

The Rapaport Report

In Solidarity With Pride Day

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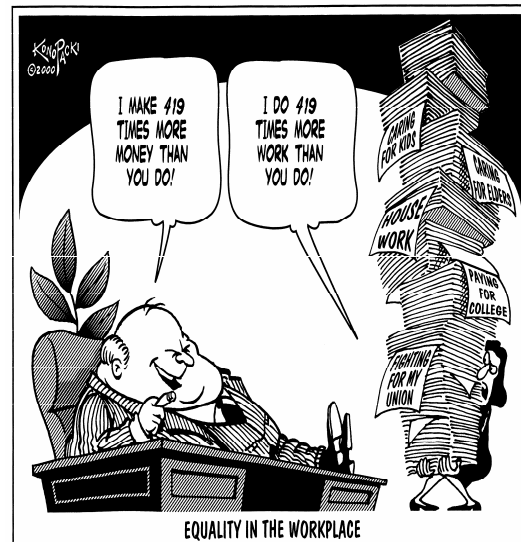
This is the second issue of *The Rapaport Report*. It is still researched, written, produced and edited by David Rapaport, Executive Board Member, Region 5. I can be reached at 416-651-1659 and at drapaport@opseu.org.

This issue of *The Rapaport Report* has its first two guest writers. **Paul Myers** represents Region 5 on the OPS bargaining team. Paul is the secretary of Local 526 and works at the courthouse at 393 University Avenue. **Carl Mohan** represents Region 5 on the Provincial Youth Committee. Carl is the president of Local 541 and works for the Shared Services Bureau at Management Board.

OPSEU is always busy negotiating new collective agreements. Since the last issue, OPSEU has negotiated a new collective agreement. CAAT-Academic and CAAT-Support are still negotiating new contracts. The support and technologists units at Canadian Blood Services, are in conciliation. The Hospital Professional Division is waiting for the arbitrator's decision.

There is more to OPSEU than collective bargaining. Our political world is highly dynamic. In the past two months we have seen the introduction of legislation eliminating compulsory retirement at age 65 in Ontario; a Supreme Court decision that permits the use of private health care; and thanks to **Jack Layton** and the NDP, additional money for education, child care, health care and social programs.

In OPSEU we negotiate at over 500 separate tables, for bargaining units as small as ten and as large as 42,000. Yet we all share an interest in the issues of the wider political world. One of my central tasks as an EBM is to draw the connections between what happens at those tables and the wider political and social arenas. I hope that *The Rapaport Report* does that. The wider world is still far too conservative for my taste. The political forces that would like to see the end of unions and equity and fairness are still strong and aggressive. And we keep holding the line.



Executive Board Retreat & Meeting - June 21, 22, 23

The Executive Board had a three day retreat and board meeting out of town. We covered much ground.

The Executive Board Retreat

At the retreat we discussed the union's financial picture, which seems to be heading for a deficit for 2005. It is way too early to draw any conclusions. I'll report more details in the fall as we get closer to year end.

We heard a presentation on public opinion in Ontario. There is a widely held view that the pendulum has swung too far to the right and that people want a restoration of infrastructure and public services.

We had a heated discussion on pensions, investment and public infrastructure. Apparently, the Liberal government at Queen's Park is hoping that pension plans will invest in infrastructure. Two views emerged from our discussion. One view wondered if we can leverage some advantages for OPSEU, particularly in areas of the BPS where pension plans are either weak or lacking. The other view feared that this smells too much like investing in P3s and privatization.

We had an update on the MDT/SDT training program. **Terry Downey** is on the board committee.

We spent the last day talking about OPSEUdirect and the status of collective bargaining in our BPS sectors.

According to the surveys, OPSEUdirect is doing quite well and is getting good reviews from users. OPSEUdirect operators are trained to answer questions on a wide variety of labour topics and emergencies, and know how to contact OPSEU staff, if necessary. They also have access to OPSEU membership databases and collective agreements. OPSEUdirect can be reached at 416-443-8888 or at 1-800-268-7376.

