

# The Rapaport Report

Volume 1, Number 14

December 2006

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*“We must not confuse dissent with disloyalty.”*

Edward R. Murrow

## Leah Casselman

At the December Executive Board meeting President **Leah Casselman** announced that this is her final term as OPSEU President. See Page 2.

## A Week in the Life of an EBM

How often do you ever find yourself in a space where you think about the so-called ‘big picture’? Why you do what you do?

In one week, this happened to me four times.

## CAAT Part-Time Campaign

On Friday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, I participated in a lobby for the CAAT part-time campaign. We visited two Ontario cabinet Ministers, Chair of Management Board **Gerry Phillips** and **Mary Anne Chambers**, Minister of Children and Youth Services. I went with **Martha Josephian**, Local 512, who works on the CAAT part-time campaign and with **Shirley Wood** who works as a part-time employee at Centennial College.

We told the two Ministers that legally disallowing collective bargaining rights for part-time workers at the colleges is too great a compromise of our democratic principles. It cannot be justified by cost

savings. We urged them to allow the 16,000 part-time workers to decide for themselves if they want a union. We cited the International Labour Organization ruling that there is no excuse for denying CAAT part-time workers this right.

## International Solidarity

On Monday, December 4<sup>th</sup>, I spent about three hours with a delegation of 22 Chinese civil servants from Anhui Province. They are in Canada for two months to study our institutions.

I told them about collective bargaining and public sector unions. They heard about OPSEU’s history, our structure and our beliefs; how OPSEU is fundamentally about defending and advancing the conditions of working people.

OPSEU, like all Canadian unions, is independent from the government and from employers. Our politics and our practices are democratic. We ratify collective agreements. We hold strike votes. We elect our leadership every two years. I explained social unionism and how we believe that social stability, material sustenance and access to health,

*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.

education and culture are entitlements for all working people.

They explained that their unions are not independent, how their unions are basically organs of the government and the Communist Party. They were most curious about how OPSEU is organized internally. I described our six internal Divisions.

## The Pension Promise

On Wednesday, December 6<sup>th</sup>, I participated in a panel discussion on pension governance and investments. The panel was organized by SHARE, Shareholders Association for Research and Education. SHARE was created by the Canadian labour movement to promote pension self-governance and responsible investment practices.

We discussed how we moved our union voices into our pension plans and how we have become a wider voice in the economy as a result.

## Social Justice

On Thursday, December 7<sup>th</sup>, on CHCH-TV, I debated **Gerry Nichols**, media vice president of the National Citizens Coalition. The NCC is a very right-wing organization that supports business groups and opposes unions. In the 1980s, they supported a legal challenge against OPSEU for using our resources to engage in community campaigns. The Supreme Court ruled in our favour. **Stephen Harper** was President of the NCC from 1998 until his return to Parliament in 2002.

We debated the federal anti-scab legislation, a private member's bill that just passed second reading in Ottawa by a vote of 161-101. The business lobby and their right-wing allies are sounding the

alarm bells. In the debate, I pointed out that governments must sometimes protect employers from themselves. I argued that anti-scab legislation promotes good labour relations.

## In Conclusion

These kinds of events remind me of the importance of OPSEU. They help me get through the petty squabbles that sometimes cause us to focus on trivial matters and distract us from the big questions.



## Casselman to Retire as OPSEU President

**Sister Casselman** first became President of OPSEU in April, 1995. **Bob Rae** was Premier of Ontario. The election that brought **Mike Harris** to power was still five weeks away. **Leah** was OPSEU President during four Ontario Premiers; **Bob Rae, Mike Harris, Ernie Eves** and **Dalton McGuinty**.

**Leah** was President through the 1996 OPS strike, the 1995-98 Days of Action, the 2002 OPS strike, the strike by the Hospital Professional Division in 2003 and the three week CAAT-Academic strike in 2006. NDP MPP **Peter Kormos** frequently pointed out that **Leah** was the

voice and the face of the opposition to **Mike Harris** and his so-called Common Sense Revolution.

During **Leah**'s tenure OPSEU added its name to the protest over the murder of **Dudley George** at Ipperwash Park in 1995. OPSEU led the charge against the dismantling of public services, particularly in one its worst examples, the water contamination at Walkerton in 2000.

OPSEU has gone through major changes in those 12 years; including a realignment between the OPS the BPS, particularly the health sector. The OPS shrunk thanks to **Mike Harris**. The BPS saw growth through organizing and mergers.

