

The Rapaport Report

Volume 1, Number 15

January 2007

“Courage, my friends; 'tis not too late to build a better world.”

Tommy Douglas

The Debate on Pensions

In the week of January 15th, the political right-wing in Canada once again challenged the ‘fairness’ of public sector pension plans. Articles appeared in the *Toronto Star*, the *Globe and Mail*, and the *National Post* outlining the views of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).

A recent CFIB report is quoted in the *National Post* as saying that Canada is on its way to a two-tier retirement system, where public sector workers will be assured of gold-plated, fully indexed pension plans and many private sector workers will be lucky to have a pension at all.

CFIB President **Catherine Swift** adds, “those of us who work in the private sector will not have the same means to retire as our counterparts in the public sector, and to add insult to injury, we are subsidizing their retirement lifestyles.”

It takes a lot of nerve, I must say, for a leader of Swift’s stature to blame the public sector for the fact that the members of her organization have been providing their rank-and-file employees with little or nothing in the way of security for their old age. Hello, folks, if you want your

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Inside This Issue

This issue of *The Rapaport Report* has two guest writers. **Patty Rout** is the chair of the Health Care Divisional Council and is a Region 3 Executive Board Member. She writes about legislation and conditions in the long term care sector (page 7). **Cecil Beckford** is the Region 5 Member of the Provincial Human Rights Committee and represents OPSEU on the executive of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council. She writes about the campaign to raise the minimum wage (page 5). On January 23rd I made a presentation to the Ontario Citizens Assembly (OCA) in Etobicoke. The OCA was established to examine our electoral system in Ontario and to propose a referendum question for the October election. On page 6 you will find excerpts from my presentation. The report on the Board meeting starts on page 3. The Board passed a budget at the meeting.



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.

Pensions (continued from page 1)

employees to have retirement incomes, that is in your power. But it is going to cost you money. Pensions are, after all, nothing but deferred payment for the work we do all our lives.

The CFIB report concludes, "The overall objective of any pension-policy reform should be to level the playing field between the public and the private sector". Their solution, of course, though they don't admit it, is to lower the pension benefits of public sector workers. Or to reduce compensation for public servants over-all.

That 'solution' presents more than one problem. Yes, working people do not all enjoy the same pension rights and expectations. That fact does not mean that we should lower anyone's benefits. From our point of view, it does mean that we should raise the standards of those lagging behind. Canada's economy is performing well. We can afford to treat our retirees with respect and dignity.

Let us put matters in perspective. The average OPSEU Pension Trust pension for 21,439 retirees was \$18,642 as of December, 2005. That hardly provides a jet-set lifestyle, even when you throw in CPP benefits. And many public-sector workers in the broader public sector have inadequate pensions or none at all. We are working on that.

Yet, we still hear stories of big buy-outs and severance packages for corporate CEOs, in the millions and tens of millions of dollars. Although not called pensions they still provide retirement security. Even, in some notorious instances, for CEOs who have essentially destroyed their companies and done away with the pensions and life savings of their employees.

What is a pension entitlement? What should a retired worker receive? That, of course, is a moving target. That depends on social policy, political persuasion and collective bargaining.

Our adversaries are relentless. They are determined to stir up resentment against whatever material benefits we acquire through collective bargaining. They miss the point. We consider ourselves as the benchmark for everybody with fewer benefits and rights, not the other way around.

Here is one more quote, this time from **J.S. Woodsworth**, founding leader of the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation, the forerunner of the NDP: "What we desire for ourselves we wish for all. To this end may we take our share in the world's work and the world's struggles." **Woodsworth**, by the way, played a pivotal role in the introduction of Canada's Old Age Pension in 1926.



The Executive Board Meeting

The Board met on January 24th and 25th.

Establishment of a New Division in the Health Sector

We heard a presentation from **Tony Morabito** (Mental Health Division) and **Sean Allen** (Canadian Blood Services) from the Health Care Divisional Council, who represent 30,000 members in six Divisions. They asked the Board to approve in principle the establishment of a new Division in the Health Sector, for Canadian Blood Services and Diagnostic Services. They explained that a new division would represent 1,200 CBS members and provide the potential for organizing 1,200 more members. The Board agreed. It must now be approved by delegates at the BPS Conference in June.

Campaign for Minimum Staffing in Long-Term-Care Homes

The Board agreed to contribute \$30,000 from the Defense Fund towards a joint province-wide radio advertising campaign with CUPE and CAW to pressure the Ontario government for minimum staffing levels in long-term-care homes.