The Executive Board Meeting

Purchasing 31 Wellesley Street East

This discussion was postponed until the September board meeting. We need an assessment on the building's value before making a decision.



Selecting Trustees to the Staff Plan

Nancy Pridham and I brought a proposal for a new process to select the four EBM trustees to the OPSEU staff pension plan. This process guarantees that all four trustees are EBMs, one is the president, and that there will be some overlap from the previous board to guarantee some experienced trustees.

Loan to NAPE

The Newfoundland Association of Public Employees is the OPSEU equivalent in Newfoundland. They had a four week strike in 2004. OPSEU loaned NAPE \$4.5 million. They paid back \$1.137 million and should have the rest paid back ASAP. OPSEU received over \$20 million in loans during the 1996 OPS strike. This is solidarity.

Solidarity Works

We agreed to send a member of the new Provincial Youth Committee to the OFL sponsored Solidarity Works Program in July for a cost of \$2,600.

CAAT Part-Time Campaign

We had a discussion on the program details of the CAAT part-time workers campaign. See below.

Additional Staff Rep in Ottawa Office

The Board agreed to add an additional staff representative for the Ottawa office.

**An OPSEU Welcome to the OLBEU**

The Ontario Liquor Board Employees Union and OPSEU have merged under the OPSEU banner. The Executive Board voted unanimously for the merger. OPSEU is receiving 5,400 members. They are currently involved in a difficult round of bargaining with the Liquor Board.

Back on the OPSEU Pension Trust

The Pension Liaison Committee expects to take a few more months to select a new OPT trustee. Now that Liquor Board employees are members of OPSEU as well as members of the OPT, we are expanding our search into their membership.

As discussed earlier, we are expecting the government at Queen's Park to make some moves on public infrastructure investments. The Executive Board felt that the OPSEU trustee team should be at full complement. Thus, I was re-appointed as a trustee until September.

Time-off for the OPS Bargaining Team

A proposal was presented to the board for OPSEU to pay for two weeks time-off for members of the OPS team. It failed. There was a subsequent attempt for three days time-off. That also failed. While the Executive Board appreciates the work and successes of the OPS negotiating team, the board felt that we would need to do the same for other bargaining teams.

Other News

Pensions and Investments

I'm getting deeper into the pension world. Many of our members are getting a bit grey and their thoughts go to pensions and retirement. The Pension Liaison Committee, which includes **Nancy Pridham, Shirley McVittie** and myself have started examining the situation more closely. Too many of our BPS members have either precarious pension plans or no pension plans at all. We had a long discussion at the Board/Staff retreat about investment strategies and other pension issues.

The Settlement in the OPS

The OPS folks held the line, yet again, without a strike. The collective agreement was preserved, even enhanced. The recognition clause was improved, to protect us from the job leakage to AMAPCEO and to private contractors. The compensation package is an improvement over the employer's May 12th offer that was rejected. The employer backed off some key concessions. We can breathe now for four years. Congratulations to all activists in the OPS, to the bargaining team, and to the staff and member mobilizers assigned to the campaign.

Much was done by many. Thanks to all who attended a rally, helped organize a local information session, distributed *The Source*, told members about the OPSEU web site, helped organize your cluster or MOB, went to Ottawa, sent Dalton a postcard, visited Liberal Party Headquarters on St. Mary Street, spoke to an MPP, leafleted at Ontario Place,

told workmates why to reject the employer's May 12th offer, posted a flier, visited a Liberal MPP or passed the word. You stuck with your union and you let it be known. Because of your work, the OPS collective agreement is that much stronger. There is a piece of you in that contract. That's solidarity. Pat yourself on the back.

About 350 OPSEU members went to Ottawa on Saturday, June 11th to rally at the Ontario Liberal Party policy convention. Three buses and many cars took about 150 of us from Toronto. We tried to get into the convention but security made that impossible. We used our loud voices instead. The contract was signed off that day. Maybe, just maybe, Dalton heard our voices and did what he had to. I wonder.