**Leah**, thank you for your service to OPSEU and the membership.

*The Rapaport Report* wishes you the very best in your future endeavors.

## The Diverse World of OPSEU

This issue of *The Rapaport Report* has four guest writers. **Eric Morin** is the co-chair of the OPS Central Enforcement and Renewal Committee. He writes about the challenges in the OPS. **Mike Bisailon** is the President of Local 616, the North Bay Jail. He writes about a problem faced by a young worker and union activist in Corrections. **Noeline Ah-Hone** is a health and safety activist from Local 502. **Rick Hamilton** of Local 604 is now a Mayor.

**Let me take this opportunity to wish all of you the very best of the holiday season and a happy and healthy new year for you and your family.**

## Executive Board Meeting

The Executive Board met on December 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>.

### Trusteeship of Local 278

Local 278 represents employees at Casino Niagara and Fallsview Casino in Niagara Falls. The current leaders of the Local told the Board that the former leaders were hostile to OPSEU and created credibility problems among the membership. There was even talk of decertification and 'shopping for a different union'. The current leaders asked us to put them under trusteeship for a maximum of six months. The OPSEU Constitution addresses this type of situation in Article 16.9. **Mario Posteraro**, President of Local 256, was appointed Trustee. He now has the power to do what he thinks is necessary to rebuild the steward body and restore confidence in OPSEU.



### Union Participation of Part-Time Employees

This matter was left over from Convention, 2006. OPSEU represents thousands of part-time employees. Frequently they do not have full rights under the collective agreement, including time-off for union business. The Board approved the following two steps to

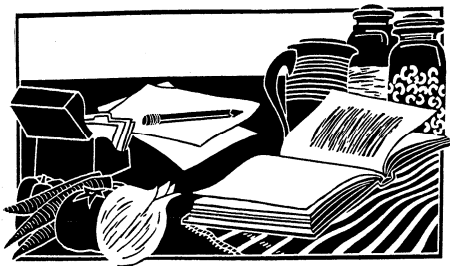
facilitate their participation in union business.

- 1) The union will request that the employer cover the wages of part-time employees for days off due to doing union business.
- 2) Where employers refuse, OPSEU will reimburse for those days off.

## Contract Enforcement Project Update

I discussed this project in the November issue of *The Rapaport Report*. The aim of the project is to develop Local capacity in grievance handling. A second aim is to reduce head-office arbitration costs by in-sourcing arbitration hearings and reducing our use of lawyers. The Board asked staff to report at the December Board meeting. The report made the following points.

- 1) Four Locals will be participating in the building Local capacity program; Local 378, Local 526, Local 234 and Local 500.
- 2) By training and using four temporary grievance officers for arbitration hearings we should realize a savings of about \$167,000 in the period April, 2006 – April, 2007.



## OPSEU Joint-Trusteed Benefit Plan

As the sole sponsor of the plan, OPSEU appoints employer trustees and union trustees. We appointed **Silvana**

**Petersen** from the Simcoe County Board of Education as a union trustee. We appointed **Joyce Adams** from Community Living Meaford as an employer trustee. Both appointments are from January 1, 2007 until December 31, 2008.

## The Carol McGregor Scholarship

**Carol McGregor** was an outstanding OPSEU activist from Local 525 as well as an outstanding disability rights activist. **Carol** passed away in November. We approved an annual scholarship in her name for \$3,000.

## Environment Committee Report

The Environment Committee was created as a result of the David Suzuki presentation and ensuing debate at Convention, 2006. OPSEU officially became Green. Members of the Environment Committee are **Patty Rout**, **Gino Franche** and **Laurie Brown**.

After months of work they came up with a comprehensive implementation plan. They are calling for Green Stewards, Green Jobs, a Green OPSEU, Green Workplaces, Greener Pension Funds, a Greener Labour Movement, Greener Communities and Greener Lifestyles. They made two specific requests to the Board. Both were approved.

- That the Committee continue its work until Convention 2007 to monitor the implementation plan and to report.

- That a temporary full-time Campaigns Officer be established to assist in the implementation plan. The term of the assignment is from January 1, 2007 until December 31, 2007.

Congratulations to the committee on a job well done. It does OPSEU proud.

## Presentation from MPAC

The Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) was divested from the Ministry of Finance in 1999. They were organized by OPSEU after divestment. They have their own sectoral leadership and represent about 1,200 members.



They came to the Board to complain about the number of arbitration hearing days that are allotted to them by OPSEU. Apparently they are given only eight days.

