

The Rapaport Report

Volume 1, Number 4

October 2005

Autumn is here. It is getting chilly. The leaves are falling. The CBC lockout is over, a great relief for me. I've learned how much that I depend on the CBC for news and for entertainment. The NHL lockout is over, another great relief for me. Go Leafs Go.

The OPSEU Executive Board met on Wednesday, October 19 and Thursday, October 20. Here is another issue of *The Rapaport Report*.

Demonstrating Against Dalton in Niagara-On-The Lake

At the start of the Executive Board meeting, **Leah** asked us to join her for a demonstration in Niagara-On-The-Lake, organized by the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Ontario Health Coalition (see page 9 of the September issue of *The Rapaport Report*) and OPSEU. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce was holding its 'Ontario Economic Summit' and **Dalton McGuinty** was scheduled to speak at 12:15. The Liberals are going ahead with a P3 hospital in St. Catharines. Just last June, over 12,000 people in St. Catharines voted 98% in a referendum to 'keep our hospitals public and non-profit'. Public opinion is opposed to the private funding of public institutions.

We are living and working in the shadow of the P3, Public Private Partnership or Alternative Public Funding (AFP).

We have already experienced more than a decade of privatization, rollbacks and assaults on our collective bargaining. We have seen lower wage settlements, more use of 'essential service' workers and back-to-work legislation. Funding cutbacks to BPS agencies have caused many public sector workers to fall behind.

But there is good news. We do continue to resist. The introduction of neo-conservatism into Canada has been met with resistance from OPSEU and other public sector unions, right across Canada. The teachers in British Columbia are the latest to draw their line in the sand. (See **Gary Shaul's** article on page 7.) Their message to B.C. Premier **Gordon Campbell** is the same message as was our message to Mike Harris, and lately to **Dalton McGuinty**. 'You are wrong to roll back the social sector'. That roll back only increases the disparities between those with lots of money and those with less, frequently too much less. We deliver that message to our members at union meetings, to the politicians, among activists at Convention and from our picket lines.

That is the essential difference between our social sector and the American social sector. Their public sector unions have been effectively neutralized. **George W. Bush** and his pals wallow in more money as they roll back the social sector.

While still in office, the former chancellor of Germany, **Gerhart Schroeder**, described what happened in New Orleans this way. "I can think of a recent disaster that shows what happens when a country neglects its duties of state towards its people." Addressing trade unionists in his home town Hanover, **Schroeder** said amid laughter and applause: "My post as chancellor, which I still hold, does not allow me to name that country but you all know that I am talking about America."

The preferred route of the Liberal government at Queen's Park is the Public Private Partnership. Since the Executive Board meeting we have learned of yet another P3 initiative. I received an email with a press release from the Canadian Union of Public Employees warning us about another P3 hospital in Sudbury.

There will be more on this in future issues of *The Rapaport Report*. The Public Private Partnership (P3) or Alternate Public Financing (APF) are very important issues for OPSEU and the workers we represent.

Oh, by the way, the demonstration at Niagara-On-The-Lake was called off. Dalton cancelled.

Sister Terry Downey seeks the office of OFL Vice President

Region 5 Vice President **Terry Downey** is seeking the position of Vice President of the Ontario Federation Labour. The election takes place at the upcoming convention of the OFL, November 21-25. Terry is the preferred candidate of the leadership at the OFL executive. If all goes according to plan, Terry will be elected in late November. She would start the position in early January.

This has a ripple effect in Region 5. If Terry wins, she would leave her position on the OPSEU Executive Board. If I read the OPSEU constitution correctly, **Nancy Pridham** would become Region 5 Vice President. **Peggy Maybury** would return to the Executive Board as the third Region 5 EBM. I look forward to working with **Nancy** and **Peggy** in the leadership of OPSEU and of Region 5.

Terry has devoted many years, hard work and much energy to OPSEU and to Region 5. She has been a strong and consistent voice for human rights and has developed strong ties with the Labour Council and the new **David Miller** leadership at City Hall. She provided leadership as the first minority woman vice president of Region 5. Terry has been a strong model for a new generation of OPSEU activists. We always hear **Terry's** distinct and identifiable voice coming through the megaphone at rallies, Labour Day, demonstrations and picket lines.

Although we will miss Terry we wish her the best of luck on her new challenges at the OFL.

Since 1957, the Ontario Federation of Labour has been the voice of labour in Ontario. The OFL is the umbrella group for over 30 unions representing 700,000 workers. It lobbies the provincial government on all labour issues including collective bargaining, labour law, health and safety, equity and economic development. The OFL has an education and research program. It runs strike support, campaigns on protecting socialized health care and quality education and training programs. Learn more at <http://www.ofl.ca/>.