Advertising Support for Coordinated Bargaining in Developmental Services

OPSEU represents 6,300 in 61 bargaining units in the developmental services sector. As reported on numerous times in *The Rapaport Report*, they are under-funded

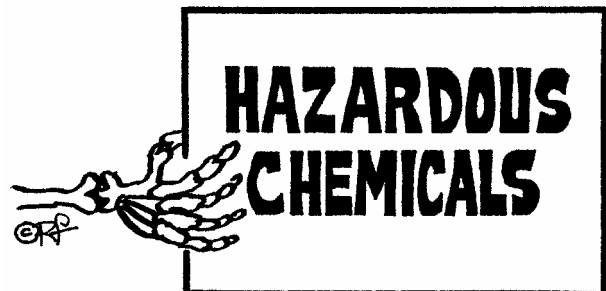
and underpaid. 36 of our bargaining units have 2007 contract expiry dates. This is a significant step for this sector and for OPSEU. The Board approved a proposal to spend \$250,000 for a television and radio advertising campaign.

Addressing Systemic Discrimination in Corrections

We have developed a program to respond to systemic discrimination, racism and sexism in Corrections. The Systemic and Anti-Racism Organizational Change (SAROC) Steering Committee was established to deliver this program. A training package and Terms of Reference for Local SAROCCs have been finalized. An OPSEU project team will be involved in the continuing development and implementation of human rights programs within Corrections. An OPSEU lead is being appointed to lead this project. The Board approved the funding of \$92,000 to backfill for the employee leading this project.

Ministry of Children and Youth Services Health and Safety Committee

The Board approved the funding of \$9,900 to recognize and support this committee. They are scheduled to have three meetings with the employer this year.



Budget Adjustments for Green Initiatives

The Board amended the 2007 budget to allocate a 0.15% of gross revenue place marker for green initiatives.

Budget Adjustments for Accommodation and Accessibility

The Board amended the 2007 budget to allocate a 0.15% of gross revenue place marker for OPSEU office upgrades for accommodation and accessibility.



The Region 5 Regional Meeting

Region 5 normally has its regional meeting at the Delta Chelsea hotel. As reported in numerous issues of *The Rapaport Report* there have been labour issues at the Chelsea. OPSEU has signed onto a boycott pledge. It is anticipated that the hotel workers union, UNITE/HERE will call for a boycott in February. The regional meeting is scheduled for March 24. The Board voted to move the Region 5 meeting to the Westin Harbour Castle. We pay a cancellation fee of \$8,000 to the Chelsea.

Teleconferencing Task Force

The Board agreed to establish a task force to investigate how OPSEU can take advantage of new telecommunication technologies to facilitate meetings. Two EBM's and one staffer will be on the committee. The two EBM's are **Jamie Tocker** from Region 7 and myself.

Child Care at OPSEU Events

To enhance accessibility, child care will now be provided at central, divisional and sectoral meetings in the evening from 7:00 PM until 11:00 PM.

Strike Fund Asset Allocation

I sit on a three-person Board Committee with **Smokey Thomas** and **Dave Lundy** to manage the cash portion of the strike fund. Prior to June, 2006, the money was invested in low-risk, low-interest bearing T-Bills. In late June, we re-allocated the funds to realize a higher return. In the later six months of 2006, we realized an additional \$1.2 million as a result. The Board approved a further re-allocation that has less risk.

CAAT-Academic Retiree Trustee

The Board approved the appointment of CAAT-A retiree **Ron Golemba** (formerly of Local 558, Centennial College) as a retiree trustee on the CAAT Pension plan for the period January 1, 2007 until December 31, 2009. Former First Vice President/Treasurer **Bill Kuehnbaum** (formerly of Cambrian College, Sudbury) was appointed alternate. There were 25 applicants. The two brothers were selected by the CAAT-A Divisional Executive.

A Million Reasons To Raise The Minimum Wage

By Ceceil Beckford

On January 13th the Toronto Star headlines read “**A State Of Constant Dread - Poverty Today**”. This statement captures the essence of what many people living in Ontario experience on a daily basis. Over one million workers in Ontario earn less than \$10 an hour in jobs where they are underpaid and receive few or no benefits. Many of these workers have two and three jobs in order to afford the bare necessities of food, shelter and clothing.

