

The Rapaport Report

Volume 1, Number 11

June 2006

In Solidarity with Pride Day

I don't believe in charity. I believe in solidarity. Charity is so vertical. It goes from the top to the bottom. Solidarity is horizontal. It respects the other person. I have a lot to learn from other people.

Eduardo Galeano

Two documents came to my attention recently. In their separate ways, they each reinforce the importance of being in a union, in a good union like OPSEU that fights for good jobs for all of our members.



Louis Uchitelle is a journalist on economic issues for the New York Times. In his new book, “The Disposable American, Layoffs and Their Consequences”, he writes about the spectre of job insecurity faced by American workers. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, over 30 million full time workers have been ‘permanently separated from their jobs and their pay checks against their wishes.’ This means wage stagnation, loss of benefits and pensions and a sense of economic security. This of course translates into emotional problems for tens of millions of Americans and their families as well as social problems for their communities. These ‘good jobs’ are not reappearing. I suspect that the work is still being done but at a much lower wage rate.

The second document was produced by the Toronto and York Region Labour Council. It is a one page fact sheet with numbers that speak very loud. In 2004, in the GTA, there were 2.26 million wage earners. 362,000 workers were in the public sector, 1.9 million

Strike Alert – Local 535, Art Gallery of Ontario

Unless the managers at the AGO recognize the job security that OPSEU members have earned – there will be a strike on June 29th. Stay tuned. See page 9.

in the private sector. In the public sector, the unionization rate was 70%. In the private sector, unionization was at 15%. Here's the punch. The average hourly wage rate in the more unionized public sector was \$6.21 higher than the less unionized private sector.

The facts and figures in these two documents shed light on our campaigns for part-time rights in the colleges and successor rights in the OPS. More and more work in the colleges is being done by part-timers who have no collective bargaining rights. They work for lower wage rates and with no access to benefits. As work from the OPS is being divested and privatized, new employers prefer not to inherit a union. To keep their union status, OPSEU must re-organize them. Divestment and privatization frequently mean lower wages for employees. Many privatized OPS workers in the Trillium Drug Program who transfer over to the new company to do exactly the same work have been offered jobs at about two-thirds of their OPS salaries.

In the December 2005 issue of *The Rapaport Report*, **Moira Cowan** wrote, "Some BPS employers recognize that converting part-time positions to regular fulltime positions would help recruit and retain experienced staff, and contribute to better service, but part-time workers cost less. As long as the provincial government refuses to properly fund BPS agencies, BPS employers will continue to try and exploit part-time workers." Moira continues. "The Liquor Control Board Employees Division has about 5,800 members. The casual component numbers over 3,300 members, about 57 per cent."

John Cartwright, president of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council frequently points out that over 1 million workers in Toronto make less than \$29,000 a year.

We have two guest writers. **Janice Hagan** is the chief steward of Local 561 at Seneca College. She is studying for a Master's Degree at York University on labour and the environment. **Sherri Demers** is a steward in Local 551, Probation and Parole.



This is the last issue of *The Rapaport Report* until September. Have a great summer. Spend time with your family and your friends. Read a good book. Go for a swim. Relax. Have a barbecue. Go on a hike. Come to the Women's Caucus Picnic. Visit a new neighbourhood. Go to a garage sale. Listen to music. Visit your friends. Make new friends. Go to a movie. See a play. Cook a great meal. Eat a great meal. Take time to smell the flowers. Go to Caribana. Watch the Blue Jays win it all this year. Come out for Labour Day. We're in a great union. Let's celebrate that.

The Executive Board met on June 19th. Here is another issue of *The Rapaport Report*.

Executive Board Retreat - June 17th and 18th

The Executive Board held a two day retreat on June 17th and 18th. We discussed a number of key issues facing OPSEU. We reached no conclusions. It was discussion and debate, all useful and interesting.

There was a time that I was weary of ‘retreats’. I now find them useful. The leadership of OPSEU should periodically discuss the ‘big issues’. It gives us a chance to think big and maintain elected leadership knowledge and perspective.

The issues were diverse and inter-related. Where does OPSEU stand in the wider world, a world that is becoming more hostile to our union and what we stand for? How do we identify the big issues; as a union, as a group of workers, as an advocate for public services and for human rights? These are tall orders.

How do we determine our successes and our shortfalls?

