

The Rapaport Report

Volume 1, Number 3

September 2005

Welcome to the Fall. I hope that you all had a great summer. As usual, the OPSEU agenda is jam packed. OPSEU had a busy summer. Thousands of OPSEU members were involved in collective bargaining and strike votes. The struggle seems never to end.

The Executive Board met on Wednesday, September 22 and Thursday, September 23. Here is another issue of *The Rapaport Report*.

The June issue of *The Rapaport Report* attempted connecting collective bargaining with wider social and political issues. That very point was emphasized at the BPS Conference held last weekend. The connection is obvious for those of us who work in the public sector. Less money for public services and infrastructure means less money at public sector bargaining tables. Less money means that our employers try to divide us.

Youth – Youth is a convenient target to divide. The last issue of *The Rapaport Report* contained an article by Carl Mohan, the Region 5 delegate to the Provincial Youth Committee. Carl wrote about youth issues in the labour market and in the union. In August, The Canadian Labour Congress published the results of a study describing the steady decline of economic prospects for young Canadians. I quote from the study. “*You’re a young Canadian with your whole future in front of you*”, meant a lot more a generation ago than it does today. Today, being a Canadian under 25 means you’re better educated, paid less and less likely to find a job you can count on compared to your parents’ generation back in the 1970s and 80s.” The study calculated that youth have suffered a 25% decline in average wages over the past ten years. That doesn’t count higher tuition and mounting debts. Are we eating our young? I hope not. Yet, it seems so.

Since June, we have witnessed two strikes implicating younger workers and their issues.

OPSEU members at the Duty Free Shop at the Ambassador Bridge, all students at the University of Windsor, went on strike for 24 days. The 45 students voted 100% to strike. Before the strike they earned a maximum of \$9.25 an hour. U.S. billionaire Marty Maroon owns the Ambassador Bridge (you read that right) as well as the Duty Free shop. The employer hired scabs. Imagine that. In a practice that seems best described as ‘juniority’, the students were laid off after working for one year. The longer you work, the less job security you attain. The strike was settled on Saturday, September 24th. Visit <http://www.opseu.org/bps/general/abdutyfree.htm> for more information. *The Society of Energy Professionals* had been on strike more than 100 days against Ontario Hydro. The key issue in this strike is ‘two-tier’ bargaining. The employer wants to pay new hires, younger workers, a lower wage. This is a common practice in the United States. We must keep that practice out of Canada.

The Summer of the Strike Vote – OPSEU spent much of the summer telling the McGuinty government that things need to change. Not the OPSEU leadership, from whom Queens Park expects to hear that message, but from tens of thousands of members who hitched their wagons to the union star and delivered strike vote after strike vote. The Ontario Public Service, Support staff at CAAT, Liquor Board employees, Canadian Blood Services – Support and Canadian Blood Services – Technologists. OPSEU has gone to the brink a number of times. We had two strikes. The students in Windsor and the workers at Surex in local 5102 in Toronto who went out for three days and saw their employer fall to pieces in chaos and disbelief.

The message at this year's Toronto Labour Day Parade was 'A Million Reasons to Organize'. Over 1 million workers in Toronto are not in unions. Their working conditions, compensation packages and morale are significantly different from those of us who are in unions. Without a union, the workers at Surex, at the Ambassador Bridge and at Ontario Hydro would have no vehicle from which to protect their interests. Employer rule would prevail.

This issue of *The Rapaport Report* has three guest writers. **Rod Bemister** is the chair of the CAAT-Support bargaining team. Their contract was ratified on September 22. Rod is the president of Local 561 and works at Seneca College. **Holly Kirkconnell** of Local 512 writes about funding restructuring at Human Resources and Skills Development – Canada (HRSDC) and the community/union response. **Patty Rout** is chair of the Hospital Professional Division (HPD) and is an Executive Board Member from Region 3. She writes about the HPD and the recent round of bargaining.

One more final word on OPS bargaining. We owe a big thanks to the Corrections team and to **Dave Graves** (L517) who represented Region 5 on the team. Once again, Corrections came out on top in OPS bargaining. They achieved a larger, much larger, strike vote than the Unified Unit. And guess what, they get a significantly higher wage increase. Once again, Corrections teaches the rest of us how solidarity pays off. And once again, a big thank you and congratulations to Brother Graves.

Executive Board Meeting - September 21, 22

The Executive Board had a two day meeting on Wednesday, September 21 and Thursday, September 22. On Tuesday, September 20, there was a one-day session for human rights and equity training. EBMs and leaders from all three sectors attended that session.



The Human Rights/Equity Seminar

On Tuesday, September 20th, the Executive Board and leaders from all sectors of OPSEU spent the day at a Human Rights/Equity seminar. We were reminded about the importance of incorporating equity principles into our collective bargaining work and our political work; not only because it is right but also because it is tactical. Being serious about equity invites more people to our struggles and efforts.

We discussed our own backgrounds and experiences with oppressive behaviour. We also considered the many ways that leaders respond to racist, sexist and homophobic incidents.

We heard updates from our equity groups; the Provincial Women's Committee, the Provincial Human Rights Committee, the Provincial Youth Committee, the Rainbow Alliance, the Workers of Colour Caucus, the Disability Rights Caucus and the Aboriginal Circle. We have come a long way yet still have much to cover.



