

The Rapaport Report

Volume 2, Number 4

December 2007

It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it.

Aung San Suu Kyi (Opposition Leader in Mynamar/Burma)

Happy Holidays

2007 was an eventful year for us. The big news, of course, is the change of leadership at the top. **Leah Casselman** is no longer president after serving for 12 years. **Smokey Thomas** is the new president, after serving as first vice president/treasurer for six years. **Patty Rout** is the new first vice president/treasurer.

The provincial Liberals were re-elected to a second majority government for the first time in over fifty years. The Tories are still in the political wilderness. The NDP is hanging in as the third party. Electoral reform went down in a very convincing fashion. We spread our political wings in OPSEU by supporting the reform, almost unanimously.

The folks from the Developmental Services Sector, largely from southwest Ontario, led strikes to correct the historic under-funding and under-salaries in that sector. They achieved huge victories and salary increases.

The part-time organizing campaign in the colleges is rolling along. In a landmark decision last June, the federal Supreme Court ruled that the right to collective bargaining is protected by the charter as a right of association. It is just a matter of time before the part-time employees at the 24 colleges

receive bargaining rights. We're starting to organize them.

2008 promises to be very heavy on the collective bargaining front. It is estimated that 80% of OPSEU members will be negotiating new contracts in the next two years. It has been referred to as the 'Perfect Storm'.

We will continue our work in everything that we do; fight privatization, promote health and safety, political action, pensions, collective bargaining, WSIB, organize new members, defend the environment, grievance/arbitration, labour council, strike support, union education, struggle for human rights, etc.

I wish each and every one of you a happy holiday season and a prosperous and healthy new year.

There are two guest writers in this issue. **Krista Maracle** is the Region 5 representative to the Provincial Young Workers Committee. She writes about the boycott against Coca Cola. Her article is on page 5. **Deb Gordon** is the chair of the Community Services Divisional Council. She writes about the health and safety campaign against violence in social agencies. Her article is on page 7.

The Rapaport Report is the newsletter of **David Rapaport**, Region 5 Executive Board Member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, OPSEU. Contact information is on the back page.



The Executive Board Meeting

The Executive Board met on December 5 & 6. Here is my report.

Peggy Maybury

Former Region 5 EBM, **Peggy Maybury** was introduced to the Board as the new executive assistant to first vice president/treasurer **Patty Rout**. We wish **Peggy** the best of luck in her new challenge.

Workplace Violence Campaign

Deb Gordon, chair of the Community Services Divisional Council, made a presentation about violence in social services work places and the need for a health and safety campaign. The proposed campaign is extensive and is expected to last about a year. It covers workplaces in a number of BPS sectors; developmental services, child treatment centres, children's aid societies, family service agencies and community agencies. The program will cover 11,652 members in 160 work locations. The Board endorsed the program with a budget of \$165,000. Please see **Deb Gordon's** article on page 7.

Convention 2011

We have outgrown the convention facilities at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto. The Board gave the go ahead to hold the 2011 Convention at the Metro Convention Centre. Toronto is still a popular convention city and we must book that far ahead. We are considering holding Convention outside Toronto in 2012.

MMP – The Referendum

In the October election, there was also a referendum to reform the electoral system. Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) is an electoral system to bring some balance and proportionality. OPSEU was a major supporter of this effort. It was substantially defeated by almost two to one. Former Region 5 Vice President **Gary Shaul** worked on the campaign. He spoke to the Board about the campaign. **Gary** thanked OPSEU for the support. There were many factors working against the reform. The process was too late. The public education campaign was too thin. Almost all journalists and newspapers opposed the reform. In short, the case was not effectively made to the voting public. When asked about electoral reform prospects for the future, **Gary** remarked that younger voters tended to support MMP by fairly wide margins.

Convention Resolutions

Every year, resolutions that have not been addressed at Convention are sent to the Executive Board with 'For' and 'Against' recommendations from the Resolutions Committee. This was, of course, an election year. Only eight resolutions were passed by Convention. Two were defeated. The rest were sent to the Board. The Board has the constitutional right to make policy.

There were some interesting discussions as the resolutions were debated. Some changes were made to the recommendations. Here are a few examples. The interpretations of the discussion are my interpretations. They do not speak for the Board. Let me know your opinion.



BPS Pension Plan. This was submitted by all three equity committees along with two locals and the Niagara Area Council. The resolve was '.....bargain decent pension plans..'. We dropped the word decent. Not that we are against decent pension plans. But we felt that that word was gratuitous and unnecessary. Incidentally, We are working on that project through the Pension Liaison Committee.