The Region 5 Mobilization Team was great. I spent some tremendous time with some tremendous activists. It's comforting to know that OPSEU produces activists who can 'hit the ground running' as member mobilizers.

A special thanks to **Paul Myers**, Region 5 representative on the bargaining team.



The Cutbacks

What cut is the unkindest? Here's my nomination. Some of you might remember my daughter, Rachel, who now lives in Winnipeg and works as a researcher for the for the Prairies Women's Health Centre of Excellence. They use a Social Determinants of Health and gender-based analysis in health-care policy. In the past three weeks Rachel has twice sent me the same email. The email explains how McGuinty backed off on an election promise to restore the clawback from Ontario social assistance; a clawback that decreases the welfare/workfare 'benefit' by the exact amount of the monthly National Child Benefit Supplement – a clawback not even seen in Ralph Klein's Alberta. "Now if that's not taking from the mouths of babies then I don't know what is", pointed out Rachel in a moment of frustration. She continued, "And can you please have OPSEU speak out against this measure? People on welfare do not have the opportunity to speak out and when they do, are not taken seriously." So, I am doing that. Rachel is right. We should do more. Please visit www.handsoffnow.ca for more info and to send an email to Dalton.

CAAT-Support

The CAAT-Support team called for a rejection of the employer's June 23rd proposal. Stay tuned for the vote. The CAAT-S folks in Region 5 are organizing a mobilization effort. The collective agreement expires on August 31. It should be a busy summer.

Organizing Rights for Part-Time Workers at the Colleges

OPSEU represents about 15,000 workers in the CAAT-A and CAAT-S bargaining units. It is estimated that there are that many non-unionized part-time workers in the college system.

Part-time workers in Ontario colleges do not have the legal right to join unions. The Colleges Collective Bargaining Act prevents them from joining a union.

As a result, part-time workers experience lower wages, no benefits, no job security and a very precarious employment relationship. The employer uses them as a cost-saving measure, aka cheap labour.

OPSEU is trying to change that. We have launched a campaign to win bargaining rights for part-time workers and organize them into OPSEU. It is called **Denying Rights Is Wrong**.

Download the petition from <http://www.opseu.org/caat/parttime/Part%20time%20Petition.pdf>

Hospital Professional Division Bargaining

The HPD is waiting for the arbitrator's award. The hearing was May 18-20. According to **Bryan Mitchell**, president of Local 570 and member of the bargaining team, the team is trying to reach parity with registered nurses. "The Ontario Hospital Association should recognize our work. We're still invisible and treated as such. We want that stopped." The award is expected soon.

Canadian Labour History

I had a chance to think about the broad implications of unions and collective bargaining during the May 28-29 weekend. I co-taught the History of Canadian Labour course at the Region 5 weekend educational.

We talked about the rise of the labour movement and the development of collective bargaining in the 1940s and 1950s, along with the public sector. While teaching the course, I was thinking how we are losing ground in this period; privatization, loss of legislative rights, fewer Canadian workers in unions, loss of social programs.

Yet, as I travel from local to local, sector to sector and activist to activist, I learn that we continue to struggle and defend what our parents and grandparents started, to stand up for what makes this world a better place. Collective bargaining is part of that equation but there is so much more.



Local 5102

Local 5102 represents employees at Surex Community Services, who work in the Developmental Services sector of the BPS. I talked about Sector 2 of the BPS in the previous issue of *The Rapaport Report*. The work is very difficult and under-recognized by the government and through their compensation package. There are 40 full time employees and 110 part time employees at Surex. There are 11 locations in the east end extending from Broadview and Danforth to the Toronto Zoo.

They are currently engaged in a very difficult round of bargaining. The employer offered them 1% and 1% over two years. The union bargaining team was told that the wage increase would cost two full time positions each year. In other words, the union is being asked to make a decision between a very small wage increase and jobs.