Their grievances are basically along three streams; dismissal, job classification and job competition. The MPAC leadership is very careful what gets sent forward. They enforce their contract very closely and very carefully.

We asked head office staff to report back to the January Board meeting.

It seems as if our grievance/arbitration system needs an overhaul. We allot arbitration hearing dates on a per capita basis. If our access to arbitration is limited, we also need to be more careful what actually gets sent forward. We are hearing too many complaints that serious matters, like dismissal, are getting lost in the rush.

## Kennedy House Strike

There are still 30 members on strike at Kennedy House in Region 3. They have been on strike since March. The Board voted them \$30,000 to tide them over in additional strike pay.

## The Delta Chelsea Pledge

There have been numerous reports in *The Rapaport Report* about the 'Hotel Workers Rising' campaign. The union representing hotel workers has been engaged in a North American struggle to raise the living standards and working conditions of hotel workers. The Delta Chelsea has been an inflexible employer. The 555 employees are ready to go on strike. OPSEU is a major customer of the Delta Chelsea. We spent over \$300,000 there last year. UNITE/HERE asked us to sign the boycott pledge. We unanimously agreed to sign the pledge at the December Board meeting.

## Buying 31 Wellesley Street

We are in the final stages of purchasing the Regional Office/Membership Centre at 31 Wellesley Street East for \$2.2 million plus all applicable closing costs. The Board voted to pay cash for the building out of the strike fund. The Strike fund secures a valuable asset and we avoid giving any interest to the bank.



## Maximizing the Power of the Collective

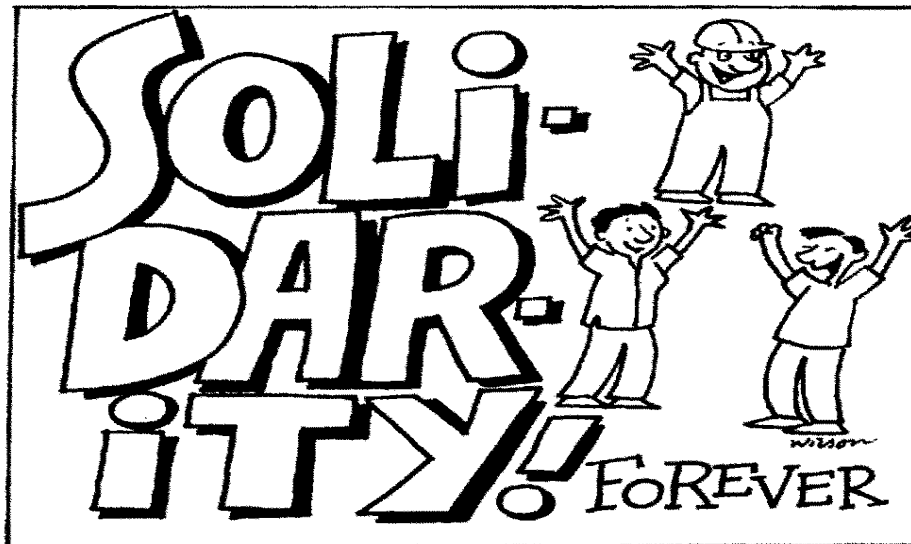
By Eric Morin, Co-Chair of OPS Central Enforcement & Renewal Committee

As Co-Chair of the Central Enforcement and Renewal committee, I had the privilege of hosting the Ontario Public Service (OPS) Divisional on November 25 and 26, 2006. It was a great opportunity to meet member activists from across the province who enforce our collective agreement with passion and conviction every day.

Involvement from every member is essential as we prepare for the next round of OPS bargaining. So this year's divisional meeting was about engaging our membership: *Maximizing the Power of the Collective*, to be effective at our Enforcement Renewal tables and at our next round of collective bargaining. At Divisional we asked the leadership present to accept the challenge to lead, and we believe they have accepted that challenge. We are also confident the leaders in every workplace across the province will step up their game. Your CERC members are committed to providing our bargaining unit with responsible, responsive and

visionary leadership that will take us through to the next round of bargaining. We also need to continue working to make our union relevant for all OPSEU members, who deliver important public services to the people of Ontario. We must develop and maintain networks that provide real-time, two-way communications to members on the front lines: responsive, positive, member-to-member communications on issues that matter.