Of these one million workers in Ontario earning less than \$10 per hours, 70,000 are in Toronto waiting for affordable housing. Many rely on food banks to just get by. It is a shame that a city as prosperous as Toronto has such statistics. There are other numbers that should be considered when looking poverty. Corporate profits in Canada in 2005 reached \$200 billion. If corporations are making these profits then why are so many people in Canada and one of its richest provinces still living in poverty?

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council, the Canadian Federation of Students and other labour groups and anti-poverty organizations have joined in a campaign to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour. In its findings in 2005, the Toronto and York Region Labour Council found that over one million people living in Toronto made less than \$29,800. These groups have come together to push forward a private member's bill by NDP MPP **Cheri DiNovo** (Parkdale-High Park) to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour. This wage would help meet the minimum required to live in cities such as Toronto.

Business members have commented that raising the minimum wage to \$10 would drive business out of Ontario. Yet, there are no concrete facts to back up this argument. The flipside to this argument says that poverty is not cost efficient for the economy. In other words those who earn less are unable to give back as much to the economy.

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council along with community groups will be holding town hall meetings throughout the city over the next two months as part of \$10 Minimum Campaign which launched last week. The town hall meetings will be held on January 29th, February 17th, February 20th and 27th and March 6th at different locations. A list of the locations can be found on the website at www.labourcouncil.ca. The Council has also dedicated a web-based petition to lobby MPP's and Premier **Dalton McGuinty** to focus on this important issue. At the federal level, NDP MP **Peggy Nash** has also introduced a private members bill in Ottawa calling for a national \$10 minimum wage. To quote **Peggy Nash** “Most people feel it's a basic issue of fairness”

Join in on this campaign by signing cards or the petitions and/or by attending one of the town hall meetings. Have your say and show your support for this campaign.

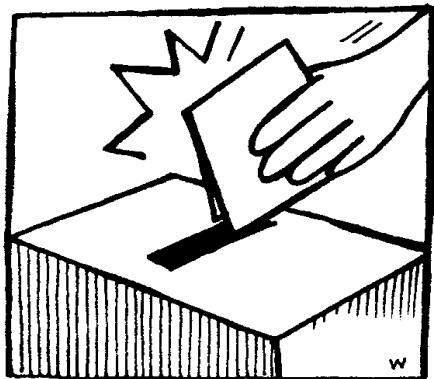


Excerpts from My Presentation to the Ontario Citizens Assembly

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. It is an honour to participate in this ground-breaking review of our voting system. I vote in every election and often feel frustrated with the outcomes.

All votes should be equal. Due to a number of factors, the number of voters it takes to elect a representative varies widely across the province. This affects voters of all political persuasions. Let's take a quick look at the 2003 election; it took an average of roughly 29,000 votes to elect a Liberal, 65,000 to elect a Conservative and 127,000 to elect an NDP. Unequal votes lead to unequal results.

While political parties are the vehicle through which my voice is heard at election time, the will of the people should be determined by an overall 50% + 1 majority of the voters, not by which party can finesse the most number of 3-way splits. A government with less than 50% support of the electorate should not have unfettered power in our parliamentary system. It's not in keeping with our democratic ideals. Not too long ago in Ontario, the government unilaterally reduced the number of ridings from 130 to 99. No referendum. No debate. No hearings.



No wonder the electorate is cynical. Is it too much to ask that I be able to vote for my first choice every four years? Am I unrealistic to expect that my issues are represented and my voice is heard if enough other voters share the same views? I shouldn't have to feel like a left-out loser.

That's what drives negative voting, what has sometimes been referred to as strategic voting. Voters are encouraged to vote for their second choice in order to beat their mortal enemy – the third choice. It is negative because the vote is cast in order to kick or keep someone out, rather than a positive vote for a first choice who better represents their views. No wonder voter turnout is steadily dropping.

You have the power to recommend a new system that can make my vote count. I hope you recommend a proportional system that enables citizens to be governed by governments elected by a real majority.

And while parties and politicians are certainly key players, it is your job to balance the equation while being somewhat voter-centric to ensure the voters are heard and their interests represented in the legislature.

It is not unrealistic to consider a model with a larger legislature to decrease the population per riding ratio in order to elect a Legislature that better reflects the make-up of the population. It is not unrealistic to propose a model where the popular vote is roughly translated into a proportional seat count. These are not radical ideas.

Don't let the threshold level for the referendum (60%) which is really nothing more than a minority veto, stop you from putting forward your best ideas and proposals for change.

