

# The Rapaport Report

Volume 1, Number 9

April 26, 2006

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## Special 2006 Post-Convention Issue

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*The future ain't what it used to be.*

Yogi Berra (1925 - )

April 20<sup>th</sup> marked my first anniversary on the Executive Board. And what a year it was; never a dull moment. This issue of *The Rapaport Report* follows Convention. And what a Convention it was. This issue follows two Board meetings as well.

The first Executive Board meeting was the regularly scheduled pre-Convention meeting on Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>. On Thursday, Convention sent the Board back into session in the evening to 'fix up the budget'. We met for about two hours on that night and emerged with a compromise for allocating dues revenue between the strike fund and the general fund. That compromise was realized on Friday, at Convention through an amendment to our constitution.

Like OPSEU, the Convention is complex. There are meetings of sectors, bargaining units, divisions, equity seeking groups, etc. There was a human-rights forum, a breakfast hosted by the Provincial Women's Committee and a pension forum.

But Convention is primarily debate and discussion by delegates representing all parts of our union; locals, Convention committees, equity committees, the Executive Board and retirees. Convention is our highest level decision maker. Almost 900 delegates and over 300 alternates debated resolutions, constitution amendments, policy and direction; passionate debates about political affiliation, equity representation on the Board, the environment, the budget and many other issues.

Convention is meeting old friends, making new friends, hospitality suites and an Awards Banquet on Friday night. It was great to see LBED delegates at the microphones and at all Convention events.

### **Local 598 - On Strike**

Employees at the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan (OTPP) are on strike. After fruitless negotiations since November, the local bargaining team called a strike. I joined their picket line on Monday morning, April 24<sup>th</sup>. As a former trustee at the OPSEU Pension Trust (OPT), I find it disheartening that employees at another union jointly trusteed pension plan are forced to strike, and after such a great year for investment returns. The picket line is on the corner of Finch and Yonge. Visit [www.local598.ca](http://www.local598.ca) for more details.

## Convention

The 2006 Convention was dedicated to **John Stammers**. Brother Stammers was a 63 year old Accounting teacher at Centennial College, Local 558. Along with 9,100 CAAT-Academic members he went on strike in March. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, he died as a result of a picket-line incident. Local 558 President, **Eileen Burrows** spoke emotionally, compassionately and respectfully about Brother Stammers at the opening of Convention. Local 558 established the John Stammers Family Fund. See page 8.

Visit [www.opseu.org/insolidarity/insolconvention2006.htm](http://www.opseu.org/insolidarity/insolconvention2006.htm) for Convention information.

## The Budget

OPSEU dues are allocated to three funds – the general operating fund, the strike fund and the education fund. The First Vice-President/Treasurer, **Smokey Thomas** convinced Convention and the Board to adopt a new formula to distribute dues revenue among the three funds. The need for redistribution could have many explanations. Clearly the general operating fund needs more money but is this because expenditures are too high or dues are too low or because we are putting too much into the strike fund? Previously, 10 per cent of dues revenue went into the strike fund; 88% went to the general fund and 2 per cent went to the education fund. This formula continued until the strike fund reaches \$50 million at which point 2 per cent would be put into the strike fund. In December, 2005 we had about \$37 million in the strike fund. The strike fund was used during the CAAT-A strike bringing the fund to about \$34 million (All estimates). There was a provision that when the strike fund falls below \$30 million, due to a strike or a lockout, a 0.2 per cent dues surcharge kicks in until the fund is restored to \$30 million.



Some EBMs, including myself, felt that this arrangement needed to be maintained. We worry about returning to the chaos, during and after the 1996 OPS strike, when the strike had \$1 million to run a \$25 million strike. The union went into debt for about \$15 million. These provisions were placed into the constitution as measures to build and maintain a strong strike fund. Some EBMs feel nervous about leaning on the strike fund for general operations. Other EBMs feel that we can no longer afford such a high rate of

contribution to the strike fund since our day-to-day operations were pushing us right up against our bank credit limits.

The budget debate is a political debate. The strike fund, the general fund and their relationship are all loaded with political meaning. This became evident during the discussion over the past five months. It is no great secret that the Board has been divided over this issue since last fall.

I count five different perspectives in the budget debate. Here is my list. Let me know if I am forgetting something.