Overnight Hotel Stay at Divisional and Sector meetings. This is an old Region 5 beef. It is felt by some activists in Region 5 that the 60 kilometer rule, denying many Toronto folks a hotel, puts Region 5 delegates

at an electoral disadvantage at sectoral and divisional meetings. Although the proposed change came to the Board with a 'For' recommendation, the Board reversed it to 'Against'. What can I say?

Salary Disclosure at NUPGE – OPSEU is affiliated with the National Union of Public and General Employees. The Board received an 'Against' recommendation for salary disclosure by its officers and representatives. The Board reversed to a 'For'.

Picket Line Discipline – The resolve is to enable local strike committees to 'remove members from picket lines and from all other duties for the purposes of qualifying for strike pay'. This caused heated debate. The recommendation from the committee was 'Against'. This is a replay of the old OPSEU debate of allowing locals to discipline their own leadership and sanction members. There is a belief that this practice can be used for political purposes.

The resolution was amended to apply only to members who are deemed to be involved in strikebreaking activity. This coincides with the right of locals to strip strikebreakers of their membership after a strike. This is yet another example of the conflict between individual rights and collective rights. On this issue, the Board went with the amended resolve.

Signing a 'non-Management' Oath – The resolve is to require union leaders, including bargaining team members, to sign an oath that they will not take a position with human resource or senior management for a period of twelve months after leaving their union position. This also caused heated debate. It was yet another example of the conflict between individual rights and collective rights. The recommendation was 'Against'.

Union Finances

Patty Rout reported on our finances. The overall picture is good. There is a surplus of \$1,469,906 in the General Fund. For all intents and purposes, the line of credit is paid off, way ahead of schedule.

Much of the Board meeting was spent debating the budget. The debate is on-going. I will report on the budget process when it is complete and the Board has a budget to present to Convention in April.

OPSEU Direct

Filomena Lofranco, supervisor of OPSEU Direct, made a presentation to the Board. OPSEU Direct is a call centre that facilitates the flow of information throughout OPSEU and to activists. They have been logging about 10,000 phone calls a month. Members and activists, like you and I, call in for information. Backing up the seven employees at OPSEU Direct is an integrated collection of databases on bargaining, education, collective agreements, grievances and so on. This is a positive move for OPSEU. It makes use of database and telecommunication technologies to share information.

Pension Plan Appointments

Patty Rout, first vice president/treasurer, was appointed to a two-year term as a HOOPP (Hospitals of Ontario Pension Plan) trustee. HOOPP is jointly trusteeed. We have about 30,000 members in HOOPP. SEIU, ONA and CUPE are also sponsors of the plan. Each union appoints two trustees. Our other trustee is **James Sanders** from Region 1. The Ontario Hospital Association, the employer, appoints eight trustees.

Laurie Brown from Region 1 was appointed to the OPSEU Staff Pension Plan.

I was re-appointed as a trustee to the OPSEU Pension Trust for a one-year term. That appointment gets reviewed in six months.



Bringing Urban Kids to the Country.

Fern Blais is a Conservation Officer and Local president from Region 4. **Fern** made a presentation to the Board. Last year he approached OPSEU for a contribution to a project that bought 20 under-privileged inter-city kids from Ottawa to a lodge near Timmins for canoeing, camp fires, hikes and the countryside. Altogether, OPSEU donated about \$11,000. He came to show us slides of the trip and to thank us. It's more appropriate that we thank him. This support shows the human side of OPSEU to the world. Region 5 and Local 532 made donations. We received a plaque and that should soon be hanging at the Membership Centre at 31 Wellesley.

Good Taxes

The Central Political Action Committee (CPAC) reported to the Board on a new political initiative to challenge the tax-cut frenzy that is popular in conservative political circles but is, in fact, destroying the public and social infrastructure. There is strong evidence that a proper and progressive tax level builds a healthier society and a vibrant economy.

Columbian Killer Cola

*Krista Maracle
Region 5 Provincial Young Workers
Committee*

As everyone should be aware a pet project of the Provincial Young Workers Committee has been to get out the message about the Coca-Cola Company and their misdeeds in their Columbian bottling plants. In Columbia at least eight (8) union officials in the bottling plants have been murdered by paramilitary thugs. Many of the families of these killed workers are in hiding with relatives to escape the persecution they face at the hands of Bottling Company's management. The union within the plants has been crushed by force. Paramilitary thugs threaten to kill anyone who wishes to be in a union and forced the plant workers who were in the union to resign or face being killed.

