm Thursday, April 28th, 2011 @ LIUNA Station**  
**Sign Up in your staff room or by calling the D21 office: 905-574-8285**

# Would the Real Tim Hudak Please Reveal Himself?

Glen Simm

The upcoming provincial election takes place on October 6. Throughout the spring and summer, all four of Ontario's major parties—Liberals, Conservatives, Greens and New Democrats—will slowly reveal their platforms. Currently, the three opposition parties have yet to release anything regarding their education policies. Meanwhile, the governing Liberals want to use education as the central plank in their re-election bid.

This can only mean one thing: if the Liberals can win a majority government on education (remember John Tory's "Faith-Based School" fiasco?), the other parties need to defeat them on the same issue. Tim Hudak, the newly minted leader of the Conservative Party, will not make the same mistake his predecessor made. Hudak will try to win a majority government at the expense of teachers and other educational workers, and he will likely continue something his mentor, Mike Harris, started in 1995: teacher bashing.

Among neo-conservative politicians, teacher bashing is one of the easiest ways to whip up public sentiment. Right now, Republican Governors in New Jersey and Wisconsin, to name a few, have been attacking teachers and teacher unions. One can expect Hudak to emulate his American counterparts and he may try to get teachers to vote for him through traditional conservative policies: lower taxes and "increased efficiencies".

How will Hudak confront teachers during his election campaign? Here are a few things that might pop up over the next seven months.

(1) **Merit Pay:** Conservatives love merit pay because it pits teacher against teacher, parent against teacher and student against teacher. Merit pay works like this: "hardworking teachers" will be remunerated with pay and "lazy teachers" will receive the equivalent of a social-assistance cheque. Make no mistake: this is the dumbest idea ever. In an industry as complex as education, there is no objective way of measuring who should receive a bigger paycheque. If you rely upon standardized tests, teachers in inner-city schools will simply not get paid because of high

student absentee and failure rates. If you rely upon "pass rates" a starving teacher would be forced to inflate grades so they can buy food. If you rely upon the judgment of junior and senior management, many principals will generously reward their friends while good teachers starve. It is easy to be seduced by merit pay because, quite frankly, 'no one teaches better than me', but merit pay has nothing to do with merit and everything to do with economics. A penny-pinching government will do everything in its power to continuously raise the bar so that no teacher can obtain a full salary, no matter how highly we think of ourselves.

(2) **Teacher's Unions Protect Bad Teachers:** Hudak will enjoy saying this, and the right-wing media will tell pop-psychology stories about the teachers who damaged them. Here are some questions about teachers unions. Do you enjoy smaller class sizes? Do you enjoy having access to expensive lawyers if a vindictive parent/student accuses you of something you didn't do? Do you enjoy your level of financial compensation? Do you appreciate being able to ask poignant questions at staff meetings? Do you sleep better knowing that good teachers, like you, are going to receive equal pay regardless of how much time you spend "hanging out" with the principal? If you answered yes to any of these questions, thank a union.

(3) **Tax Cuts:** Tax cuts are great. Who could possibly disagree with the idea of a tax cut? I do. Taxes pay our salaries, benefits and pensions. A 3% teacher pay raise costs the province approximately \$350 million. If Hudak promises a tax cut, he'll find his 'savings' in education. Moreover, using tax cuts as an economic stimulus never works. It is supposed to create jobs and consequently raise revenue, but it did not work for Reagan, Mulroney, Harris, Bush Jr, Obama or Harper. Tax cuts reduce revenues and drive up deficits, thereby forcing governments to make further cuts.

(4) **We'll cut inefficiencies:** When Hudak says he'll cut inefficiencies, what he means is: I will cut back the number of teachers currently working in the province of Ontario. Yes, the Min-

istry of Environment and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs have some "inefficiencies" but if you really want to know how Hudak spells "inefficient" it is: T-E-A-C-H-E-R. Education accounts for approximately 33% of all government spending (\$21.4 billion for 2010-11 and \$22.3 billion for 2011-12) and no government of any political stripe will cut back on Health Care because senior citizens vote. When Hudak goes to find "inefficiencies" he may, as a sop to the general electorate, cut back on the number of coffees MPPs can expense to the province, but he'll want to save billions of dollars and the Ministry of Education is a multi-billion dollar portfolio. In the name of "efficiencies" Hudak could easily lay-off student success teachers, guidance counselors, librarians, credit recovery teachers, geography teachers, consultants and history teachers.