The next two years will be both exciting and challenging as we fight to retain and expand jobs and services in the OPS. Together we can hold the McGuinty government to its promise to rebuild public services. However, to achieve this they will have to experience our true collective might. Your CERC team is pleased to have this opportunity to serve and lead you for the next two years. We are driven by the belief that all of you will seize the challenge to "maximize the power of the collective."



## Young Worker Expelled from Corrections Training

By Mike Bisailon, Local 616

I still hear the old view that unions are no longer needed. You know the one that employers often try to convince us with... "Sure unions were a good thing at one time, but now things are different." You find this same fallacy being made in the *Globe & Mail* as early as 1912. I guess that some think that the 'justice spirits' will protect workers. Thanks to the labour movement, our workplaces have come a long way. Indeed, many of our workplaces and institutions have climbed out of the 'dark ages.' However, there are many places that are still stuck in the 'dark ages,' and apparently don't know how out-of-date they are.

Consider the Bell Cairn Correctional College. At Bell Cairn a worker can be tossed out by simply expressing pro-union views or by bringing the collective agreement to class. **Carrie Cashmore**, a member of my local, tells this story.

After working for two years at the North Bay Jail, **Carrie** decided that she wanted to return to her home town, Sudbury, to study at Laurentian University. She was told that a transfer had been arranged so she could work at the Cecil Facer Youth Facility in Sudbury. She must first complete a mandatory six-week course to qualify.

The trouble started in week five. A manager got fed up with her talking to other students, most of whom had never worked for the Ministry before. She described how OPSEU operates in correctional facilities. **Carrie** was scolded. When she stood up for her

rights, she was instructed to attend a meeting the following day to justify why she should remain at the College. Knowing her rights, **Carrie** insisted on having union representation at the meeting. She was denied that right.

The following morning North Bay staff representative **Gord Hamilton** called the College and insisted on **Carrie** having representation. A subsequent meeting was arranged and Region 2 EBM and Corrections MERC Member **Eddy Almeida** accompanied **Carrie** to the meeting. The purpose of the meeting changed. There was no justifying or explaining or discussion. **Carrie** was tossed out of the school. When **Brother Almeida** asked for a reason he was simply told that "she is not suited to be a youth officer and this is not a question period."

It is safe to assume that the correctional college is afraid of new hires knowing their union rights and how OPSEU functions in the facilities. This is a direct challenge to OPSEU. Stay tuned for upcoming action.

Corrections MERC Chair **Dan Sidsworth** is happy with the progress since those events. "The employer is doing an investigation. They are also accommodating her with work at the Sudbury Jail, starting January 2<sup>nd</sup>. Once reviewed, the opportunity to complete her course will be offered. The newly elected MERC team worked hard to accomplish this. We are pleased with the results."

## This and That

### The OPS Divisionals

OPS members held their divisional meetings on November 25/26. Over 600 delegates from all Ministries attended. There was much discussion on bargaining unit integrity and the continuing threats from outside contractors. Region 5 OPS Local Presidents are meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup> to continue that discussion.

**Eric Morin**, chair of the Central ERC, spoke on the need for rebuilding OPSEU's relationship with the membership. See **Eric's** article on page 6.

Congratulations to all elected and re-elected members of Ministry Enforcement and Renewal Committees (MERCs). It is a huge and important task. The challenges in the OPS are enormous.

I delivered a report on the Information Technology initiative – a project of the CERC. The IT Group met with senior IT management on November 23<sup>rd</sup>. We engaged them on the related issues of training and contracting out. We held an IT caucus at 5:00 on Saturday afternoon of the OPS Divisionals. We are planning a road show to the OPS IT locations around Ontario to encourage members to get the contractors out and in-source the work to OPSEU jobs.

### OPSEU Mayor of Elliot Lake

At the OPS Divisional meetings, I had the pleasure of chatting with **Rick Hamilton**, president of Local 604 and newly elected Mayor of Elliot Lake. **Rick** is a proud labour Mayor.

Here is what **Rick** wrote for *The Rapaport Report*.

