



Amalgamated Transit Union

Local 1624

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Welcome to the history of the ATU local 1624

The roots of Local 1624 began a decade before the final transfer of bargaining rights in April of 1990. It was the voluntary recognition and certified registration of the Trentway - Wagar Employees Association (TWEA) in the early 1980's that would pave the way to eventual membership with the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU). Under the guidance of influential leaders such as Calvin Rouse, Ray (Butch) Frost, Stephen Byrne and others, the first and successive TWEA collective agreements were forged. At the time, the TWEA represented members in two districts 150kms apart. Trentway in Peterborough Ontario and Wagar in Napanee, Ontario. In the fall of 1985, a third district of members were added in the west with the opening of the Mississauga Airport division made up of mostly former Charterways employees. This addition of members in the Toronto area along with the sale of the company in 1987 to Gray Coach Lines (a division of the Toronto Transit Commission TTC) would plant the seeds in TWEA members to begin to seek an association with a larger international union. By 1989, TWEA members were engaged in spirited discussions at local meetings about the benefits of joining a larger union. It was decided by motion that a referendum vote would be held to decide the future of the TWEA, but first an amendment to the bylaws was needed. In order to get the best reflection of the wishes of the full-time operators, it was decided that votes on this issue would be weighted by a complex mathematical equation that would balance the scales between the majority part-time members and the minority full-time members. By way, of the passage of this weighted vote into the TWEA bylaws, the total full-time members vote would be valued at 51% no matter how many members in total turned out to the polls. This would prove to be the single most crucial factor in the formation of Local 1624. The vote to join the ATU was defeated when counting the ballots at face value on a one for one basis but when the weighted mathematical ratio was applied, the motion was narrowly passed and a meeting was set up with the ATU. Being already a certified trade union as the TWEA was, no signing of ATU cards was necessary in advance. Our vote indicating the membership's wishes to transfer bargaining rights to the ATU was all that was needed along with the proper paper work to be filed and registered with the Canadian Labour Relations Board for their review. In Early 1990, Carl Earl (TWEA Vice President) and Scott Miller (TWEA Toronto Shop Steward) met with Bob Saarinen (International ATU Vice President and former President of Greyhound Canada's Largest Local 1374 in Calgary) at the Valhalla Inn in Etobicoke, Ontario and the transfer from the TWEA to the ATU began. However, the transfer did not go smoothly! Some members, unhappy with the results of the vote, chose to challenge the validity of the weighted vote and filed a complaint with the CLRB (Canada Labour Relations Board). During this appeal process, newly elected ATU Officers could not be recognized by the company and the Local was held in limbo for the better part of the summer of 1990. By October of the same year, the complaint was defeated and Local 1624 was certified and recognized by all four parties being the Canadian Government, the Company, the ATU and the former TWEA membership. Ten Chartered Members were then listed as the official founding chartered members of Local 1624 and the first ATU union cards were issued to those ten members back-dated April 1st 1990. The first elected officers were then finally recognized as Brian Jameson -

President/Business Agent, Scott Miller - Vice President, Bill Smith - Financial Secretary Treasurer and Marie Devlin - Recording Secretary. John Vanderkeemel was later appointed as the first Grievance Chairperson to complete Local 1624's first serving officers. In the summer of 1993, discussions were entered between the company and HSR (Hamilton Street Railway) for the purchase of Canada Coach/Funtrek one of Canada's oldest coach companies. Successful negotiations between HSR's ATU Local 107 and Local 1624 resulted in new members now in the Hamilton/Kitchener/Guelph/Niagara/Buffalo corridor. Again in 1996, the company was successful in the acquisition of the Montreal-Toronto scheduled service from Voyageur Colonial with negotiations with the CAW Canadian Auto workers adding an additional 40+ members to Local 1624. In the late 1990's, employees at the Mississauga maintenance facility voted to join Local 1624 and in 2005 new employees operating the company's Pearson Airport contracts also became Local 1624 brothers and sisters.

In chronological order, the following members have served the members of Local 1624 in the capacity of either President-Business Agent or Acting President Business Agent:

- 1- Brian Jameson
- 2- Scott Miller
- 3- John Vanderkeemel
- 4- Sven Gjesing
- 5- Wayne Fraser
- 6- Gary Graham
- 7- Ray (Butch) Frost
- 8- Bill Kindon

The Following are the 10 official founding members in no particular order:

- 1- Scott Miller
- 2- Bill Smith
- 3- John Vanderkeemel
- 4- Bart Ebbing
- 5- Stephen Byrne
- 6- Doug Beakstead
- 7- Carl Earl
- 8- Gary (Doc) Loyst
- 9- Marie Delvin
- 10- Grace Riedel

The Executive Board of ATU 1624 wishes to extend a special thanks to Founding Charter Member, **Brother Scott Miller** for providing the detail of the history information and to the ten Charter Members who founded this local.