At the start of the retreat, we heard from our new internal auditor. We hired **Sunil Aneja** for one year to examine how we do things; how we might do them more efficiently, effectively and economically.

OPSEU is complex; annual revenues greater than \$70 million, over 250 staff, over 500 collective agreements. Throw in the politics and you’ve got quite a brew of intricate, complex, highly-charged, sensitive issues. We deal with so many issues, all of them urgent because they are directly involved with people’s lives; our income, our health care system, our working conditions and our communities.

We’re all partners in our union; in OPSEU.

It is the primary responsibility of the Executive Board, of the leadership, to see that OPSEU runs smoothly – or at least as smoothly as possible. There are too many partners and the stakes are too high to do otherwise.

An internal auditor is the bureaucratic or, pardon me, the management side of this responsibility. Our finances and resources should flow to where they are needed and budgeted. It should flow in the directions defined by policies that are debated and shaped at Convention and at the Board.

The Executive Board cannot fulfill its responsibility in a vacuum. There are some pre-requisites; unity within the Board to build a focus and a consensus. And a communication strategy that invites debate that creates consensus and action.

There are many facets to the responsibility.

Executive Board Meeting - June 19th

The OPSEU Joint Trusteed Benefit Plan

OPSEU has sponsored a highly successful benefit plan, mostly for BPS locals, for over ten years. We appoint the OPSEU trustees as well as the employer trustees. The Board had a discussion on how trustees are selected. Who does the selection? What is the involvement of the Executive Board? The matter was tabled until the September Board meeting.



"Sir, any spare stock options?"

OPS Bargaining Debrief

It is over a year since the OPS settled our collective agreement with the Ontario Government. There has been much talk about a debrief. It never occurred.

EBM's agreed that we should determine why the strike vote was so low in the Unified bargaining unit. Corrections has much to teach the rest of the OPS on how to get a high strike vote. They were more successful in their contract talks as a result.

The Board voted to bring in the bargaining team on the Friday before the OPS Divisional meetings in November for a debrief.

Debt/Deficit Repayment

OPSEU is carrying a line-of-credit of about \$6 million. As a result of the budget debate at Convention, we have an additional \$2.4 million in the General Fund for 2006. See the April 26, 2006 issue of *The Rapaport Report* for details.

The Board debated how to divvy up the additional funds; lower the accumulated debt or fund activities. We voted to do both. We voted to pay \$160,000 a month against the debt. That should lower the debt by \$2 million over 12 months.

CAAT Arbitrations – Part 2

Mary Ann White from St. Lawrence College, Kingston - CAAT(A) and Ann Cummings from Fanshawe College,

London - CAAT(S) made a presentation to the Board. They are both members of the CAAT Grievance Scheduling Committee. They objected to the Board's May decision to postpone/cancel arbitrations scheduled for the end of the year. See *The Rapaport Report* of May, 2006.

At that meeting, the Board was told that maintaining the proposed arbitration schedule could bring the deficit in that budget line to \$360,000. Sisters Cummings and White informed us that the schedule can be maintained with just 14 additional cases at a cost of about \$50,000. That's significantly less than what we told in May.

The Board voted to reconsider the issue and in the end agreed with the presentation. That additional \$50,000 is on a budget of \$900,000, a 5.5% increase. The Board also voted for a *pro-rated* increase in the BPS and OPS grievance legal budget lines.

Investing the Strike Fund

I am on a special Board committee with **Dave Lundy** and **Smokey Thomas** to investigate how to invest our strike fund.

Currently, the strike fund is invested in 91 day T-Bills currently realizing returns of about 2.8%. That's not very good. We recommended to the Board that with a small increase in risk, we can realize larger returns. We suggested 20% in equities, 20% in 91 day T-Bills and 60% in bonds. A fund with that asset mix would have realized annualized returns of 7.6% over the past ten years.

Our recommendation was adopted.

Board Liaison with Committees

In a reversal of its leadership/liaison position, the Board agreed to assign/elect one EBM as its liaison to the Provincial Women's Committee, the Provincial Human Rights Committee, the Provincial Young Workers Committee and the Provincial Retirees Committee. We elected **Pauline Tapping**, Region 3 EBM as our liaison.

I was unsure how I felt about this originally. I saw a Board liaison as either a direct conduit to the leadership or alternatively as political interference in the work of the committees. That confusion cleared up after conversations with committee members. They wanted a liaison, a direct contact with the Board. That fits with my belief that the Board is there to meet the needs of OPSEU activists.