- 1) The strike fund is a testament to a union's recognition and willingness to prepare for the big battles; to help other unions for their big battles as well. Recall that our strike fund is part of a network of strike funds that can be borrowed from by any union. We borrowed over \$15 million in 1996. In 2004, we loaned \$4.5 million to the NAPE, the Newfoundland Association of Public Employees, for a bitter dispute with their employer. I personally like that we can do that and that we do that.
- 2) Maybe we were a bit over-zealous in building-up the strike fund. Of course the strike fund is important. However, we are hurting the financial health of the union; underfunding day-to-day operations and carrying too much credit – currently (time of Convention) our line-of-credit is at \$6.8 million with a limit of \$7 million. We must start repaying the line-of-credit. Maybe we should revisit the rules and re-adjust the contribution rates to the general fund and the strike fund. It was upon this matter that we struck a compromise.
- 3) Our expenditures are too high. Affiliation costs, board expenses, contingency fund expenses, litigation costs, etc. are unnecessarily high. The Executive Board is way too loose with the money.
- 4) We need a dues increase. That is the only way to address the demands of the two funds and start rebuilding the defense-fund. We currently pay 1.375 per cent in dues. A dues paying member with an annual salary of \$40,000 pays OPSEU dues of \$550 a year, fully tax-deductible. Increasing dues to 1.475 per cent would cost that dues paying member \$40 a year. That increase would bring in an additional \$5 million a year to OPSEU. (My figures are based on annual dues revenue of \$70 million.)
- 5) We should use the strike fund to underwrite all of our debt. It is crazy to pay the bank any interest.

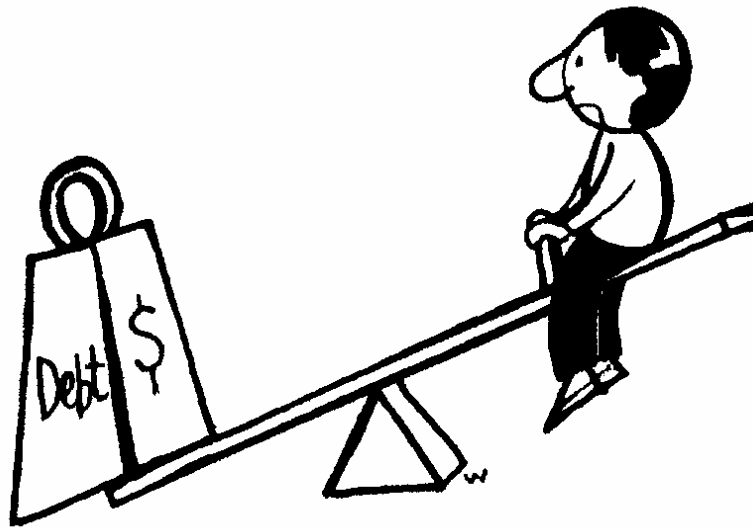
The diciest suggestion from the floor, to run the line of credit from the strike fund, was never seriously entertained. It is very risky. It could result in non-guaranteed IOUs from the general fund to the strike fund. We had a bad experience once with a special fund. The education trust fund was created around 1980 to buy an education centre for

OPSEU activists like the CAW centre in Port Elgin. Even with commitments, that fund was only worth a few hundred dollars after many years because we kept “borrowing” from it and never had the discipline to repay what was borrowed. This suggestion runs the risk of over-borrowing from the strike fund to fund general activities.

The second Executive Board Meeting on Thursday evening negotiated and crafted a re-arranging of the rules. Here is a description of the three sets of formulas to explain the three options and the outcome.

*Pre-Convention Status Quo* – 10 per cent of dues revenue goes to the strike fund until the strike fund hits \$50 million (2001 dollars) then reduce contributions to 2 per cent. If the strike fund falls below \$30 million, there is a 0.2 per cent dues surcharge. This was triggered in 1996 (with a referendum) and 2002 after the OPS strikes.

*First Proposal for Readjustment* - This proposal would reduce current payments to the strike fund to 5 per cent and everything else remains the same. This is the so-called ‘5 and 2’ solution. This proposal was rejected by the Executive Board twice – once at the March Board meeting and once at the second Board Meeting at Convention (vote of 9-8).



*Second Proposal for Readjustment* – This compromise proposal was adopted by the Board (vote of 12-8) and by Convention overwhelmingly. This proposal sets the strike fund contribution to a constant 5 per cent. Also, the threshold for the 0.2 per cent dues surcharge is increased to \$50 million. Under this new arrangement, it takes longer to get to \$50 million, but once there, the fund will grow faster than under the existing formula and mechanisms are in place to return it to that level quickly after a strike or lockout.