Should we boycott Coca-Cola completely? Well here's the problem. Many of the bottling plants here in Canada and in the United States are unionized. By boycotting Coke we are potentially putting fellow union members out of a job. Some argue that the boycott should not be called because of this reason. But what can be done? The only way organizers can think of to bring the Bottling Companies to atone for their misdeeds and to stop the murders, kidnapping and tortures in Columbia is to boycott all Coke products.



At first I did not agree that this was the way to go. But now it seems to be the best course of action. The unionized members at Coca-Cola should join in the fight and make their employer responsible for the actions done to fellow workers in other plants. The only way the Bottling Company will stop this injustice is by the joining together of everyone to boycott the purchase of Coca-Cola products including: Coke, Sprite, Dasani, Nestea, Minute Maid, Barqs's, Fanta, Fresca, and Powerade until justice has been found for the families and workers in Columbia.

Join in the fight against the killings in Columbia. Refuse to drink Coca-Cola beverages at all your local functions. Make the Coca-Cola Bottling Companies pay for their injustice and blatant disrespect to basic human right, including the right to be in a union. For more information on how you can get involved contact a member of the OPSEU PYWC and check out the website: www.killercoke.org.

This and That

UMOVE Benefit

United Mothers Opposing Violence Everywhere (UMOVE) is a non-profit organization made up of a group of mothers who have each lost a child to a senseless act of violence, along with supporting members from the community.

They are holding a Benefit on Sunday, December 23 from 1:00 to 5:00 PM at the Steelworkers Hall at 25 Cecil Street. Admission for adults is \$10. 15 and under, admission is free. For further information call 416-819-2007.

December 6 Commemoration

The Region 5 Women's Caucus held its annual December 6 event last week, commemorating the murder of the 14 women at Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal in 1989. NDP MPP **Cheri DiNovo** spoke at the event.

Region 5 Education

Our Region 5 Education weekend on December 1/2 was kicked off with a rousing presentation from **Roger Couvrette**, a lead hand in the campaign to organize part-time workers in the colleges. In the evening, we held the annual thank-you/holiday party. The music was provided by Local 561 President and chair of CAAT-S bargaining team **Rod Bemister**.

Our next weekend education weekend is scheduled for the weekend of March 1 & 2.

Organizing Information Knowledge Workers

The fastest growing industry in southern Ontario is the so-called knowledge industry, in information technology and information management. We have organized a working group to study the working conditions and issues of IT workers in OPSEU and figure out how to make OPSEU organizing inroads into this area. OPSEU represents thousands of IT and knowledge workers.

There will be half-day workshop on issues dealing with information knowledge workers, collective bargaining issues, unions and organizing on Saturday, February 6th, from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM at 31 Wellesley Street East. If you or anybody in your local is interested, please get in touch with me.

This is a new approach to education. We are going to try to put on topical workshops for

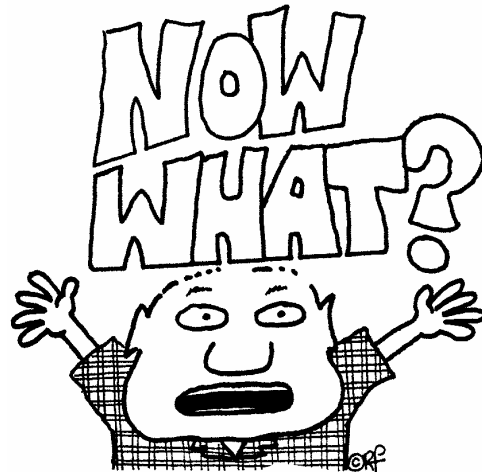
half-day sessions. It is probably more accessible. Let us know your ideas.

There are resources available for local education as well. Please contact a Region 5 EBM or your staff rep.

Green Jobs and the Environment

As leaders of countries gather in Bali to create a post-Kyoto framework, the United Nations Environment Programme issued a press release on how an environmental sustainability program can and does produce good jobs.

Visit http://www.global-unions.org/pdf/ohsewpNewsUNEP4_P_13Bd_EN.pdf.



Study on Low Paid Work

Toby Sanger, senior economist with the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) has produced an informative study based on a Statistics Canada 2006 data on low-wage work in Canada and in each province. About one in six of all employees in the country, or almost 2,200,000 employees were low-paid, that is earning less than \$10 / hour. In Ontario alone, almost 830,000 employees earned less than \$10 / hour. The study is available at

http://www.cupe.ca/economics/Low_paid_work_still

CSDC begins Workplace Violence Health and Safety Campaign in 2008

By Deb Gordon
Chair, CSDC

The BPS Community Services Divisional Council (CSDC) met with OPSEU's Executive Board on December 5th to request support for an ambitious year long campaign to address issues of workplace violence experienced by our membership. The motion to support this project was passed unanimously by the Board.

