

# The Rapaport Report

Volume 2, Number 1

May 2007

*“The rumours of my death are great exaggerations.”*

Mark Twain

## The New Leadership

I have returned to a changed OPSEU Executive Board. There are six new EBMs, including **Ted Montgomery** replacing **Peggy Maybury** in Region 5. The two BIG changes on the board (and in the entire union) are rather obvious. **Leah** is gone. **Smokey** is President. What does that mean for OPSEU's direction and future? It is too early to say. We shall wait and see.

Which way will this new Executive Board and this new leadership try to lead the union? Some Executive Board Members will attempt to change our direction on political action; that we should not tie our wagon to any partisan horse and that we should be more politically agnostic. I am looking forward to that discussion at the next Executive Board meeting.

There are many OPSEU matters that await direction. What will we do about the huge grievance arbitration backlog? What will be our pension strategies and our response to the AMAPCEO encroachment into OPSEU turf in the OPS? How will we deal with the growth of cheaper labour markets that compete with our bargaining units, as in the colleges and in so many other venues? How will we stop, or at least mitigate the rising tide of privatization, particularly in its new forms; P3s, agency stores, competitive bidding and government restructuring such as the LHIN? How will we address and

correct the injustices experienced by equity seeking groups? What about our relationship with the wider labour movement, particularly the Ontario Federation of Labour?

I will discuss these matters in future issues of *The Rapaport Report* as they and other matters arise. I will continue to stay away from the personal disputes that divide us.

My congratulations go to **Smokey Thomas** and to **Patty Rout**. **Smokey** and I worked on and completed two projects during the last Executive Board; we collaborated on the Delta-Chelsea campaign (a proud moment for OPSEU) and the highly successful strike fund asset re-allocation. Since Convention he has signaled an open administration to me.



*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.

I have got to know **Sister Rout** in the past year. She has principle and conviction. She is also a regular contributor to *The Rapaport Report* on health sector matters.

## My Final Word on the Elections

Many members were supportive of my presidential campaign at Convention and I truly appreciated that. I am of course disappointed that my own aspirations did not pan out. But, I have long ago learned to accept unmet expectations. My campaign was about political independence and I will continue that approach over the next two years.

The big change for me is that I am Region 5 Vice President, a position that I held for six years, 1991-97. So, this is familiar territory. I look forward to working with **Nancy** and **Ted**. Region 5 shows respect for bargaining unit diversity as we represent all of the larger sectors in OPSEU. I am from the OPS. **Nancy** is from the BPS. And **Ted** is from CAAT.



## Electoral Reform

You will be hearing much from me on electoral reform as we move closer to the October 10<sup>th</sup> referendum. There will be a big push to remake the composition of the provincial parliament so that it is more reflective of the popular support of political parties. On page 6 you will find a brief article from Fair Vote Ontario. FVO has

been leading the charge for electoral reform in Ontario. Convention delegates voted overwhelmingly to support proportional electoral reform for the province of Ontario. OPSEU has been supporting the work of Fair Vote Ontario.

## On Producing Newsletters

A contentious issue arose at the March Executive Board meeting. I voted on the losing side and issued a Minority Report, which means that I can speak out against the decision of the Executive Board.

First, some background. A P.A. Day is a Presidential Assignment Day where the President of the union approves a union paid day off for EBMs. They are mostly predictable and ordinary; attending Board meetings, committee work, visiting a local, working on a union campaign, etc.

Earlier in the year **Leah** denied P.A. days to an EBM to produce a newsletter. The EBM challenged her decision and the Board supported that challenge. I voted on the losing side. I believe that an EBM newsletter is an informal communication with OPSEU activists and members. It is not the official word of the union nor should it be. We have a Communications Division that does that, and quite well, I might add. What frightens me is that once the union is paying for the production of the newsletter then the union can say what goes into it.

In the Convention Executive Board Report, some EBMs argued in their Minority Reports that a newsletter is a device for re-election and that the union should not support that. That's pretty cynical. Some of us consider it as an important communication device, to informally communicate and to express views and to maintain our independence.

I have always been a big fan of newsletters. As a reader, I learn. As a producer, I share. Information sharing and opinion sharing is democratic and horizontal – leveling the playing field of OPSEU information and politics – getting into interesting discussions and debates with readers.

Why, then, am I going on about newsletters? Well, back to the **Mark Twain** quote at the top of the first page. It refers to *The Rapaport Report*, not to its producer.

There are three guest articles in this issue of *The Rapaport Report*. On page 5, there is a piece from **John Cartwright**, president of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council giving us an update. On page 6, **Jennifer Ahamed**, Region 5 member of the Provincial Human Rights Committee tells us about an exciting community project in Rexdale. On page 6 there is a piece from Fair Vote Ontario.