The Central Political Action Committee - CPAC

The Board made the following decisions.

- 1) \$5,000 to the NDP for the provincial by-election in Parkdale-High Park;
- 2) For the municipal elections in November; \$10,000 for Region 5 and \$5,000 for each of the other regions.

The Weekend Walk to End Breast Cancer

By Sherri Demers, Local 551

On September 8 – 10, 1,000's will converge on Toronto for the annual 60 K. walkathon for "The Weekend to End Breast Cancer" for Princess Margaret Hospital.

One in nine Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in her lifetime. **That's more than any other type of cancer.** That means that many of the wonderful women we know will be diagnosed with this tragic disease.

Some entrants choose to walk simply because it is the right thing to do. Some walkers participate in order to celebrate their success in battling this terrible disease. Each step celebrates their on-going journey from devastating diagnosis to triumphant survival.

Some teams walk to celebrate the life or lives of cherished loved ones, who sadly, lost their battle with this terrible disease.

Black Creek Probation and Parole office is participating in this event mostly for the third reason, that of honouring the memory of a loved one. They have entered a team of 8, calling themselves "Sisters in Law", comprised of Kim Merglesky, Ida Rosati, Alis B. Kennedy, Gabriella Morreale, Sherri Demers and 3 members of Kim's family.

This team will be walking in memory of Kim's sister, Cindy, who lost her own battle with this disease at the age of 40. The team will be wearing t-shirts, detailed with Cindy's picture to honour her courageous battle with breast cancer.

Each team member is expected to raise a minimum of \$2,000. At first the amount seemed to be a daunting one, but the team has decided to work together. Our mantra is: "Together we can do anything." The team as a whole unit must raise \$16,000.

If you wish to remember a woman who lost her fight with breast cancer, please let us know. We would be happy to honour your loved one's memory on the walk.

The team will be holding fund-raisers such as a garage sales/bake sales, etc. Any and all donations would be greatly appreciated. Donations may be made over an extended period of time as well. All monies donated go directly to the Princess Margaret Hospital. Any donations exceeding \$10.00 is eligible for a tax receipt.

To make a donation please visit www.endcancer.ca or call either Kim or Sherri at Black Creek Probation and Parole 416-314-9531 for further information.

Thank you for assisting us with our quest to create a brighter future for all women through The Weekend to End Breast Cancer - and to improving the lives of women by taking another step toward the end of breast cancer.

Labour and the Environment

By Janice Hagan, Local 561

David Suzuki inspired us at Convention. Excited delegates voted to turn OPSEU green. How can we as labour activists help in the fight to save our planet?

Start with Health and Safety (of course)

Diseases originating at work make up two thirds of all work related deaths in Ontario. There were almost 200 WSIB approved claims in 2004. Very alarming considering that the Board rejected half the claims received on behalf of workers who died from suspicious illnesses. Many exposures lead to terminal illnesses 30-40 years in the future. The links to workplace exposures are rarely made. The threat is greater than documented.

Locals need to consider toxins, carcinogens and air pollutants when performing health & safety inspections. Make an inventory of all chemicals and materials used in your workplace and do your own research. Don't rely on manufacturer or management information. Start with the websites of Workers Health & Safety Centres across Canada and similar organizations around the world. Share your research with members and other locals, through education and newsletters. Like the canaries in the coal mine, when we identify toxins in the workplace, we make our whole community safer.

Plan for a Just Transition

The second most important place for union activists in the environmental movement is in the face of environmentalists. With obvious exceptions like Dr. Suzuki, environmentalists are not generally pro-labour. Just listen to global warming activists measure their campaign success in numbers of jobs lost in "offensive" industries. Where is the bragging about how environmental organizations also ensured effected workers would be offered retraining or resettlement programs, so they could continue to support their families? Labour needs to be in the face of the environmentalists because they need to be reminded that workers are NOT going make all the sacrifices to save the planet for the rich few while they are left behind to fend for themselves.

Locals and sectors in our union must start thinking ahead about the response to global warming (not a Harper response). These include radical cuts to the emissions of carbon and other greenhouse gasses. They will change how we work and what work. We need to lobby employers, governments and environmentalists to make sure that remediation and adaptation plans always include fair transition programs for effected workers. If we don't bring the voices of workers to the environmental table, who will?