*I was first appointed to city council in 1999 being elected in 2000, re-elected in 2003 as Deputy Mayor, and most recently elected Mayor. OPSEU has supported my last three campaigns financially and with members help. I bring a strong social component to council supporting numerous community groups supporting a wide variety of programs ranging from social housing, to mental health services, to affordable transit. All have been my mantra for the past 7 years and will continue to guide my leadership style for the next four years.*

*You asked what it means to be a Mayor with labour roots. What it means to me is the people have entrusted me with leading our community while sharing and upholding these values. They see a real place for these values in their day to day lives as well as enshrining them in the fabric of our community. It is an immense honor to serve the people of our city. I am excited and humbled by the support received. I encourage all like minded people to involve themselves in their local municipal councils. It is one of the most rewarding experiences one can ever imagine*

### Collective Bargaining Campaign in the Developmental Services Sector

As reported in previous issues of *The Rapaport Report*, this under-funded and underpaid sector is embarking on a coordinated collective bargaining program in 2007. 35 OPSEU units are coordinating their demands and their bargaining timelines with the aim of forcing the Queens Park to increase funding to this sector.

You can help them out. On Wednesday, January 17<sup>th</sup>, they are holding Worker

Appreciation Day. On Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup> they are lobbying MPPs in the Toronto Area. On Saturday, February 17<sup>th</sup> there will be a Skate-A-Thon. For more information please contact **Chris Moore**, President of Local 554, at 416-574-3459.

## Remembering December 6<sup>th</sup>

Once again OPSEU participated in events to commemorate the horrible tragedy of December 6, 1989 when a deranged anti-feminist killed 14 woman students in Montreal. On Tuesday, December 5<sup>th</sup> the Region 5 Women's Caucus hosted a commemoration with two guest speakers; **Josephine Grey** from Low Income Families Together and **Eileen Morrow** from the Ontario Association of Interval and Transition Houses. On Saturday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, OPSEU had two tables at the annual December 6<sup>th</sup> dinner. Region 5 and Local 503 each purchased a table.

Visit

<http://www.stepitupontario.ca/index.html>.

## Electoral Reform

As discussed in previous issues of *The Rapaport Report*, our electoral system requires reform. The Ontario Government appointed a 103-member Citizens' Assembly, one person from each riding, to investigate and report on the matter. The Greater Toronto Area Council and the Region 5 EBMs hosted two events on November 15<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup>. There will be a referendum at the same time as next October's provincial election. The Ontario Citizens' Assembly is hosting forums across Ontario. For dates and

locations visit

<http://www.citizensassembly.gov.on.ca/en-CA/Whats-New/EventsRG.aspx>.

## The Founding of OPSECAAT

Part-time workers in the college system are legally disallowed from belonging to a union or engaging in collective bargaining. OPSEU, CAAT activists and part-time workers are fighting to change the legislation.

On Sunday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, OPSECAAT, the Organization of Part-time and Sessional Employees of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology was born. CAAT part-timer employees are eligible for membership. A ten-member executive was elected.

It is hoped that OPSECAAT will evolve into a full bargaining agent for these employees. Visit

<http://www.opseu.org/caat/parttime/parttimeindex.htm>.

## LBED and Agency Stores

Our sisters and brothers in the Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED) are once again fighting privatization. The LCBO is expanding the number of so-called agency stores to sell their products. Agency stores are existing retail operations that take on the additional task of acting as LCBO outlets.

On Friday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, the LBED started their campaign by leafleting in front of LCBO outlets. I joined them at the Yonge and Summerhill location.

## RSI - Repetitive Strain Injury

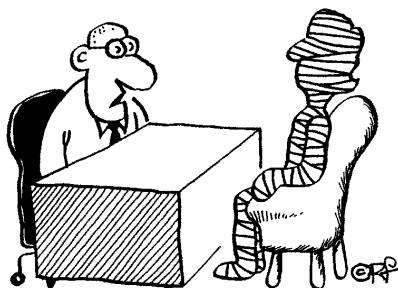
By Noeline Ah-Hone, Local 502

“John, could you please open the door for me. My wrist is getting worse and worse, I can’t even turn the door knob”.

“I am sorry, dear, could you please go around? My back is killing me with all the bending at work”.

**Repetitive strain injury (RSI)** is a loose group of conditions from overuse of the computer, guitar, knife, or almost any tool. It is an [occupational overuse syndrome](#) affecting [muscles](#), [tendons](#) and [nerves](#) in the arms and upper back; hence it is also known as **work related upper limb disorder** or **WRULD**. The medically accepted condition in which it occurs is when muscles in these areas are kept tense for very long periods of time, due to poor posture and/or repetitive motions.

It is most common among [assembly line](#) and [computer](#) workers. Good [posture](#), [ergonomics](#) and limiting [time](#) in stressing working conditions can help prevent or halt the progress of the disorder. Stretches, strengthening exercises, massages and biofeedback training to reduce neck and shoulder muscle tension can help heal existing disorders.