SHOP AT STORES  
THAT HIRE  
UNION WORKERS



## Executive Board Report

The Executive Board met on May 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>. We covered the following ground. As an aside, the tone of the meeting on Wednesday was a bit antagonistic, probably a leftover from Convention and the elections. The tone became much friendlier on Thursday.

## Change in Strike Policy

Previously, when a bargaining unit goes on strike, members are entitled to an additional quarterly rebate at the start of the strike. What about a BPS units that makes up a small percentage of a local. This happened in March with the Compass workers at the University of Western Ontario who make up a small part of Local 144. We changed the policy to only include the number of members who are on strike. We improved the benefit so that it is repeated every eighth week. Let's hope that that does not happen too often.

## NDP Leader's Dinner

The Executive Board purchased 10 tickets as an Event Patron for the Ontario NDP Leader's Election dinner for \$8,400.

## Safe Needles

We discussed the Safe Needles Save Lives Act, a health and safety initiative in the health care sector. Bill 30 is a private members bill introduced by NDP MPP **Shelley Martel**. If enacted, it would require health care employers to provide safe needles for employees. According to **Patty Rout**, all MPPs seem to support the legislation except Health Minister **George Smitherman**. It is estimated to cost about \$22 million a year to implement and save a projected \$33 million in WSIB claims.

## Committee Elections

At the first board meeting of a new term we hold elections to about 20 board committees or board liaisons to other committees. I was elected to the Pension Liaison Committee, to the OPSEU Staff Pension Plan as a trustee, to the Convention Board Report committee and as the Executive Board Liaison to the Retirees Committee. **Nancy Pridham** was elected to the Pension Liaison Committee and to the Strategic Planning Committee. **Ted Montgomery** was elected as the Executive Board liaison to the Convention Constitution Committee, to the OPSEU Staff Pension Plan as a trustee and to the staff negotiating team.

## Support at Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare

OPSEU locals and activists in Region 3 have been fighting the privatization of lab services in Bracebridge and Huntsville. One steward was dismissed for speaking out. The Board approved the expenditure of \$14,000 to fight the privatization and to defend our activists. As an aside, I attended a support rally for the dismissed steward on Tuesday, May 24<sup>th</sup> in Barrie. We must stand behind our stewards who take risks for the union and for the membership. We are doing just that.

## Electoral Reform in Ontario

There will be a referendum on October 10<sup>th</sup> to reform Ontario's electoral system. The reform will make the system more proportional and representative. This initiative was overwhelmingly endorsed at Convention. We received a request for assistance from Fair Vote Ontario. The request was referred to the Central Political Action Committee. They will report back to the June Board meeting.

## OFL Aboriginal Conference

The Board approved sending four members of the Provincial Human Rights Committee to this conference June 12-14.



## *This and That*

### Labour Council Workers of Colour/Aboriginal Workers Conference

Along with about 15 OPSEU Region 5 activists, I attended this fifth annual conference on May 12<sup>th</sup>. As usual, it was informative and inspiring. OPSEU activists **Yvonne Bobb** and **Cecil Beckford** facilitated two of the sessions.

### Day of Mourning

Every year, on April 30<sup>th</sup>, the labour movement, across Canada, stops for one hour to remember Canadian workers who died on the job in the previous year. Most, if not all of these fatalities are preventable. This year, the Toronto ceremony was at City Hall. All major unions, including OPSEU, were there.

See *More This and That* on page 7

## A MILLION REASONS TO MOBILIZE

by John Cartwright, President, Toronto and York Region Labour Council

Two years ago, Labour Council launched "A Million Reasons to Take Action". We described it not as a campaign, but as a framework for strategies to raise the standards of a million workers in greater Toronto. Since that time, there have been a number of major initiatives undertaken by Labour Council and our affiliates within the Million Reasons framework.

At the start of this year, we quickly created a high-profile campaign for the \$10 Minimum Wage. Petition cards, posters and buttons were soon to be found all across Ontario. Together with community allies, we held a series of town hall forums where low wage workers could tell about the reality of trying to live on less than \$10. The issue hit home, as the by-election victory of **Paul Ferreira** proved.



The response of the Liberal government – to make low-wage workers wait three years until the minimum wage climbs to \$10.25 – is unacceptable. We will continue to mobilize to demand \$10 now, as well as addressing the other key issues that were raised during the first phase of the campaign.

The next initiative is taking place within the social services sector. This sector is largely taken for granted, but comprises an essential part of both our economy and our social infrastructure. Every day thousands of people in Toronto depend on social service agencies to deliver expert programs that touch all our lives—from day care to home care, children and youth recreational programs, seniors services, crisis intervention, family counselling and employment/skills training.