(5) **Teachers don't work hard enough:** As soon as we hear a politician say this, what they mean to say is: wouldn't it be wonderful if teachers taught four classes per semester? Also, why do we have such a low student to teacher ratio? Combined, these elements could lay-off 25% of our local bargaining unit and, for the teachers who survive the cull, they would obviously be working harder and longer than they did before.

(6) **Collective Bargaining Contracts Get in the way of Learning:** No they don't. Our collective agreement facilitates learning by clearly outlining management's limitations. It is nice knowing how many coverages and duties you are going to receive, so you can spend more time teaching and planning. It is nice knowing that something is protecting us when management is not. Also, collective agreements are signed by two sides. Conservatives can pretend that collective agreements were dreamed up by OSSTF-pixie-dust fairies, but that is not the case: every collective agreement signed between a local of OSSTF and a board has been negotiated by two parties. If a board signs an agreement that is bad for kids, bad for learning or just plain silly, then shame on the board.

(7) **Charter Schools Will Save Ontario's Education System:** This is specious. **con't pg. 3**



con't from pg 2

There is nothing inherently wrong with Ontario's public education system, but let's dissect the argument a little further. Whenever you hear "charter schools" what someone is trying to say is: how can we operate a school free of unions? Charter schools have started all over North America and they work by being publicly funded but they remain outside of a public board. Therefore, the "Principal" or "Director" does not have to hire unionized workers, pay benefits or contribute towards a pension. We also run the risk of creating a fragmented education system where every religion and ethnic group has its own school.

**(8) No More Professional Development:** Although I have strong reservations with the way specific boards conduct Professional Development, when done properly, PD is a meaningful way for teachers and other educational workers to collaborate. PD gives us a rare opportunity to review departmental goals, school initiatives and keep

us abreast of the latest (uh-hum) "research". I realize that many boards patronize teachers with group projects, Smart Board lessons and useless maxims like "BELIEVE", but, in theory, PD is a worthwhile initiative.

These 8 points are not exhaustive but they represent the bulk of the arguments you might see from Tim Hudak during the election campaign. This campaign will define what kind of profession we will be working in over the next decade.

At this stage, it is important to note that none of this is a fait accompli. We can still influence the outcome of the upcoming election and fight for a strong publicly-funded education system. Here are few things we can all do to protect public education:

(1) Come to PAC: Your local OSSTF district has a Political Action Committee that is working on the provincial election. Your help is always appreciated.

(2) Get Involved: If you cannot make it to a PAC meeting, go help an education-friendly candidate get elected. Po-

litical parties always need volunteers, and you do not have to cold call; you can put up election signs, drop flyers or simply say hello to your education-friendly candidate so he/she knows who you are.

(3) Give Money: Money and people still win elections. Political parties and individual candidates will never refuse a donation. I realize it is shameless to repeatedly ask for money, but fundraising wins campaigns.

(4) Talk to Family and Friends: Convince your loved-ones how important this election is to you, your job and your career. This is far more effective than advertisements or 'zingers' during Question Period.

(5) Come to OSSTF's Education Debate: The Political Action Committee is in the process of organizing an "Education Debate" in May. Our hope is to have a representative from each of the four major parties answer specific questions about education in the province of Ontario.

## Becoming the Solution: Susan Huang and Joshua Wald

Dave Delville

This year's theme for the Marion Drysdale awards was "Putting Words into Action: Become the Solution". The Communication/Excellence in Education Committee forwarded two entries on to the province for judging. Two HWDSB students submitted entries judged best in the province: Susan Huang and Joshua Wald.

Susan, from Sherwood Secondary, (Teacher: Silvia D'Agruma) won in the creative visual arts, intermediate division. Joshua, from Sir John A. MacDonald, won in the creative video/audio/animation category. (Teacher: Rick Kowalchuk)

In the OSSTF award publication distributed at AMPA, Joshua describes his animation.