This budget debate is over. We struck a compromise and the union can move on and we will move on. The Executive Board is committed to develop a multi-year plan to address finances at the June Board meeting.

## More On Convention

### Affiliation to the NDP

As expected, we had a long and lively debate on NDP affiliation. The Political Action Committee presented their report to Convention, recommending affiliation. The debate was about tactics and principles. Over 20 delegates spoke to the issue from both sides. The vote was very close; 349 in favour, 378 against. Much thanks to the PAC for all of their hard work and focus. The debate was respectful, interesting and engaging. It was a step-forward for OPSEU.

### For A Green OPSEU

**David Suzuki**, this year's Stanley Knowles Humanitarian Award recipient, addressed Convention on Friday afternoon. He was brilliant. He warned delegates about the environmental challenges facing our planet and all species. He pointed out that we have been aware of environmental disaster for 40 years but have chosen to largely ignore the signs. "We have been using the rightful legacy of future generations and we think that is progress." He applauded our 'OPSEU Goes Green' program which was passed overwhelmingly.

### Equity Representation on The Executive Board

On Saturday, we debated a constitution amendment from the equity-seeking committees and caucuses for equity representation on the Board. It was turned down by delegates after a lively debate. I support the idea.



### Awards and Recognitions

Region 5 did very well at the Awards Banquet.

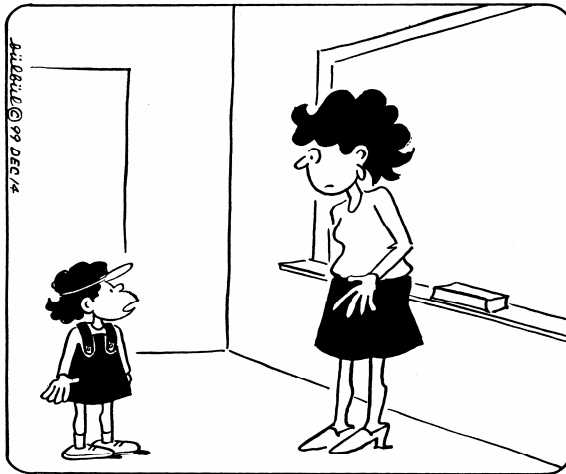
**Local 506** (Ministry of Transportation) received the Human Rights Award for a Local for consistent and diligent work on equity and harassment issues. Local President **Joe Daniel** accepted the award.

**Local 560 and Local 561** (Seneca College) jointly received the Health and Safety Award for a Local. The award was recognition for their work in forcing the employer to acquire defibrillators. It was a bitter and sweet victory for the two locals. **Josef Stavroff**, a long-time activist with Local 560, died early last year while teaching. A defibrillator might have saved his life. **Brother Stavroff** would have appreciated this. We miss him. This is a fitting tribute.

**Edna Bowes**, Region 5 retiree, received an Honorary Lifetime Membership. I served with Sister Bowes on the Executive Board 1991-93. Her speech reminded me of her humor and her dedication to OPSEU.

**Stephanie Blake**, retiree from Local 596 (Ryerson University) received an Honorary Lifetime Membership. Stephanie did it all. She helped organize Local 596 in the 1970's and was local president for years. She served on the PWC and the Executive Board.

**Terry Downey**, former Region 5 EBM and current Executive Vice President of the Ontario Federation of Labour was recognized as a departing Board Member.



"Are you preparing me to resist the low wage, indentured slavery of the global economic future?"

**Ethel Birkett-LaValley**, former Region 3 EBM, received an Honorary Lifetime Membership. **Peggy MacDonald**, Local 433 won the individual Human Rights Award. **Brian Wilson**, Local 317 won the individual Health & Safety Award.

The Coalition of African Canadian Community Organizations received the **Rainford Jackson Award**.

At the PWC breakfast, **Mary Piro**, retiree from Local 505, received the Regional Recognition Award for Region 5. I have known Mary for years. She is a dedicated trade unionist, a strong OPSEU activist and a great friend.

The Pension Forum paid a tribute to **Heather Gavin**. Heather was a long time senior staffer at OPSEU and a well recognized authority in pensions. She is now the Chief Administrative Officer at the OPSEU Pension Trust.