Yet a decade of inadequate funding for this work has created huge pressure on these organizations and left many workers in the sector underpaid and undervalued. A Community Social Services Campaign has been formed with agencies and unions to win stable, secure funding for this vital work. It will launch at a major event at Queen's Park on Tuesday, June 5<sup>th</sup>.

And then there is the silent crisis in manufacturing. Tens of thousands of good paying jobs have been lost in greater Toronto in the last five years. Labour Council is mobilizing around key demands for government action – starting with challenging bad trade deals that allow companies to shut facilities here and move to places where wages are poor and conditions are worse. We need to put a human face on that bitter reality, and highlight the impact on working families across the Toronto region

As we weave together the elements of these distinct campaigns, what becomes clear is the common theme. There are a million reasons to organize in Canada's largest urban centre. There is a crying need for leadership and focused action. Good jobs matter in every sector of our economy, and they matter to people from all walks of life and in every neighbourhood and community.

## **C.O.R.D. (Community Organizing for Responsible Development)**

**By Jennifer Ahamed, Local 563**

### **Region 5 Member of the Provincial Human Rights Committee**

CORD is the Word in the Rexdale Community. CORD was formed by Etobicoke residents, community organizations, Labour Council and unions to share the vision of a \$350 million expansion of the Woodbine Racetrack in North Etobicoke.

This community has come together to seek economic, social and environmental benefits from this project that is developed by Woodbine Entertainment Group (WEG) and Cordish (an American company).

I have been working with CORD, specifically on outreach programs to community organizations and union locals. CORD is still looking for endorsements.

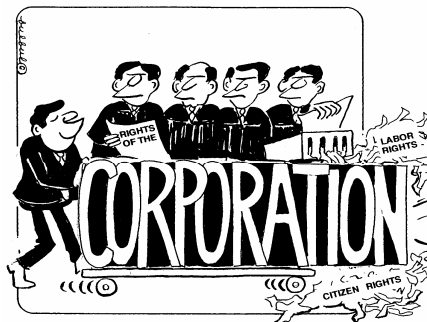
The developers are planning an expanded race track, a shopping mall and a hotel. It will bring high end entertainment area to a working class neighborhood in Rexdale. It will create employment.

Some of the significant benefits that are on the top of CORD's list are:

- Good stable jobs (living wage jobs) where workers rights are protected;
- Local hiring with targets for vulnerable groups such as youth, older experienced workers, women, immigrants and Internationally Trained Professionals;
- Training including apprenticeship, job readiness and transferable skills;
- Equity targets for employment.

The community, through CORD, is seeking social benefits such as child care, housing, recreational centres that are culturally appropriate and affordable for youth, seniors and families. Environmental concerns such as public transit, green space and air quality are also on the list.

CORD is a transparent group that has opened the doors to everyone. If you are interested in supporting in building stronger communities call 416-979-5922 or email [communityorganizing@hotmail.com](mailto:communityorganizing@hotmail.com)



## **VOTING REFORM REFERENDUM: ONE CHANCE ON OCTOBER 10**

We have an historic chance on October 10, 2007 to achieve what we all need more than anything else in our political arena: a modern voting system.

The Ontario referendum on electoral reform opens the door, at long last, to a more hopeful politics: more voter choice, fairer election outcomes, better representation, and more party accountability.

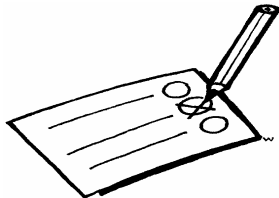
Under the proposed MMP (Mixed Member Proportional) system all voters matter equally, very few votes are wasted, local representation is guaranteed, and parties will generally get the share of seats in the legislature they actually deserve – no more, no less.

Other countries have found in proportional voting a strong tool to promote the election of women and minority candidates. Parties put forward candidate lists with an appealing diversity of accomplished men and women from various occupations and groups.

By voting yes on October 10, we will affirm the most fundamental democratic value – all citizens are equal – and its natural companions – fair representation for all and true majority governments.

VOTE YES for MMP is multi-partisan campaign to make this important reform happen. We welcome people from all backgrounds and every political party.

For more information on VOTE YES for MMP, visit [www.VoteYesForMMP.ca](http://www.VoteYesForMMP.ca). Contact us at [info@voteyesformmp.ca](mailto:info@voteyesformmp.ca) or 416-410-4034.



