

BIOGRAPHY

Bob Kinnear

President/Business Agent > ATU Local 113

Descended from a Scottish-Irish family that came to Canada in the 1840's, Bob Kinnear was born and raised in Toronto's Cabbagetown district before going to work for the Toronto Transit Commission in 1988 when he was 18 years old. He initially worked in the Plant Department and in Buildings and Maintenance at the TTC's Hillcrest complex at Bathurst and Davenport. Later he moved to Collectors Division where he worked for a number of years before moving to Lansdowne Division, which closed in 1996. After that he worked, at different times, at Danforth Bus Division, Danforth Subway Division, Birchmount Division and Wilson Subway Division.

Kinnear got involved with Local 113 soon after he joined the TTC and was continuously active in mainly lower level roles such as an elected Delegate and a member of the Bylaws Committee. In 2003, he decided to contest the top position of the 104-year old organization after hearing often from co-workers that the incumbent leadership was, in their view, out of touch with the members and not aggressive enough in defending them against an increasingly oppressive TTC management. Many of those in the upper ranks of the union's executive told him he was too young to be President. They advised him to first run for a position on the Executive Board.

"The members want change and they want it now," he told them. "They don't want to wait and neither do I." He was swept into office with a significant majority over the incumbent. He was re-elected in 2006 by a landslide margin of 78% and again in 2009 by the same margin in the largest election turnout in the union's history.

Since taking office, Kinnear has undertaken a complete overhaul of the union's communications with both its members and the public. He has launched a new membership magazine, a website, broadcast phone messages to his members, and large-scale public advocacy campaigns. He has become the best-known labour leader in Toronto because of his willingness to face the media in controversial situations and to lobby relentlessly for more funding for public transit from all three levels of government.

Under Kinnear's leadership, Local 113 has significantly expanded its charitable activities. In addition to the union's traditional fundraising for Multiple Sclerosis Research at Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital, the union has become a major contributor to the Toronto Argonauts Stop the Violence Foundation and the Toronto Children's Breakfast Clubs, among other causes. The union has also donated a total of \$40,000 to Doctors Without Borders, Habitat for Humanity, CARE Canada and Canadian Feed the Children for Haiti Earthquake Relief.