The OFL has three full time officers. **Wayne Samuelson** of the Steelworkers is the president and is running for re-election. **Irene Harris** of CUPE is the vice-president and is running for the position of secretary-treasurer. OPSEU is the largest union in the OFL. It is widely accepted that OPSEU has one of the three top spots. Terry would be replacing **Ethel Birkett-Lavalley** who is retiring. Ethel was a long time OPSEU activist. We wish Ethel well in her new endeavors.

OPSEU delegates at the OFL convention must work hard to ensure Terry's election.

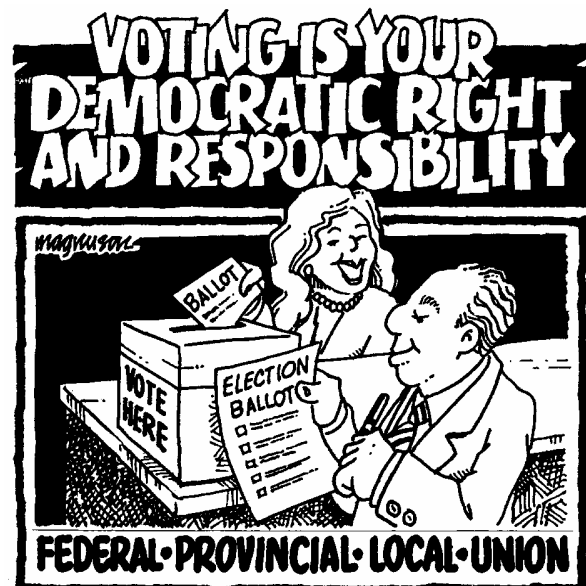
The guest article from **Gary Shaul** (page 7) was found on his blog. I thought that it was worth sharing with you. I made some stylistic changes but I'm sure that Gary will forgive me.

Executive Board Meeting – October 19 and 20

Purchasing 31 Wellesley East

At the September Executive Board meeting, we voted to purchase the Regional Office/Membership Centre on 31 Wellesley Street East. The feedback from members has been very positive. The cost of the building is \$2.2 million plus extras like GST, land transfer tax and lawyer's fees. The treasurer, **Smokey Thomas**, brought us up to date on the matter. The last appraisal of the building was \$3.1 million. We can acquire a mortgage for about 60% of the appraised value of the building. OPSEU will have to cough up \$400-500,000 for a down payment. We currently pay \$263,000 a year in rent. The numbers work well for us.

The Executive Board is currently debating whether to pay for the building out of the strike fund or the general fund.



Negotiation Procedures – Hospital Professional Division - HPD

OPSEU represents approximately 15,000 hospital professionals in 91 units in 78 hospitals across Ontario. HPD chair, **Patty Rout**, described the Division in the last issue of *The Rapaport Report*.

The province-wide collective agreement expires on March 31, 2006. 41 of the bargaining units participate in central negotiations. The other 50 units bargain directly with their hospital. Participation from more units would result in more clout and better contracts. But a unit can only participate centrally if its hospital management also agrees.

The HPD Divisional Meeting at the BPS conference agreed to proposed changes to the procedures for central bargaining. The changes have two objectives; to encourage more units into central bargaining and to speed up the bargaining process. It usually takes one to two years to get a new contract after expiry of the previous contract.

To address the first objective, non-participating locals can send two delegates to the final demand-set meeting. They can participate in setting demands but not in elections to the bargaining team.

Addressing the second objective, the pre-bargaining conference will be held as early as possible. (This year it is scheduled for December 2.) The provincial demand-set meeting will be called ASAP after the pre-bargaining conference.

The changes were approved by the Executive Board.

Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED) Update.

Nancy Pridham provided the Executive Board with a comprehensive update from the Merger Transition Committee. This is an on-going process until the merger between OLBEU and OPSEU is complete.

The OPSEU Constitution takes full force for LBED on December 31, 2005, when the OLBEU leadership becomes the LBED Divisional leadership.

The division budget for the remainder of 2005 was established. This will cover all remaining transition costs.

The OLBEU building at 5757 Coopers Avenue, Mississauga was appraised at a value between \$845,000 and \$1,200,000.

The divisional leadership structure will include chairs of the following committees; labour relations, health and safety, benefits, grievance and public policy. The local structure must still be worked out.

An LBED Divisional Assembly is scheduled for January, 2006.



