

The Rapaport Report

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May, 2005

This newsletter has been written, edited, researched and published by me, David Rapaport, Executive Board Member of Region 5 of OPSEU. I take full responsibility for its content. If you have any comments, suggestions or criticisms, please address them to me. I can be reached at 416-651-1659 or at drapaport@opseu.org.

I hope to publish an issue of The Rapaport Report after every board meeting. In addition, I might find it necessary to publish issues between board meetings. My aim is to inform activists about the broad issues facing our union and the many activities and events in Region 5.

Back on the Board – After eight years I am back on the Executive Board of OPSEU. I left the Board in April, 1997 after six years as a Region 5 EBM. Much has changed and much has remained the same. The OPS is smaller. The Broader Public Sector, particularly the health sector, has grown substantially. The Executive Board is smaller. Mike Harris is gone. The Liberals are in. The cuts remain. CAAT-S and CAAT-A are negotiating new collective agreements in tandem. OPS is once again having problems negotiating a new collective agreement.

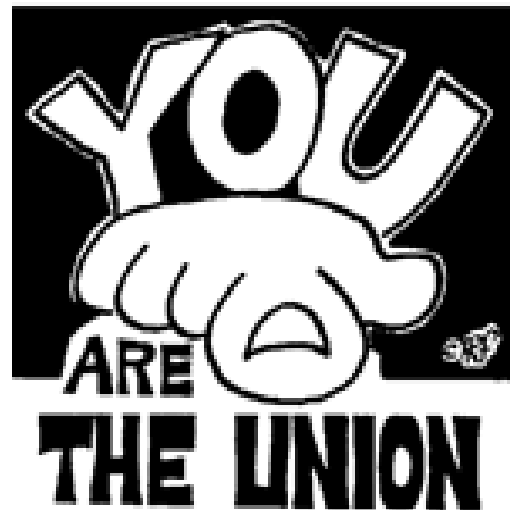
Executive Board Meeting - May 18, 19

The first meeting of the new Executive Board occurred on May 18 and 19. We covered a number of issues and made a number of decisions. What follows is a brief synopsis of each issue.

Merger with the OLBEU

If all goes according to plan, the 5,400 member Ontario Liquor Board Employees Union, OLBEU will soon be part of OPSEU. At their convention on May 8th, delegates voted unanimously to merge with OPSEU. Members will vote between May 29th and June 30th. It requires a two-thirds majority. The merger makes a lot of sense. OLBEU members are civil servants. They fight privatization. They are members of the

OPSEU Pension Trust. If you are visiting your local LCBO for your weekend bottle of wine, identify yourself as an OPSEU member/activist and say a few welcoming words.



Presentation from the Developmental Services Sector – BPS Sector 2

Sue Walker and **Sara Jordinson** made a presentation to the Board about a joint BPS/OPS campaign. They had a joint caucus at convention. The three remaining OPS Regional Centres, South Western near London, Huronia near Orillia and Rideau near Smiths Falls are facing closure. They employ about 2,000 workers. The community centres in the BPS are receiving patients from the shrinking OPS presence. The 6,500 employees in the community centres are generally paid less, have fewer benefits with less access to pension plans. The proposed campaign involves saving the Regional Centres and implementing strategies to improve the collective agreements in the community based centres.

There was a rally at Queen's Park on Wednesday, May 11th to save the centres. It was organized by the parents of patients and by OPSEU members. On May 17th, **Leah Casselman** and **Sid Ryan** from CUPE held a joint press conference highlighting the situation in this sector.

An objective of the BPS portion of the campaign is to develop coordinated bargaining among the small Sector 2 bargaining units. The aim is to have all agencies represented by OPSEU negotiating new collective agreements in 2007. We have been working with CUPE on this matter. There is also the need to organize more agencies.

OPSEU currently represents 63 of the approximately 370 agencies in this sector.

Currently, the government spends about \$1.2 billion annually for 39,000 patients.

The Executive Board granted \$70,500 for this campaign from the Contingency Fund.

The OPSEU Joint Trusteed Benefit Fund.

In 1995, OPSEU established a benefit fund. Too many BPS members were not receiving adequate benefits. This fund was established as an affordable option for employers to offer benefits for these members. Currently, 86 BPS agencies are participating in the program. Recently, SSQ, a labour-friendly Quebec-based firm was chosen to be the carrier for Benefit Fund. The Fund has been a true success story. It is now celebrating its ten year anniversary.

Bernard King of local 500, CAMH and **Angelo Rao** of local 576, OCAD are the current OPSEU appointed trustees.

Nancy Pridham, EBM was recognized as a former trustee.

Financial Report

The First Vice President/Treasurer, **Smokey Thomas** walked us through the financial report. We were told that many expense lines are going over budget. The Board requested a report for the June Board meeting that identifies those over-budget items with explanations.