The EBMs hosted the Region 5 Awards ceremony on Thursday evening.

**Dallas Takeuchi** of Local 553 received the 2006 **Dave Millard** Award for Union Recognition. **Dallas** has consistently responded to the union's call; such as in OPS mobilizing and the OPT Grandparenting campaign. **Dave Millard** was a long-time Region 5 activist who suddenly died in 1992. He worked on all regional committees and made a strong contribution. I'm glad that he is still being recognized.

**Local 503** (OPS, Queens Park) received the 2006 Region 5 Labour Day Award.

**Local 558** (Centennial College – Academic) received the 2006 Region 5 Human Rights Award. It was in recognition of the dignity and respect displayed after the death of **John Stammers**.

**The Region 5 Labour Day Organizing Committee** was recognized with a regional award for their consistent hard work.

This was my 21<sup>st</sup> Convention. My first Convention was in 1985. I still find them interesting and engaging.



## Executive Board Meeting – April 19

### Pilot Project for the Contract Enforcement Unit

We were presented with a proposal that could improve the way we represent members. The aim is to skill our Grievance Officers to hearing readiness. We are also employing four MDT's to work in arbitrations and med/arbs. The program also has a component to skill local activists. The aim of the program is to decrease reliance on expensive outside lawyers and to keep the grievance/arbitration knowledge internal to OPSEU. This is a one-year pilot. I will write more on this in future issues.

### 5757 Coopers Avenue, Mississauga

We acquired this building from the merger with the Liquor Board Employees. **Nancy Pridham** reported on behalf of the Building Committee. The Board voted to maintain ownership, accepting the recommendation of the committee.

### National Women's Conference

The Canadian Labour Congress is holding their 13<sup>th</sup> Women's Conference in June. The conference is called 'Fighting The Blues'. The Board voted \$7,500 to send the seven members of the Provincial Women's Committee.

### Pension Liaison Committee

The Board voted to re-appoint **Shirley McVittie** to a three year term as a trustee on the pension plan for Canadian Blood Services.

## OFL Anti-P3 Rally

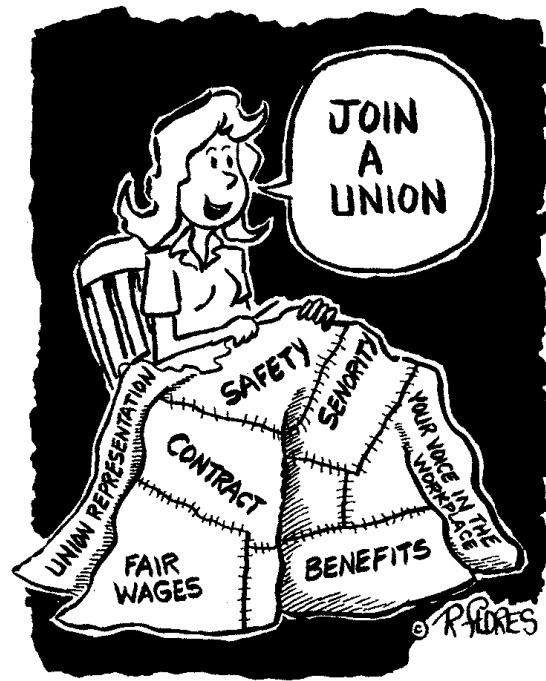
The Board voted \$9,000 to support an anti-P3 rally at Queen's Park on June 3<sup>rd</sup>. There will be a follow-up lobby at the Legislature on Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup>.

## Executive Board Meeting – April 20

This Board meeting occurred on the Thursday evening of the Convention. It was the result of a Convention resolution instructing the board to meet and 'fix the budget',

We had three options. Reduce expenditures. Propose a dues increase. Suggest allocating more of the dues revenue into the general fund.

After a long debate, the board approved a motion reallocating the division of the dues revenue. This is explained in more detail on pages 2 through 4.



## Around OPSEU and Region 5

### Three OPSEU Strikes in the GTA

Aside from the strike at OTPP (see page 1) there are 2 other strikes in the GTA.

Workers at Community Living, Mississauga went on strike on April 10. [www.opseu.org/bps/development/strike.htm](http://www.opseu.org/bps/development/strike.htm)

Workers at Kennedy House in Ajax, a young offender facility went on strike on March 28.