"In my film, the mice of the mice colony meet to talk about important issues they face, much like how we talk about issues we face. By the end of their meetings so, they have a solution that they are putting into action. If mice, which are mindless, rodents, can put their words into action then we have no excuse for not doing the same. Sadly, excuses are what we come up with, whether we are too busy or too

accustomed to the way things are. So, instead of taking action. Many of us just sit down, expect that someone else will do something, and watch the world crumble. If we don't do something soon the earth won't have the ability to support us much longer, especially as our population continues to grow.

Population growth probably would not be as big an issue today if we started out smart, polluting and consuming less. The bad news is that at the dawn of the Industrial Revolution. We were ignorant of what we were doing to the earth. Now we don't have the luxury of ignorance, but still as the point of no return approaches we do little to nothing. We are very lazy society, which does not like change in our lifestyles. So again, we create excuses so we don't have to do anything. We often fail to realize that if we don't do something, our lifestyles will change. So again, we create excuses so we don't have to do anything. We often fail to realize that if we don't do something our lifestyles will change anyway.

The mice in my film come up with a solution to the problem of overpopulation that will change their lifestyles, but they champion it, instead of dreading it.

Whatever problems we face, we need to do the same and stop creating excuses. I insist that if the mice colony can put their words into action and we have no excuse for not doing the same".

You can view Joshua's animation at: [www.osstf.on.ca/studentachievementtowards](http://www.osstf.on.ca/studentachievementtowards)

Susan explains her artwork in the same publication.

"In this artwork, the figure, which represents humanity, is becoming connected to nature. He/she is connected to mother nature, as shown by the touching fingertips to create a warm light. By being connected, the person becomes one with nature, which is represented by the transformation of the person's normal flash on the hand into a whole bunch of animals and plants that are all part of the person. The earth is on the left side of the chest, where the heart should be. This symbolizes that this person cares about the earth. "Becoming the solution" or one with nature, or caring about nature is the main solution to global warming. If people love anything such as Earth, they will treat it with respect and treasure it, which everyone should do. (con't pg. 4)



### con't from pg. 3

The figure is speaking out about how we should stop global warming by doing various actions. When these actions come out of the mouth, they are not colorful, but at the ends, they become colorful and full of movement. The words become intertwined with the plants on the flash, so this person is putting the "words into action" by caring about the earth, which leads to doing things for it. This whole section represents that the words we speak have no color or meaning if we do not put them into action or truly care about the earth.

Behind the person, there is his/her shadow, or the evil side of humanity. This dark side causes people to be-

come very greedy. It is represented by the coins on the shadow, or the I should be. The shadow can only see the world as a bank of coins from which he/she can have fortune. Behind coins, there is an electric power plant that is burning fossil fuels that had to the massive sheet of carbon dioxide in the atmos-



phere. This represents that the shadow of humanity uses these electric power plants to gain fortune. All over this shadow, there are fighters, dead animals and demons, a tornado, a deforested

area, and a withering vine wrapped around that area. They all represent the chaos and death of life they came with the power plants and fortune. The whole shadow has no color because it has no beauty, or love for nature – only greed. As a result, shadow would even kill him/herself to gain meaning misfortune. This is shown by the shadow strangling its counterpart by pulling on the chain. The person who was one with nature is trying to get away from his/her shadow, as shown by the hand pulling on the chain.

This section of the artwork shows how people should put aside their greed for the sake of nature and life on earth. Putting aside greed is also part of the solution.

**Bottom Left:** Joshua Wald (Sir John A. Macdonald) accepts his Marion Drysdale award.

**Bottom Center:** Over 550 OSSTF AMPA delegates get down to work in downtown Toronto. The red shirts were in support of the teachers and labour movement in Wisconsin.

**Bottom Right:** As it was a campaign year, each candidate had a hospitality suite. Tony Viola, Paul Brown, and Paul Cooke (all Sir Allan Macnab) keep things smooth in the District 19 photobooth.