The Board was presented with a proposal to purchase 31 Wellesley Street for \$2,200,000. We have until November to exercise that option under our current leasing agreement. We deferred the decision until the June

board meeting. EBM's felt that we needed more time to consider the option.

The OMERS legal challenge

Our sibling union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) has started a legal challenge against the Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS), Ontario's second largest public sector pension plan. The goal of the challenge is to establish true joint trusteeship and challenge Borealis, the OMERS investment arm. Borealis has invested in P3 projects across Canada. We represent about 3,000 members in the OMERS plan. The Executive Board gave \$10,000 to support the legal challenge.

Elections to Board Committees

We held elections for nine Executive Board committees. I was elected to the Pension Liaison Committee (what a shock) along with **Nancy Pridham**. I was also elected as an employer trustee on the OPSEU staff pension plan. **Terry Downey** was elected to the

Strategic Planning Committee and the MDT/SDT Committee.

OHRC Campaign

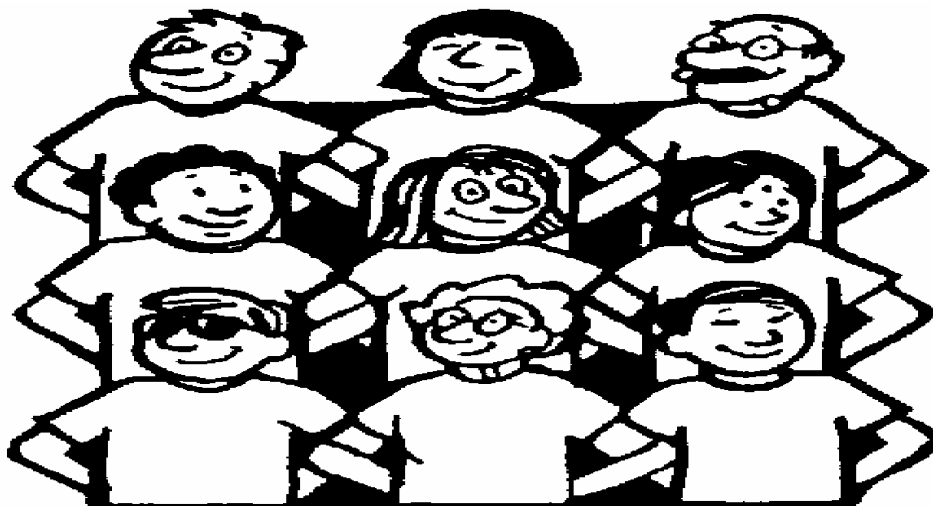
Three activists from the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) made a presentation to the Executive Board on deteriorating working conditions at the OHRC. **Terry Downey** arranged the presentation. There is talk of privatization and other options to weaken citizen access to this important public service. The board gave \$6,500 for the campaign.

Human Rights Training for EBM's

Board members will be receiving one day of human rights training at a board meeting sometime in 2005. It is important that EBM's lead by example.

Visiting Board Members

It is now official policy that when an EBM visits a local or an area council in a region other than her/his own, then the visiting EBM notifies the RVP from the visited region.



What follows is a list and description of bargaining, organizations and events, past and future. Where possible and appropriate, I provide a contact. Please feel free to get in touch with me if I forgot to include an organization or event.

Collective Bargaining

OPSEU is always bargaining. This is a big year for many central collective agreements. Many Region 5 locals are in bargaining units that span across locals and regions. They negotiate collective agreements with province wide employers. Currently, there are six central bargaining tables. Region 5 has members on all of those bargaining teams. I will periodically ask Region 5 activists to comment on bargaining and write about their experiences representing members on bargaining teams.

OPS Bargaining – OPS members of OPSEU are once again experiencing our triennial collective bargaining roller coaster. After three rounds of very difficult bargaining with the Harris/Eves Tories, we have run into yet another wall with the McGuinty Liberals. It is disheartening to witness the new Liberal government, which we helped elect, acting this way. Many Liberal MPPs and cabinet ministers joined us on our picket lines in the 1996 and 2002 strikes.

What this round of bargaining has in common with previous rounds is the attempt to restructure and reengineer how we work. The OPSEU collective agreement is not part of that vision. Their vision is concerned with the

expansion and contraction of the labour market, flexibility, lower wages and the ability to layoff cheaply.

The neo-conservative vision of organizational development and labour relations has not gone away with the election of the Liberals. I shall return to this matter in future issues of *The Rapaport Report*.

This coming Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, May 25-27, 42,000 members of the OPS bargaining unit votes on the employer's offer. The count takes place on Saturday. Ratification of the employer's offer would mean a set-back for our collective agreement. We must reject the offer. The team can then return to the table with a mandate to bargain a good contract. **Paul Myers** of local 526 represents Region 5 on the OPS bargaining team.