<http://www.opseu.org/news/Press2006/mar282006.htm>

### Activist Elected to Fair Vote Ontario.

**Gary Shaul** of Local 520 was elected to the executive of the 'Fair Vote Ontario' campaign. Email [garyshaul@yahoo.com](mailto:garyshaul@yahoo.com).

### John Stammers Family Fund

Local 558 established the John Stammers Family Fund. Donations can be made to:

John Stammers Family Fund  
c/o OPSEU Local 558  
P. O. Box 631, Station A  
Scarborough, Ontario, M1K 5E9

### Day of Mourning for Workers Who Died on the Job

This event is held every year. This year, Labour Council is holding the event at the sight of the incident that cost **John Stammers** his life. It will be at 12 noon, on April 28<sup>th</sup> at Centennial College, 941 Progress Avenue, east of Markham Road.

## Labour Rallies for Political Action

On May 6<sup>th</sup> Labour Council is holding political workshops and a political rally to prepare for the November municipal elections. The workshops start at 9:00. The rally starts at 1:00 PM. They will be held at the OFL Building at 15 Gervais Dr. Contact Labour Council at 416-441-3663 ext 225. Region 5 pays the \$25 fee.

### Region 5 Women's Caucus Picnic

The Region 5 Women's Caucus is organizing this year's picnic. It is scheduled for Saturday, July 15<sup>th</sup> at Wilket Creek Park. For more information contact **Gloria David**.

### Young Workers Committee (YWC)

The Region 5 YWC continues its series of seminars/discussions Monday, May 1 and Monday, June 5 at 5:45 PM at 31 Wellesley. Contact **Carl Mohan**.

### Region 5 Retirees Group

On April 25<sup>th</sup>, **Tony Carneiro** was re-elected chair of the Region 5 Retirees.

### Mayworks (April 28 – May 7)

For the full details of the events, visit [www.mayworks.ca](http://www.mayworks.ca).

### 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Workers of Colour/Aboriginal Workers Conference

The Labour Council is organizing this conference for Saturday, June 17, at Earl Haig Secondary School, North York.

Working on Peter Tabuns's NDP By-election Victory

By Frank Inglis, President, Local 565

I worked as an Election Day (E-Day) Organizer on Peter Tabuns' recent NDP by-election victory. "Intense" is probably the first word to describe the experience. "Exciting" is another word. Campaigns certainly are exciting. But they also involve a lot of dull, repetitive work – even for those of us with fancy-pants titles like E-Day Organizer. On the last campaign I coloured in maps, photocopied art, stuffed kits, and transcribed information by hand over and over again.

Another descriptive phrase is "all-consuming". It is ironic that the party that stands for shorter hours and progressive employment practices can't always offer them on the campaign trail. Typical campaign office hours are 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM weekdays with slightly shorter hours on weekends. Campaign staff are often expected to be there for most of that time. Most deadlines in life have some flexibility, but E-Day isn't one of them. If you want to win, you just can't put things off so you stay all night if necessary. I put in about 145 hours in the final eleven days. My longest day was 18 ½ hours and my latest departure was 3:15 AM. Now you know what "hell bent for election" means!

But the potentially long hours aren't the only reason why I'd describe campaign work as "intense" or "all-consuming". More important, particularly for an E-Day Organizer, is the increasing level of demand on your attention, or the focus required. This leads me back to what E-day organizers actually do.

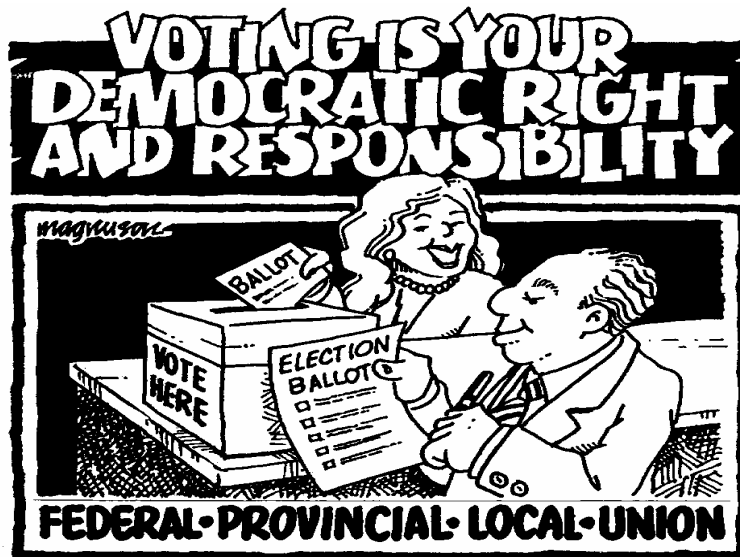
The NDP campaign strategy is to contact as many potential voters as possible and identify your candidate's supporters. Then make sure that they vote. You must know the election laws, liaise frequently with Elections Canada or Ontario, familiarize yourself with the normal and alternative voting procedures (proxies, advance polls, mail-in ballots, how to get on the voters list or register at the polls, etc.) and get to know the riding and its unique flavour (demographics, locations and characteristics of all the polling stations, community issues etc.). You also have to get to know the opposition and their sometimes nasty tactics.