The local put much effort into educating the part-timers about collective bargaining. It paid off. In March the members delivered an 87% strike mandate to the bargaining team. In May they rejected the employer's 'final' offer by 92% with overwhelming support from the part-timers.

The Rapaport Report had a chat with the local president, **John Keating**. Surex recently signed into the OPSEU Jointly Trusteed Benefit Plan. As a result the employer saves \$19,000 annually. The employer is offering a signing bonus of \$200 for the full time workers and \$100 for the part-time workers. OPSEU wants inclusion of the part-timers in the

Local 5102/Surex – *continued*

benefit plan. The employer says ‘no’.

Stay tuned. We might have to help them out in the not too distant future. The union bargaining team called for a ‘no-board’ report in mid June. They will be in a legal strike position on July 6th.

Labour Education Centre

The Labour Education Centre is a joint project of the Labour Council and George Brown College . They offer re-training for laid off workers as well as labour content courses with certificates. OPSEU weekend educational courses

are recognized for the certificate. Contact **Janet Dassinger** of the Labour Education Centre at 416-537-6532

Labour Community Services

Labour Community Services is a project of the Labour Council. It is funded by the United Way. They perform many community development and counselling projects for members of unions. They have a program that trains union counsellors.

Contact **Faduma Mohamed** at 416-445-5819.

Provincial Youth Committee

by **Carl Mohan**, Region 5 Representative

Your Provincial Youth Committee had its inaugural meeting on May 25 and 26. The committee chair is Kyle Pearson (Region 7), and the vice-chair is Laurie Brown (Region 1). In addition, the delegate to the OFL Youth Committee is Carie Walker (Region 2), and the alternate is your Region 5 representative.

As a new committee, there are many challenges. We are starting from scratch, and hope to build a framework to educate, motivate and mobilize OPSEU youth across the province. The committee members, both delegates and alternates, are committed to increasing youth involvement from a paltry 14 to over 100 by year end.

On a personal note, I’ve taken the responsibility of developing a resource library to help address youth issues and concerns. Once developed, this library will be accessible via the OPSEU website under Youth Committee. Also, together with the equity chairs and/or designees, I am involved in the development of a new OPSEU course, ‘Human Rights, Union Rights and Global Solidarity’. The pilot is expected to launch this coming fall/winter.

For information or inquiries relating to the Youth Committee, please call (416) 657-2356 or email cmohan@opseu541.org.

Thank you for your continued support.

Dates

Injured Workers Day – June 1st is Injured Workers Day and there was the annual rally at Queens Park. **Orlando Buonastella, Marian Endicott** and **Carol McGregor** from the Injured Workers Consultants of Local 525 were rally organizers.

CLC Convention – The Canadian Labour Congress is the umbrella organizations for all unions in Canada. They speak for over 3 million workers at the national level. The CLC had its annual convention in Montreal in the week of June 13th. Over 100 OPSEU activists were delegates.

Labour Day Parade Planning – Region 5 organizers had our first organizing meeting on May 16th. The theme of this year's parade is "A Million Reasons to Organize". A million workers in Toronto work without the benefit of a union. Only 25% of Toronto's work force are in unions. The next meeting for OPSEU labour day planning is

Upcoming Events

Region 5 Picnic, July 16th
 Labour Day Parade, September 5th
 North Membership Centre, Sept 13th
 BPS Conference, September 16–18
 Executive Board Meeting, Sept 21-22
 Editors Weekend, Sept 30 – Oct 2nd
 Region 5 Educational – Oct 1-2
 Executive Board Meeting, Oct 19-20
 PWC Woman's Conference – Nov 4-6
 OFL Convention, Nov 21-25
 Executive Board Meeting, Dec 14-15

Wednesday, July 13th at 5:30 at 31 Wellesley Street East. Labour Day is Monday, September 5th.

Region 5 Picnic – The Region 5 Woman's Committee is holding a picnic for all Region 5 activists, members, friends and family. It is scheduled for Saturday, July 16th. It starts at 12:30 at Wilkett Creek Park at the corner of Leslie and Eglinton. The charge is \$5 (\$3 for children under twelve). Contact **Gloria David** at 416-314-6484.