CAAT-A bargaining - The CAAT-Academic collective agreement expires in August. **Ted Montgomery** of local 560, Seneca College and **Damian Wiechula** of local 556, George Brown College are on the team. Ted is once again team chair. He told *The Rapaport Report* that the team is aiming to improve the salary position of college faculty between secondary school teachers and university professors. Brother Montgomery also had some very positive things to say about CAAT-A's new association with the Canadian Association of University Teachers. They affiliated last year.

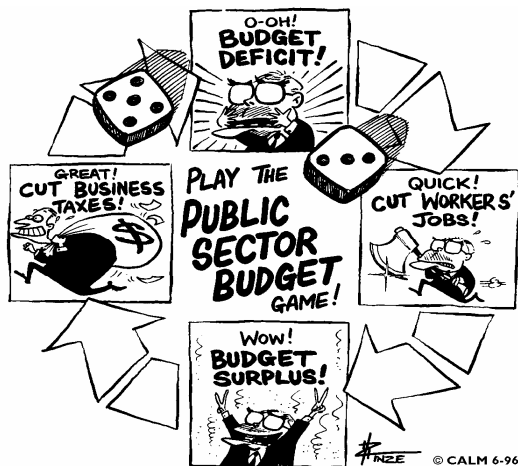
CAAT-S bargaining – The CAAT-S collective agreement also expires in August. Bargaining is underway. **Rod Bemister** of Local 561, Seneca College

and **Christine Legault** of Local 557, George Brown College are on the team. Rod is chair. Christine is vice-chair. Rod told *The Rapaport Report* that the team is currently emphasizing job security and seniority.

Canadian Blood Services/Support – Mirla Alvarado Fenn and Dino Kourlas, both of Local 5103 are on the bargaining team. They achieved a 95% strike vote early in May. Congratulations. They applied for conciliation on May 18th.

Canadian Blood Services/Technologists – Steven O'Marra and Sheila Annett, both of Local 5101 are on the bargaining team. They achieved an 88% strike vote early in May. Congratulations. They also applied for conciliation on May 18th.

Hospital Professional Divisions Bargaining – About 40 hospitals from around the province negotiate in central bargaining in the HPD. **Bryan Mitchell** of local 570, Mount Sinai Hospital is on the team. They had their first arbitration dates in mid-May.



Organizations

Labour Council - Many OPSEU locals in Region 5 are affiliated to the Labour Council of Toronto and York Region. Locals from every union in Toronto affiliate. The labour council meets the first Thursday of every month at the OFL Building at 15 Gervais Drive at 7:30. For OPSEU locals, 90% of labour council dues are paid back by head office. **John Cartwright** is the president of the labour council. **Ceceil Beckford** of Local 543, the Royal Ontario Museum, represents OPSEU on the labour council executive board. I am on the labour council outreach committee. If you are interested in having your local affiliate to the labour council, please get in touch with me or Ceceil. I strongly encourage affiliation. The labour council is the labour movement in Toronto.

The Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) – The area council meets the third Wednesday of every month at 5:30 at 31 Wellesley. The area council is a long-time feature of Region 5. 12 locals are affiliated. Debates, discussions and invited speakers take place. It provides an opportunity to network and share information on collective bargaining and wider union issues. I encourage locals to affiliate. Most of the area council dues are paid back by head office. **Bob Taylor** is the president. Bob can be reached at 416-482-6680.

The Region 5 Women's Caucus – The Women's Caucus meets the first Tuesday of every month to discuss women's issues. The contact is **Gloria David** of Local 532. Gloria can be reached at 416-314-6484.

The Region 5 Retiree's Group – The retiree group is open to all OPSEU retirees. They meet the first Tuesday of every month with a break during the summer. They discuss issues of interest to retirees, such as pensions and benefits. The chair is **Tony Carneiro**. Tony can be reached at 416-787-7033.

Past Events

Aboriginal/Workers of Colour Conference – On May 7th, about 35 OPSEU activists joined over 200 other labour activists at the third Aboriginal and Workers of Colour Conference. The conference was organized by the equity committee of the labour council. By any standard, the conference was a great success. There were workshops on equity, how leadership should reflect membership, the changing face of Toronto and its workplaces. We heard from **Howard Hampton, Haroon Saddiqi, Zanana Akande and Mayor David Miller**. **Gloria David** wrote a detailed account of the conference. Her account is available.

Wal-Mart Rallies – The Canadian Labour Congress organized cross Canada rallies in front of Wal-Mart stores on Saturday, May 7th. Labour council organized two rallies in Toronto. Many OPSEU activists participated.