“We’ll wait until someone else gets hurt, then we’ll fix the machine.”

### Warning signs

RSI conditions have varied symptoms. The following may indicate the onset of an RSI.

- Recurring pain or soreness in neck, shoulders, upper back, wrists or hands.
- Tingling, numbness, coldness or loss of sensation.
- Loss of grip strength, lack of endurance, weakness, fatigue.
- Muscles in the arms and shoulders feel hard and wiry to the touch.
- Pain or numbness while lying in bed. Often early stage RSI sufferers mistakenly think they are lying on their arms in an awkward position, cutting off circulation.

Symptoms may be caused by apparently unrelated areas — for example, hand numbness may be caused by a nerve being pinched near the shoulder. All areas of the upper body are considered when evaluating an RSI condition.

### Prevention

The following applies to typing or computer use. RSI is best prevented in its early stages before it becomes difficult to control.

- Pay attention to pain and fatigue. Stop using the computer **before** you begin to feel symptoms.
- Pay attention to posture. The head and back should form a straight line from the ears to the pelvis.

The shoulders and head should not be hunched forward.

- Take regular breaks. One option is to install reminder software that reminds you to take breaks (RSI software).
- Avoid resting the wrists on anything when typing. Hold them straight, rather than bent up, down, or to the side.
- Keep in good shape, with regular aerobic exercise, adequate sleep, drinking enough water, and not smoking. This will help improve strength and bloodflow in the affected muscles.
- Learn a systematic muscle-relaxation technique such as [diaphragmatic breathing](#), [qigong](#), or progressive muscle relaxation to help keep neck and shoulder muscles relaxed.

## Treatment

If RSI symptoms have already appeared:

- Gather as much information as possible. RSI healing generally cannot be achieved solely by medical professionals and requires active participation by the patient. [Occupational therapists](#), [physical therapists](#), [physiatrists](#), [surgeons](#), and [alternative medicine](#) practitioners may all be involved in the diagnosis and treatment plan.

- Partial or complete cessation of hand activity might be necessary for some time. [Adaptive technology](#) -- special keyboards, mouse replacements, or [speech recognition](#) software might help.
- The medical professional may prescribe [orthopedic hand braces](#), but do not self-prescribe, or further injury might result.
- Medications: Ask your medical professional about any medications he/she might prescribe.
- [Cold compression therapy](#), [TENS therapy](#) administered by a health professional, [Soft Tissue Therapy](#), [Biofeedback](#), [Massage](#) treatment, and stretches all can be helpful. Many doctors will prescribe [occupational therapy](#) or [physical therapy](#) to rebuild strength and flexibility. Some sufferers find great relief in specific movement therapies such as [T'ai Chi Ch'üan](#), [yoga](#), or the [Alexander Technique](#).
- Strengthening exercises (to improve posture and reduce fatigue in the long term) should be prescribed by a medical professional, as overuse of the strained muscles and tendons can worsen symptoms.
- Surgery. This should only be used as a last resort; it is not always effective, and the above methods have been known to heal even some very serious RSI conditions provided they are properly applied.



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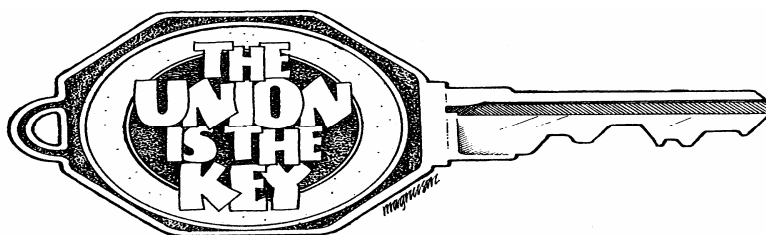
## Calendar of Events

Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) meeting – Contact Bob Taylor for details.  
Labour Council Membership Meeting–Thur, Jan. 4, 7:30, OFL Building, 15 Gervais Dr.  
Region 5 Women’s Caucus – Tue, January 9, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley.  
Developmental Services, Worker Appreciation Day, Wed, January 17  
Executive Board Meeting – January 24/25  
Developmental Services, Lobby Day, Wed, January 26  
Youth Union Movement - Mon, February 19, 6:00 PM, 31 Wellesley  
Region 5 Weekend Education – February 24/25  
Region 5 Retirees Group – Tue, March 27, 10:30 AM, 31 Wellesley

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## Region 5/OPSEU Contact Information

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**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