Bill 140 - Long Term Care Act

By Patty Rout

Bill 140 was introduced at Queen's Park in December. Unfortunately this act does not recognize any staffing mechanisms or requirements. OPSEU believes that we need a standard of 3.5 average hours per patient to create a workplace where patients are treated with dignity and where staff has better working conditions.

Wages are very low in the long term care sector. Few employees have benefits or pensions. It becomes very difficult to keep staff in this sector. They are trained and then quickly move to community and hospital settings where they have better pay and working conditions. As a result, the quality of the care in the sector suffers.

We believe a 3.5 hours per patient staffing average would go a long way to making things better for patient care. Presentations were made over and over by seniors, activists, community and even our employers regarding the current inadequacy of staffing. Our members could have 15 patients a shift to look after. Patients are bathed and fed. Staff help them walk and take them to the washroom with the intention to create a surrounding as close to home as possible.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to accomplish this because of poor funding levels and the absence of staffing regulations, safety standards, whistle blowing protection and staff replacements. They are all needed.

Privatization has taken over the long term care sector. In Ontario, 60 per cent of the beds are now privatized. British Columbia comes in second place with 35 per cent.

The Liberal government promised to bring a staffing standard in the last election. The government has turned yet again a blind eye to the needs of those who cannot look after themselves. This must end.

OPSEU represents 1600 members in the long term care sector in 19 locals.

Visit www.opseu.org/bps/health/splash.htm



"You're in a hospital, Nurse Hill. If you collapse from exhaustion, the emergency room is just down the hall."

This and That

Provincial By-Election

The Provincial Government called three by-elections for February 8th. **Janice Hagan** of Local 561 is running in Markham for the New Democratic Party. **Janice** needs our help. Her campaign can be reached at 905-470-0660 or at www.janicehagan.ca.

Development Services Workers Appreciation Day

As reported many times in previous issues of *The Rapaport Report*, OPSEU members in Developmental Services bargaining units are engaging in coordinated

bargaining in 2007 in conjunction with CUPE. The aim is to catch the attention of the public and the Government at Queens Park to correct the serious under-funding problem in this sector.

The campaign got a huge pick-up in the third week in January with Workers Appreciation Day. I attended two events on January 17th. At noon, I was at Surex Community Services in Scarborough. I listened to speeches by Local 5102 activists, family members, the employer, Minister of Education **Kathleen Wynne** and Scarborough Centre MPP **Brad Duguid**. Later in the afternoon, I attended an event at Reena and listened to speeches from Local 554 activists and the employer. This sector is tragically underfunded and employers are on-side with OPSEU. On Friday evening, January 19th, I attended a Workers' Appreciation event for the Salvation Army and Surrey Place organized by Locals 511 and 550. Congratulations to event organizers. They were all class acts and did OPSEU proud.

The Sector is now turning its attention to lobbying. The Government should be hearing them, loud and clear.



The College Part-time Campaign

CAAT part-time workers are legally excluded from belonging to a union. OPSEU has launched a campaign to

correct this injustice. OPSECAAT, the Organization of Sessional Employees of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technologies was established to sign-up members at all 24 Colleges and pressure the government to change the law. We will, once again, lobby MPP's. Two Toronto offices are being launched: 31 Wellesley East on Tuesday, January 30th from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM and at 100 Lesmill Road on Tuesday February 6th from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Visit their website at www.collegeworkers.org.

Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED) Agency Campaign

LBED activists are in the thick of their anti-privatization campaign. They are pressuring the LCBO and the Government to stop the tide of private agency stores and to begin the conversion to regular LCBO outlets. They are moving into the lobbying part of the campaign directed at municipal politicians and MPP's. They are cranking it up before the October provincial election. Visit <http://www.opseu.org/lbed/index.htm>.

Regional Elections

Where does the time go? We will be electing a new Region 5 leadership on Saturday, March 24th at the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel. I shall be seeking re-election to the Executive Board.

Our Jobs Are Our Jobs – MPAC Activists Win at Arbitration

OPSEU represents about 1360 employees at the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) which was divested from the Ministry of Finance in 1998. The employer, MPAC hired 64 data entry clerks from an outside employment agency, Pro Temps. MPAC paid the

agency a flat rate of \$17.05 an hour. The employees received \$11.00 an hour less statutory deductions, significantly less than the rate found in the collective agreement. The agency pocketed over \$6.00 an hour. The arbitrator ruled in OPSEU's favour. They should have been hired under the collective agreement.