## *More This and That*

### Region 5 Meeting

The EBMs will be organizing regular meetings. The first meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 19<sup>th</sup> at 31 Wellesley East. There will be a light dinner served a 5:30. The meeting starts at 6:15. The next meeting will be in September at the North York Membership Centre on Wilson and Dufferin.

### The Developmental Services Sector Campaign

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, **Madeleine Meilleur**, the Minister of Community and Social Services visited the Reena Centre (Local 554).

OPSEU and Sector 2 activists were not happy with the limits placed on wages and benefits. I joined a group of OPSEU activists to greet the minister. I received an email from Region 1 EBM **Ron Elliot**, telling us about a similar spontaneous meeting with Premier **Dalton McGuinty** and Labour Minister **Steve Peters** in London.

### Injured Workers Day

Injured worker activists and advocates will gather on the lawn of Queens Park for the annual Injured Workers Day. The event is scheduled for Friday, June 1<sup>st</sup> at 12:00 noon on the lawn of Queens Park. Local 525 members are involved in the organizing.

### Social Services Campaign

OPSEU is part of a broad coalition of social service agencies, unions, and the Social Planning Council. The aim is to publicize, lobby and correct the funding deficiencies faced by agencies. The campaign will be launched on Tuesday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, from 1:30 – 5:00 PM on the lawn of Queens Park. If at all possible please drop by. OPSEU gave \$8,000 for this effort at the Officers meeting.

### I.T. Jobs in the OPS

The OPS CERC established an I.T. sub-committee. We have met twice with the Corporate Chief Information Officer and another meeting is scheduled for June 6<sup>th</sup>. A conference call for members is scheduled for June 7<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 PM at 31 Wellesley. If interested, please call me. OPSEU gave \$5,000 for this effort at the May 10<sup>th</sup> Officers meeting.

### Women's Caucus Picnic

The Region 5 Women's caucus is organizing a picnic for Saturday, July 14<sup>th</sup> at Wilket Creek Park. Please contact **Gloria David**.

---

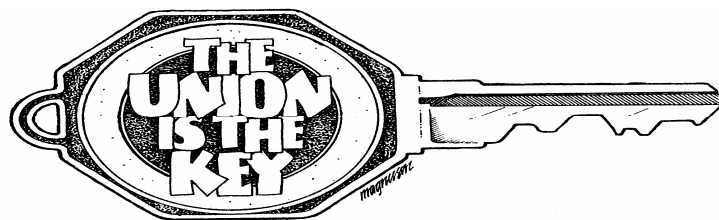
## Calendar of Events

Injured Workers Day – Fri, June 1, 12:00, Queens Park Lawn  
BPS Conference – June 1–3, Delta Meadowvale, Mississauga  
Labour Day Organizing Committee – Monday, June 4, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley  
Region 5 Women’s Caucus – Tue, June 5, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley  
Community Social Services Campaign – Tue, June 5, 1:30-5:00 PM, Queens Park Lawn  
Greater Toronto Area Council – Wed, June 6, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley  
Union Youth Movement – Wed, June 6, 5:30 PM, 31 Wellesley  
Labour Council Membership Meeting–Thur, June 7, 7:30, OFL Building, 15 Gervais Dr.  
Executive Board Meeting/Retreat – June 11-14  
OFL Aboriginal Conference – June 12-14  
Region 5 Presidents/Activists meeting – Tue, June 19, 5:30, 31 Wellesley  
NUPGE Convention – June 22-24, Fredericton, New Brunswick  
Toronto Gay/Lesbian Pride Parade – Sunday, June 24, 2:00 PM  
Region 5 Women’s Caucus Picnic – Sat, July 14, Wilket Creek Park

---

## Region 5/OPSEU Contact Information

**David Rapaport**, Regional Vice President – [drapaport@opseu.org](mailto:drapaport@opseu.org)  
**Nancy Pridham**, Executive Board Member - [nancypridham@look.ca](mailto:nancypridham@look.ca)  
**Ted Montgomery**, Executive Board Member - [ted@opseu560.org](mailto:ted@opseu560.org)  
**Gloria David**, Region 5 Member, Provincial Women’s Committee - 416-314-6484.  
**Jennifer Ahamed**, Region 5 Member, Provincial Human Rights Committee -  
[jenniferahamed@rogers.com](mailto:jenniferahamed@rogers.com)  
**Krista Maracle**, Region 5 Member, Provincial Young Workers Committee -  
[kmaracle@rogers.com](mailto:kmaracle@rogers.com)  
**Bob Taylor**, President, Greater Toronto Area Council (GTAC) - 416-482-6680  
**Ceceil Beckford**, OPSEU representative on Labour Council Executive - [ceceilb@rom.on.ca](mailto:ceceilb@rom.on.ca)  
**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.