OFL Conference – Violence in the Workplace

On January 20 and 21, the Ontario Federation of Labour is hosting a conference for women's committees and health and safety activists. The Executive Board voted to send the seven members of the Provincial Women's Committee and seven health and safety activists at a cost of \$10,600.

Earthquake Relief

The Executive Board voted for a \$10,000 donation to the Canadian Red Cross for earthquake relief in South Asia.

Dalton McGuinty's Report Card – The Video

OPSEU was approached by seasoned film makers **Michael Connolly** and **Glen Richards** of NABET Local 700 (CEP). They plan to make a video on the disappointing performance of the McGuinty government – particularly in the area of privatization. OPSEU members will have the opportunity to tell their stories. We voted to support the video with \$15,000.



HRSDC Funding Restructuring

The funding changes at Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) were described by **Holly Kirkconnell** in the September issue of *The Rapaport Report*. Those changes open up the door to competitive bidding, privatization and the degrading of social services and working conditions. At the September Executive Board meeting, we voted to endorse the coalition of unions and social agencies resisting those changes.

John Campey of the Community and Social Planning Council of Toronto and **Martha Josephian** of Local 512 addressed the Executive Board on Wednesday afternoon. The Social Planning Council is providing leadership in the HRSDC campaign. Local 512 is a multi-unit BPS local. Six of the units receive funding from HRSDC.

As a result of the presentation, OPSEU president **Leah Casselman** will write a letter to Prime Minister **Paul Martin** and Human Resources Development Minister **Belinda Stronach** outlining OPSEU's objection to the HRSDC funding changes.

The Social Planning Council can be reached at 416-351-0095 or at www.socialplanningtoronto.org. They deserve our support.

Guatemala Disaster Relief

Tens of thousands of Guatemalans have been rendered homeless by mudslides and floods in the past few weeks. The Executive Board voted a \$10,000 donation to disaster relief.

Managing the Strike Fund

The Executive Board heard a presentation from Jones-Heward, a Bank of Montreal subsidiary, about how to invest our strike fund. We have over \$35,000,000 in the strike fund and it should be managed prudently. We voted to 'amend our investment strategy for the strike fund to include the objectives of safety of principal, liquidity and growth, in that order. Investments may include money market instruments, short and long term bonds and equity.'

The Executive Board instructed Treasurer **Smokey Thomas** to prepare an investment strategy for the January Executive Board meeting.

Delegate Status at the Convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour

The Convention is scheduled for November 21 – 25 in Toronto. OPSEU elected our regional delegates at the regional meetings in March, 2005. OPSEU is entitled to more delegates than those that are elected. If your local is willing to finance your delegate status and is affiliated to Labour Council then you might consider going as a delegate. Information on the convention can be found at <http://www.ofl.ca/>. Or get in touch with me.



B.C. Teachers Can Declare Victory

By Gary Shaul, Local 520

Freed from the restraints of civility and "respect for the law" (so typical of teachers) in reaction to the heavy-handed and anti-union approach of British Columbia's Gordon Campbell Liberal government, the teachers truly had nothing to lose when they began their walkout in early October.

The B.C. government and the striking teachers' union agreed last Friday to accept a facilitator's report and teachers are voting on it. The teachers have to vote before declaring victory but that's how it's shaping up.

This is not a negotiated settlement. The teachers are not receiving strike pay and the courts fined the B.C. Teachers Federation \$500,000 for the illegal strike. However, a vote on the mediator's recommendations gives the union opportunity to hold their heads high and get back to their classrooms. A lot of people must be breathing sighs of relief.

Mediator Vince Ready called on the provincial government to spend more than \$100 million for outstanding teacher grievances. He also recommended that the government consult directly with the BCTF to improve class-size limits for Grades 4 to 12

Mr. Ready proposed a number of financial benefits for the teachers. He recommended that the government spend \$40-million to harmonize the teachers' salary grid, \$40-million on the teachers' long-term disability fund, \$5.2-million to improve the lot of on-call teachers, in addition to the \$20-million extra on class-size and special-needs students.

Victory for the teachers can be measured in four ways.

First, the teachers have made their point and caused political crisis for the provincial government. Having hundreds of thousands of kids out of school must have the government's phones ringing off the hooks (not that the unions are not also under tremendous pressure). The government pays a heavy political price when they lose control and services are not provided

Second, whatever the teachers are able to wrest from the Liberals is better than rolling over and accepting the less than nothing (after inflation) government fiat.

Third, the teachers and their unions have breathed much needed life into the BC labour movement. It creates opportunities for labour, the NDP and other allies to reinvigorate a multi-pronged opposition to bring down the government in the next election.