One of the mandates in the By-laws of the CSDC is to "improve the working conditions of Union members in the Community Services divisions". We know that years of funding freezes and cuts to community based services coupled with societal problems such as poverty (including child poverty), less overall job security and lack of affordable housing or childcare, has created conditions in our work environments that places our workers at increased risk of experiencing harm within the workplace; psychological and physical. It is as well noted that workers in community based services are predominantly women.



Child care worker

This campaign endeavours to support members in influencing change at both the local and provincial level and promote a safe work environment for all.

The Campaign will unfold in two phases: Phase 1: "Outreach and Education" will focus on gathering information on the current status of health and safety committees/ reps in our bargaining units. It will also examine the policies and procedures in our individual workplaces to assess if they adequately support a safe work environment and if not, what gaps exist. Education and training of members will occur in this phase. Phase 2: "Violence Awareness Campaign" will include a research study to ascertain actual incidents of violence in the workplace. The goal will be to address with government what changes to legislation is required to create safe work environments for our members. Media events will support the work of this phase.

Sectors involved with this project will include: Sectors 2, 4, 5a, 5b, 7 and 15, representing 11, 652 OPSEU members as well as Employers and the Ministry of Labour. These members work in day treatment programs, schools, group homes, youth custody settings, early years centers, child care centers, women's shelters, child protection agencies, supervised access centers, community outreach programs, children's mental health centers, children's rehab centres and developmental services. We will be coordinating with other Sectors within OPSEU and other Unions who share a concern and interest in addressing the challenges of workplace violence. Government needs to hear our collective voice!

Expect to see information on the OPSEU website early in 2008. A survey is in the final stages of development and will be distributed to the 160 bargaining units that will be asked to participate. We look forward to your active participation in this Campaign!

Members of the CSDC Council also include:

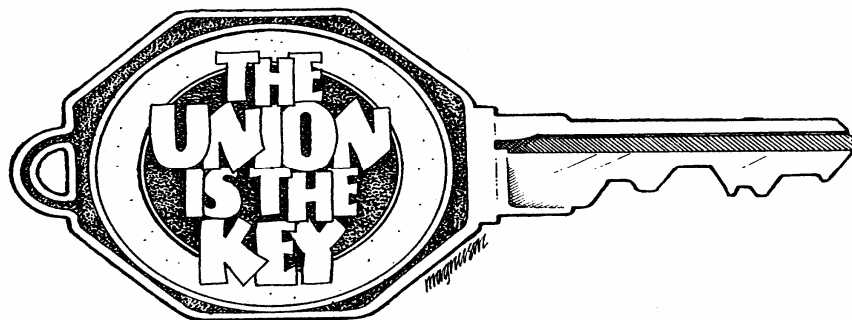
Jonathan Guider (Sector 7)	Vice Chair
Rick Pybus (Sector 4)	Secretary
Sue Walker (Sector 2)	Member
Violet Stringer (Sector 2)	Member

Calendar of Events

UMOVE Benefit – Sunday, December 23, 1:00 PM, Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil Street
Labour Council Membership Meeting–Thur, January 3, 7:30, OFL Building, 15 Gervais Dr.
Region 5 Women’s Caucus – Tue, January 8, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley
Executive Board Meeting – January 23-24
Greater Toronto Area Council – Wed, January 30, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley
Information Knowledge Workers workshop, Sat, February 9, 10:00 AM, 31 Wellesley East
Region 5 Weekend Education – March 1-2
Convention – April 17-19, Sheraton Centre

Region 5/OPSEU Contact Information

David Rapaport, Region 5 Vice President – drapaport@opseu.org
Nancy Pridham, Executive Board Member - nancypridham@sympatico.ca
Ted Montgomery, Executive Board Member - ted@opseu560.org
Gloria David, Region 5 Member, Provincial Women’s Committee - 416-314-6484
Jennifer Ahamed, Region 5 Member, Provincial Human Rights Committee -
jenniferahamed@rogers.com
Krista Maracle, Region 5 Member, Provincial Young Workers Committee -
kmaracle@rogers.com
Bob Taylor, President, Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) - 416-482-6680
Cecil Beckford, OPSEU representative on Labour Council Executive - ceceilb@rom.on.ca
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



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 or at 416-651-1659.