In February, 2005 Wal-Mart announced that it was closing its store in Jonquiere, Quebec simply because workers decided to form a union, the United Food and Commercial Workers. Canadians have the right to join a union and employers should respect that right.

A few facts about Wal-Mart. Five of the world's richest people are Wal-Mart owners. Wal-Mart likes to pretend that it is part of the Canadian community, yet most of the products that line its shelves are from off-shore sweatshops. Their favourite 'Made in Canada' product is its huge profits. The majority of their workers make salaries below the poverty line.

To learn more about this issue please visit the web site www.canadianlabour.ca.

OFL Health Care Campaign Toronto Meeting – On Monday, May 16th, I attended the Toronto meeting of the Ontario Federation of Labour Health Care Campaign. Health care is deteriorating. The focus of the OFL campaign is staffing. Health care is delivered by health care workers. Without proper staffing levels and staff with proper compensation and training, it is not possible to deliver high quality health care. Health care workers from OPSEU, ONA, SEIU are speaking out with their stories. They are being collected for a fall campaign. Stay tuned.

Upcoming Events

Protect Workers, Not Bad Bosses Rally – Friday, May 27th, 12 noon. Ministry of Labour Building, 400 University Avenue. Join the rally to urge the Ministry of Labour to enforce legislation that protects the rights of workers.

Injured Workers Day - Injured workers and their advocates are holding their annual rally in support of the rights of

injured workers in Ontario. Join them at Queens Park on Wednesday, June 1st, from 11:00 am until 1:00 pm.

Labour Day Parade Planning – Region 5 organizers had our first 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

Thursday, June 9th at 5:30 at 31 Wellesley Street East. Labour Day is Monday, September 5th.

Region 5 Picnic – The Region 5 Woman’s Committee is once again organizing 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.

More Upcoming Events

CLC Convention, June 13-17
 Executive Board Meeting, June 20-22
 Gay Pride Day, Sunday, June 26th
 Region 5 Picnic, July 16th
 Labour Day Parade, September 5th

BPS Conference, September 16–18
 Executive Board Meeting, September 21-22
 Executive Board Meeting, Oct 19-20
 OFL Convention, November 20-25
 Executive Board Meeting, Dec 14-15



Region 5 Contacts

Terry Downey, Regional Vice President - terry.downey@sympatico.ca
 Nancy Pridham, Executive Board Member - nancypridham@look.ca
 Yvonne Bobb, Region 5 Member, Provincial Woman’s Committee - ybobb1@sympatico.ca
 Ceceil Beckford, Region 5 Member, Provincial Human Rights Committee - ceceilb@rom.on.ca
 Carl Mohan, Region 5 Member, Provincial Youth Committee - cmohan@opseu541.org

To Reach OPSEU Direct – 416-443-8888

OPSEU web site – www.opseu.org

A recent editorial from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

TORONTO, May 6, 2005 —“It’s not often that a government facing fiscal problems leads into its budget by declaring proudly that it intends to ignore the fundamental cause of those problems, but that’s exactly what Ontario’s Premier and Minister of Finance have done this year.”

That’s the conclusion of an Ontario Alternative Budget Technical Paper released today by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives on the eve of the McGuinty Government’s second budget, scheduled for release on May 11.

The paper, written by Ontario Alternative Budget co-chair Hugh Mackenzie, challenges the assertion by Dalton McGuinty that Ontario’s fiscal problems are caused by the \$23 billion fiscal imbalance in federal finances that he discovered earlier this year, comparing Ontario with other provinces to focus in on the underlying causes of Ontario’s fiscal problems.

“The conclusion from the numbers is clear. Ontario is experiencing fiscal problems because its revenue is not sufficient to pay for the public services we need. And our shortage of revenue is directly attributable to cuts in taxes implemented by the Harris and Eves governments – tax cuts that we could not afford”, Mackenzie said.

Using data from Statistics Canada, the paper concludes that, in 2004, Ontario was tied with PEI in raising the lowest revenue per capita from its own sources among Canadian provinces. If Ontario had raised the same level of revenue per capita as the average for the other provinces, its revenue would have been \$15.9 billion higher.

“The numbers also make it clear why we have this revenue gap. Even taking into account the tax cut cancellations and revenue from the new Health Premium, the legacy in lost revenue from the Harris-Eves era is an estimated \$12.2 billion in 2004-5.”, Mackenzie said.

“Just bringing Ontario’s own source revenue to the same per capita levels as the average for the other provinces would generate more than enough to eliminate the deficit and fund the Liberals’ entire election platform. To suggest that Ontario’s fiscal problems have any other cause is just blowing smoke.”

The Rapaport Report is the newsletter of David Rapaport, Region 5 Executive Board Member of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, OPSEU. David is 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 and at drapaport@opseu.org.