North Membership Centre – OPSEU leases a membership centre at 620 Wilson Avenue West, just off Dufferin Street. Currently, it is under-utilized. It is estimated that about 25 locals and units can use the centre for a variety of purposes. A few locals have been meeting to determine the best way to fund and manage the space as a member-run and member-operated centre. The next meeting of this group is scheduled for Tuesday, September 13 at 5:30. Light refreshments will be served. Please let us know if you are attending.



OPS Bargaining

By Paul Myers

Region 5 Representative on the Central Team

I spent nine months of my life representing Region 5 on the OPS Central Bargaining team. It was a tremendous experience; negotiating those dreaded essential services agreements and then finally delving into issue bargaining.

There are many challenges in being one of fifteen members of a bargaining team. It is quite rare to have so many members on a team. This ensures representation from each of OPSEU's seven regions, six representatives for our five occupational categories (with two for the heavily populated Office Administration Group) one unclassified and one member from the Central Enforcement Renewal Committee, CERC. We all had strong views. We took our roles and responsibilities very seriously. This led to many heated debates amongst us and with staff. In the end this helped create cohesion within the team and demonstrated that the team was running the show at the table.

I represented 13,000 plus OPS members in Region 5. This under-representation results from the inherent regionalism within OPSEU. Region 5 is overwhelmingly the largest region based on membership and has far more member diversity than any of the other regions. Yet we only had one representative on the team.

The main challenge that I faced as the Region 5 representative was the sheer volume of membership meetings. There are 39 OPS locals in the Region. All made legitimate requests to have their team member speak to them for updates on bargaining. I had to gain the members' **trust** to ask them to vote NO to the inevitable inadequate initial offer that the employer would present. I attended 18 membership meetings before the Christmas holidays. I attended another 15 meetings leading up to the vote in late May. This was hard on me. I had to balance these meetings with my duties on the team.

I believe that I did balance these two roles. It paid off in achieving a solid NO vote from Region 5 in the vote on the employer's offer in May. I am very proud that Region 5 outperformed several other regions in our voting totals.

There are great expectations from the membership. They want us to keep them informed as to what is transpiring at the table as well as listen to what they are saying. I believe we did respond to the wishes of the membership in bargaining differently than we did in the past. We engaged in active political lobbying of Liberal MPP's. Over 20,000 letters were sent to the Premier asking him to keep his promises to rebuild public services. The climax of this political pressure was experienced on Saturday, June 11 at the Liberal Party Policy Convention in Ottawa. Your bargaining team set that date to achieve a Collective Agreement. We were advised that the Liberals did not want any disruption at their meeting and that the Liberals also agreed to set a goal to achieve an agreement

OPS Bargaining - *continued*

before that date. Our political pressure worked. We did not need to issue a 'No Board Report', proof that we were listening to the views of the membership. A tentative Collective Agreement was achieved after over 30 hours of continuous bargaining at about 11:00 am on Saturday, June 11.

My single biggest disappointment was the 65% overall vote total that rejected the employer's offer in May. Given all the meetings, the media campaign on radio and billboards and given the truly poor offer that the employer offered it was a shock to have such a low rejection vote. I believe we could have achieved so much more with the Liberals, but with that low vote we could not push as much as we wanted at the table.

In conclusion, it was a great privilege to represent all OPS members in Region 5 during negotiations. I do believe we achieved the most we could without going out on strike.

Region 5/OPSEU Contact Information

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Nancy Pridham, Executive Board Member - nancypridham@look.ca

David Rapaport, Executive Board Member – drapaport@opseu.org

Yvonne Bobb, Region 5 Member, Provincial Woman's Committee - ybobb1@sympatico.ca

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 - mohan@opseu541.org

Bob Taylor, President, Greater Toronto Area Council - 416-482-6680

Gloria David, Chair, Region 5 Woman'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 416-651-1659 or at drapaport@opseu.org.