The E-day team needs to recruit, schedule, assign, confirm and train a very large group of volunteers (and throw a good party for them). Most volunteers are inside and outside scrutineers, those who watch the polling stations and record who has voted, and those who contact identified supporters and urge them to vote. You need drivers, lawyers, and coordinators of the volunteers', either centrally or out of decentralized zone houses.

The campaign had to identify at least 14,000 supporters at over 200 polls. That comes to an average of 70 voters per poll to track and visit, sometimes several times. A team of 600 volunteers isn't really enough. Trying to keep track of 600 relative strangers' names, preferences, personal needs, assignments and faces is what I find most demanding – that and troubleshooting the many things that go wrong.

Two other words that describe my campaign experiences are “fun” and “fulfilling”. Campaigns are a chance to meet and work with like-minded people, many from the house of labour, on projects of fundamental importance to our lives and society. There is a camaraderie, similar to the best that unionism has to offer.

Campaigns have a righteousness to them. They are a chance to represent OPSEU to the wider community. On the Tabuns '06 campaign I had the great pleasure of working with two other great OPSEU activists, **Chris Moore** and **Tina Faibish**. Chris and Tina are stalwart canvassers and I think we all made the Union proud! In addition to working with some great brothers and sisters, I have made a number of life-long friends and contacts on campaigns, and come election time there is nowhere I would rather be!



The Workers Action Centre

By Mary Gellatly, Local 525

**Z**ainab was trained by Rogers Cable to sell high-speed Internet door-to-door. The sub-contractor that hired Zainab called her 'self-employed'. She was owed about \$1,500 after four weeks of work. She didn't get paid. Zainab and her co-workers went to the sub-contractor for their wages only to be told that it had no responsibility because Rogers wouldn't pay. They then went to Rogers, demanding their wages for selling Rogers products. Rogers claimed that it had no responsibility for the workers either.

Marisa sewed clothes for eight months in a small garment shop. She was owed over \$6,000 in wages. She went to the Ministry of Labour but it did nothing to force the boss to pay up. The company kept breaking the law. Workers were hired and not paid. There

are six workers owed \$35,000 in wages in 2004. The government has failed to collect workers wages. The company is still open and doing business.

These are the experiences of two members of the Workers Action Centre. The Centre is a worker-based organization committed to improving the lives and working conditions for people in non-unionized, low wage and precarious work. Most members are recent immigrants, workers of colour, women and workers in precarious jobs. People work in small workplaces or work as temps, are on contract, independent contractors or unemployed. Most do not belong to a union. Members juggle 2 or 3 jobs, while next month there is no work or income.

Employment Standards, the only protection for non-union workers, do not reflect changes in the labour market. Minimum wage is 21% below the mid 1970's level, leaving 1 in 4 Ontario employees working for wages below the poverty line. That jumps to 1 in 3 if you are a recent immigrant or women of colour. Labour laws don't address the new ways companies are organizing work, so many workers find themselves with little or no protection. Labour standards are under-funded and poorly enforced.

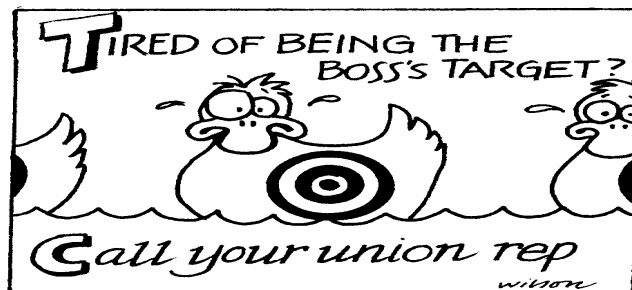
The Workers Action Centre is providing a way for people to fight for fair wages and working conditions. People who are directly affected by poor working conditions provide leadership in our struggle for dignity at work in the following ways.