Mobilize/Transform

A radical change in our daily lives must occur if we are to limit the wrath of global warming on our children and grandchildren. Involve as many members as you can. Make your Local's choice of environmental action personal. Link your activities with your local community and the knowledge and experience base of your members.

Around OPSEU & Region 5

Strike Alert – Local 535 (AGO)

OPSEU members at the Art Gallery of Ontario are poised to strike on Thursday, June 29th. There are two days of mediation scheduled for June 27 and 28.

The Rapaport Report spoke to a busy **Barry Taylor**, Local 535 President.

‘Job security is our big issue’, emphasized **Brother Taylor**. ‘Because of the construction we have lost 120 members in the past two years.’ The local wants to see seniority taken more seriously. ‘We need stronger language in the layoff and recall clauses. We want the recall extended from 14 months to two years.’ The local also seeks better benefits, particularly in vision care.

The AGO is located at Dundas and McCaul, three blocks east of University.

Hotel Workers Action

The union for hotel workers, UNITE-HERE is asking for our help in their campaign ‘Hotel Workers Rising’. Through collective bargaining at 19 Toronto hotels, they are struggling to raise the living standards of hotel workers. They are leafleting the King Edward Hotel at 37 King Street East on Tuesday, July 27 at 5:00 – 7:00 PM.

Labour Day Planning Meeting

There is a meeting to plan participation in the Labour Day parade on Thursday, June 29th at 5:30 at 31 Wellesley East. Labour Day is Monday, September 4th.

Women’s Caucus Picnic

The Region 5 Women’s Caucus is organizing a picnic. It is scheduled for Saturday, July 15th at Wilket Creek Park. Contact **Gloria David**.

Protect Canadian Jobs

Mayor **David Miller** and Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) chair **Howard Moscoe** are under attack because they want new subway cars to be built by Bombardier in Thunder Bay.

Toronto Labour Council is holding a rally to support that decision; Tuesday, June 27th, 8:30-9:30 at Toronto City Hall.

Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED) – Local Presidents Meeting

There will be a meeting for Region 5 LBED local presidents for Wednesday, July 26, from 10 AM to 4 PM at OPSEU head office. Some local presidents from Region 2 and Region 3 are also attending.

Pride Day Parade

The annual Pride Day parade was held in Toronto on Sunday, June 25th. I marched with about 60 OPSEU activists from across the province.

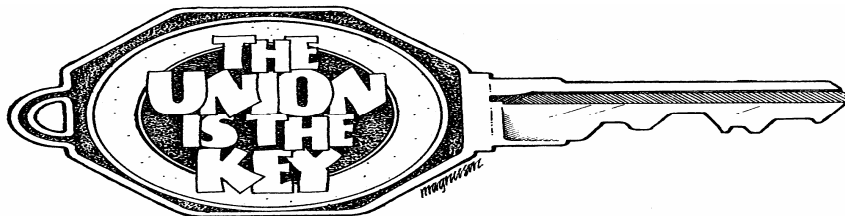
Congratulations and thanks to the Rainbow Alliance. OPSEU was there with our solidarity and with our issues; CAAT part-time campaign, protecting the Human Rights Commission and opposing P3’s. The theme of the parade was Fearless. I like that.

Calendar of Events

Protect Canadian Jobs Rally – Tues, June 27th, 8:30-9:30, Toronto City Hall
Leafleting at the King Edward Hotel – Tues, June 27th, 5:00-7:00, 37 King Street East
Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) meeting – Wed, June 28th, 5:30, 31 Wellesley
Labour Day planning meeting – Thur, June 29th, 5:30, 31 Wellesley East
Labour Council general meeting – Thur, July 6th, 7:30, OFL Building, 15 Gervais Dr.
Picnic, Region 5 Women's Caucus – Sat, July 15th, Wilket Creek Park
LBED meeting – Wed, July 26th, 10:00-4:00, OPSEU Head Office
Labour Council general meeting – Thur, August 3rd, 7:30, OFL Building, 15 Gervais Dr.
Labour Day – Mon, September 4th
The Walk to End Breast Cancer – September 8-10
2006 OPSEU Editors Weekend – November 3-5

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Tony Carneiro, Chair, Region 5 Retirees Group - 416-787-7033
Toronto and York Region Labour Council – 416-441-3663
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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.