Fourth, while there hasn't been much reporting on the public support for the teachers over here in Ontario, it probably goes without saying that teachers have a lot more goodwill with the public than do politicians. They should have had a lot of public support for their

position - especially with so many school boards supporting them as well. Allowing the daycare centres to operate in schools was certainly a smart move.

Finally, the teachers are getting to vote this weekend on going back to work. They voted to go on strike (defying the ban imposed by Premier Campbell in 2001). Now they vote to go back to work. This is not a case of the "union bosses" moving their members around like pawns. This is true empowerment.

And that's what makes the labour movement so great. Members get to vote on contracts, in elections and even on "illegal" strikes. In a gloomy world where we seem to get reamed from every direction by unaccountable powerbrokers, the teacher's work action is a refreshing beacon. They've set a positive example for people around the country and beyond by showing how collectively, working people can defend their working conditions, standards of living and the much-needed public services that they provide.



Other News

Region 5 Holiday Party

We're having a party; to celebrate, to have a good time, to dance the night away, to feast, to mingle, to bring up some memories, to forget your troubles. Meet old friends. Make new friends.

On Saturday, December 10th, starting at 6:00 pm, Region 5 is having a party. Where else? 31 Wellesley Street East. This coincides with the final regional weekend educational for 2005.

Invitations will be coming out shortly.



Labour Council Forum Reminder

Labour Council is holding a forum, 'On The Ground and At The Ballot Box' on Saturday, November 12th at Metro Hall, 55 John Street at King Street. Mayor **David Miller** and **Hassan Yussuff** from the CLC are the guest speakers.

The registration cost is \$25. Region 5 picks up the cost.

More information and a brochure are both available at the Labour Council web site at www.labourcouncil.ca.

Health Action Assembly – Another Reminder

The Ontario Health Coalition is organizing a one day assembly on Saturday, October 29, starting at 10:00 at Metro Hall, 55 John Street at King. It is a packed agenda with important information. Topics include updates on P3 hospitals, restructuring, LHINs and our response, challenges in long-term care, improving mental health services and stopping delisting.

There is a small fee. The OHC can be reached at 416-441-2502 or at their web site at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca.

BPS Part Time Workers Meeting

There is a meeting for Region 5 BPS units on the issue of part-time and contingent workers. That meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 8th at 31 Wellesley Street East. Please let us know if you are attending.

OPS Appendix 25 Meeting – Courtroom Workers

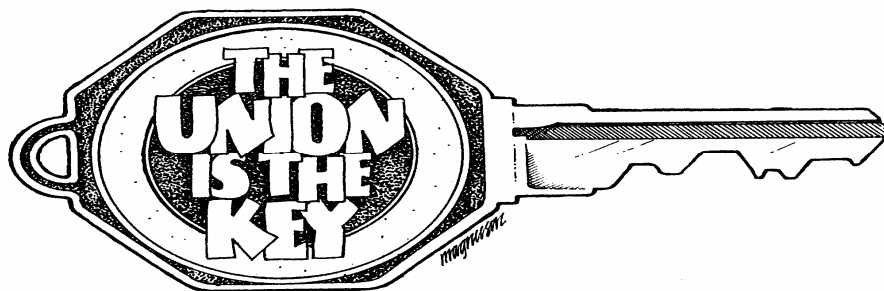
There will be an information session for part-time unclassified court workers about the new language in the OPS contract on Flexible Part Time classified employment. It is scheduled for Tuesday, November 15th, 5:30 at 31 Wellesley Street East. **Paul Myers** of Local 526 and **Julie Weber**, chair of the Ministry of Attorney General MERC will both be in attendance.

Upcoming Events

Greater Toronto Area Council Election Meeting – Wednesday, October 26th
 OHC Health Action Assembly – Saturday, October 29th
 Labour Council Membership Meeting – Thursday, November 3rd
 PWC Woman's Conference – November 4-6
 BPS Part-Time Workers Group Meeting – Tuesday, November 8th
 Labour Council Political Forum – Saturday, November 12th
 OPS Appendix 25 Meeting – Tuesday, November 15th
 OFL Convention, November 21-25
 Region 5 Holiday Party, Saturday, December 10th
 Region 5 Weekend Educational – December 10-11
 Executive Board Meeting, December 14-15

Region 5/OPSEU Contact Information

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Yvonne Bobb, Region 5 Member, Provincial Woman's Committee - ybobbl@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 -
cmohan@opseu541.org
Bob Taylor, President, Greater Toronto Area Council - 416-482-6680
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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.