**Advice and Support:** A phone line helps workers take on workplace problems.

**Challenge Employers:** We directly challenge employers to pay workers and follow labour laws. Where possible we support union organizing and other organizing strategies.

**Education:** We organize workshops and produce info on workers rights in many languages. We talk about protecting ourselves when the law does not work for us.

**Challenge Labour Laws** - Labour laws do not always protect us. The government is not enforcing the weak laws that do exist. One in three employers break the law, with no cost or penalty. The Centre is working together with workers and other unions and organizations to improve labour laws.



If you have any questions about the Workers Action Centre, please contact Mary Gellatly at 416-531-2411 ext 246 or at [gellatlm@lao.on.ca](mailto:gellatlm@lao.on.ca).

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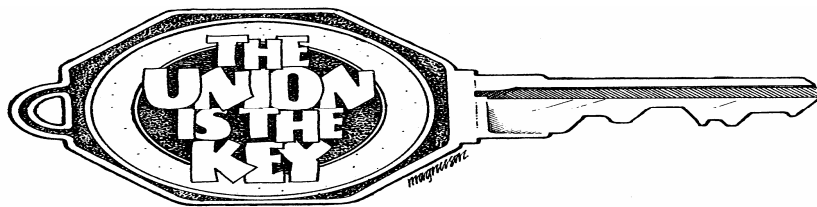
## Calendar of Events

Day of Mourning for Workers Who Died on the Job–April 28, 12:00, 941 Progress Ave  
Mayworks – April 28<sup>th</sup>–May 7<sup>th</sup>  
Region 5 Young Workers Committee - Monday, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 5:45 PM, 31 Wellesley  
Region 5 Women’s Caucus – Tuesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5:30, 31 Wellesley  
Labour Council Membership Meeting – Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 PM, OFL Building  
Labour Council Political Conference and Rally, Saturday, May 6<sup>th</sup>, OFL Building  
Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) Meeting – Wed, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 5:30, 31 Wellesley  
Support Rally for Hotel Workers–Wed, May 31, 5:30, Metropolitan Church, 56 Queen E.  
OFL Anti-P3 Rally at Queens Park – Saturday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Region 5 Weekend Union School – June 3-4  
Region 5 Party at 31 Wellesley – June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 31 Wellesley East  
Region 5 Young Workers Committee - Monday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 5:45 PM, 31 Wellesley  
Workers of Colour/Aboriginal Workers Conference – Saturday, June 17<sup>th</sup>, OFL Building

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## Region 5/OPSEU Contact Information

**Nancy Pridham**, Regional Vice President - [nancypridham@look.ca](mailto:nancypridham@look.ca)  
**Peggy Maybury**, Executive Board Member - [pegmaybury@hotmail.com](mailto:pegmaybury@hotmail.com)  
**David Rapaport**, Executive Board Member – [drapaport@opseu.org](mailto:drapaport@opseu.org)  
**Yvonne Bobb**, Region 5 Member, Provincial Woman’s Committee - [ybobb1@sympatico.ca](mailto:ybobb1@sympatico.ca)  
**Cecil Beckford**, Region 5 Member, Provincial Human Rights Committee  
OPSEU representative on Labour Council Executive - [ceceilb@rom.on.ca](mailto:ceceilb@rom.on.ca)  
**Carl Mohan**, Region 5 Member, Provincial Youth Committee -  
[cmohan@opseu541.org](mailto:cmohan@opseu541.org)  
**Bob Taylor**, President, Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) - 416-482-6680  
**Gloria David**, Contact, Region 5 Women’s Caucus - 416-314-6484.  
**Tony Carneiro**, Chair, Region 5 Retirees Group - 416-787-7033  
**Toronto and York Region Labour Council** – 416-441-3663  
**OPSEU Direct** – 416-443-8888  
**OPSEU web site** – [www.opseu.org](http://www.opseu.org)



*The Rapaport Report* is the newsletter of David Rapaport, Region 5 Executive Board Member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, OPSEU. I am responsible for the contents of the newsletter. If you have complaints, comments, praise or criticism, please get in touch with me. I would like to hear from you. I can be reached at [drapaport@opseu.org](mailto:drapaport@opseu.org) or at 416-651-1659.