Congratulations to all MPAC activists. This is a huge victory in our fight against privatization and contracting-out.

Health Care Health and Safety Information Picket

The Ministry of Labour issued an order to Humber River Regional Hospital to use safety engineered sharps. The Hospital appealed. The Health Care Divisional Council along with activists from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) is organizing an information picket at Humber River Regional Hospital at noon on February 5th to protest the hospital's appeal on this important issue.

Health Ministers Meeting Protest

Health Ministers from across Canada (federal, provincial and territorial) are meeting on Friday, February 9th at the Westin Harbour Castle Hotel. They will be discussing 'wait times'. The Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) is organizing a protest at 9 AM. The OHC suspects they will really be talking about more privatization. They can be reached at 416-441-2502 or at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca.

Protecting Jobs in the OPS

A group of Region 5 OPS activists met on January 16th to discuss the continued threats to the size and integrity of the bargaining unit. We talked about

privatization, downsizing and specifically about threats from other bargaining agents in the Ontario Public Service. The new Article 1.4 in the OPS contract gives us access to information from the employer on job postings.

The Community and Social Planning Council

The Community Social Planning Council of Toronto is embarking on a series of community consultations, to help set priorities for the next 3 to 5 years.

The last two consultations are on January 30th from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM at the YMCA, 20 Grosvenor Street (Yonge and Grosvenor) and at York/Weston on Tuesday, February 6th from 5:30 to 8:00 at the Community Hub, 1652 Keele Street.

RSVP to **Mary Micallef** at 416-351-0095 X 251 or at mmary@cspc.toronto.on.ca

Stress Busters: An Introduction to Self Care

Feeling stressed out? Tired of groups where you just sit around and moan and groan? Want to connect with other women while still having fun? Thursday, February 1st, 6:00-8:00 pm. Women's Counselling Referral and Education Centre, 489 College Street, Suite 303B (1 block West of Bathurst & College). This free group runs for 8 consecutive weeks. For more information or to register: call Lisa or Emily, 416-534-8458 ext 227.

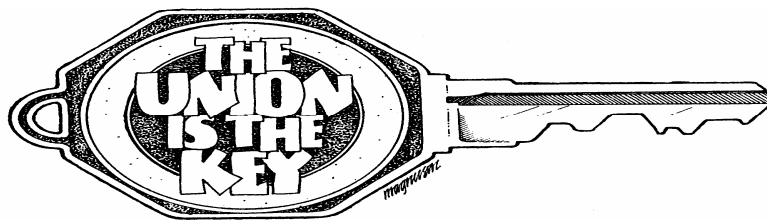


Calendar of Events

Social Planning Council Consultation-Tue, January 30, 9:30 AM, Downtown YMCA
Labour Council Membership Meeting-Thur, Feb 1, 7:30 PM, OFL Building, 15 Gervais Dr.
Health Care Info Picket – Mon, February 5, 12 noon, Humber River Regional Hospital
Social Planning Council Consultation-Tue, February 6, 5:30, 1652 Keele Street
Region 5 Women’s Caucus – Tue, February 6, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley.
Protest Canada Health Ministers – Fri, Feb 9, 9 AM, Harbour Castle Hotel
Youth Union Movement - Mon, February 19, 6:00 PM, 31 Wellesley
Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) meeting – Wed, February 21, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley
Region 5 Weekend Education – February 24/25
Labour Council Membership Meeting-Thur, March 1, 7:30, OFL Building, 15 Gervais Dr.
Region 5 Women’s Caucus – Tue, March 6, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley.
Executive Board Meeting – March 7 and 8
Regional Elections – March 24, Westin Harbour Castle Hotel
Region 5 Retirees Group – Tue, March 27, 10:30 AM, 31 Wellesley

Region 5/OPSEU Contact Information

Nancy Pridham, Regional Vice President - nancypridham@look.ca
Peggy Maybury, Executive Board Member - peggymaybury@sympatico.ca
David Rapaport, Executive Board Member – drapaport@opseu.org
Yvonne Bobb, Region 5 Member, Provincial Woman’s Committee - ybobbl@rogers.com
Cecil Beckford, Region 5 Member, Provincial Human Rights Committee
OPSEU representative on Labour Council Executive - ceceilb@rom.on.ca
Carl Mohan, Region 5 Member, Provincial Youth Committee -
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



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