The Executive Board Meeting

The Executive Board met for two days. We covered much ground.

OPSEU As Employer

OPSEU staff has two unions; the Administrative Staff Union (ASU) and the Ontario Public Service Staff Union (OPSSU). OPSEU must periodically negotiate collective agreements with them. The Executive Board elects a committee to serve as OPSEU's negotiating team; OPSEU as employer. That team is currently negotiating a new collective agreement with ASU. ASU represents supervisors and some administrative staff.

Loan to NAPE

The Newfoundland Association of Public Employees (NAPE) had a very nasty four week strike in March/April, 2004. They were legislated back to work with a four year contract that had zero per cent increases in the first two years. During those four weeks, OPSEU loaned NAPE \$4.5 million, interest free, from our strike fund.

It is established practice in the labour movement that these interest free loans are paid back within two years. OPSEU borrowed \$16 million in 1996 and \$11 million in 2002 to help fund the two OPS strikes. NAPE loaned OPSEU \$1 million twice. With special dues supplements, our debts were paid back within the two year period.

NAPE's annual dues income is about \$8 million. They currently owe about \$7.3 million. They have already made huge

cuts to their resources. As of June, 2005 NAPE repaid OPSEU \$1.14 million. They still owe us \$3.36 million. There is no way that they can pay us the remainder in the next six months.

The matter was presented to the Board on Wednesday. NAPE offered to convert the owed amount to a regular loan that will be repaid by 2010 with interest. We accepted the proposal.

We currently have over \$30 million in the strike fund. Most of our larger contracts were negotiated in 2005. The vast bulk of the money will be returned by the time many of our larger bargaining units return to the table.

I personally find it very gratifying to have a large strike fund that can be used to help out other unions. That's solidarity.

MDT/SDT Program

In the next five years, we expect to lose many talented staff representatives and other labour specialists because of retirement. OPSEU might be facing a succession problem, meaning difficulties finding replacements.

An MDT/SDT program was established to teach member activists and staff employees collective bargaining and grievance skills. Currently 15 members and 3 staff are involved in the program.



The Financial Report

The Treasurer, **Smokey Thomas**, presented the financial report on Wednesday. The figures are year-to-date for August 31st.

Books are divided into three funds; the general fund, the strike fund and the education fund. 10% of our dues goes into the strike fund. 2% goes into the education fund.

The strike fund has \$37,918,364 in assets.

We have received \$44,987,312 in dues, \$837,312 more than anticipated. That translates into a \$39,880,091 allocation for the general fund.

The general fund expenses are divided into three broad categories; members activities spent \$16,867,262, board activities spent \$718,994 and departmental costs were \$24,259,750. That adds up to \$41,846,006.

That calculates into a deficit of \$1,965,915 for the general fund. Please

keep in mind that we have had a very busy year with collective bargaining and mobilizing.

Ontario Needlestick Campaign

OPSEU, ONA and SEIU have developed a campaign to deal with an important health and safety issue in hospitals. Bill 179 which would require health care sector employers to replace dangerous medical sharps such as syringes with Safety Engineered Medical Devices. We approved an expenditure of \$35,333 for this campaign.

The Developmental Services Regional Centres

The Board approved \$6000 for a campaign to save the 3 OPS developmental service centres slated for closure.

Quarterly Rebate to the On-Strike 45 Members in Windsor

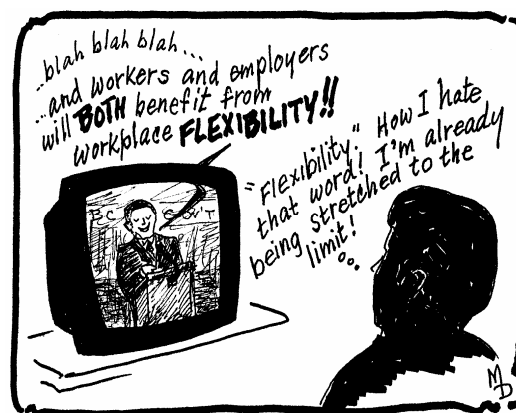
The striking students at the Ambassador do not yet have a local. They are part of the OLBEU merger with OPSEU. Our policy grants an extra quarterly rebate to a local at the start of the strike. The Board authorized the first VP/treasurer to issue a cheque equal to the amount for a 45 member local. (Update-The strike settled on September 24.)

OPSEU Direct

After eight months of piloting OPSEU Direct in Region 5, we are moving towards full implementation of the program. By any standard it is a success. All regions should be connected by late 2006

OPSEU Is Purchasing 31 Wellesley Street East

The Executive Board voted to purchase 31 Wellesley Street East for a price of \$2.2 million (plus GST). The purchase will be funded from the general fund. This is a significant move for OPSEU. It gives us a strong presence in downtown Toronto. The building was recently appraised at \$3.1 million.



Line Of Credit

The Board voted to extend our line of credit from \$5 million to \$7 million.

The Pension Liaison Committee

Nancy Pridham and I represent the Executive Board on the PLC. **Shirley McVittie** is the staff representative. We brought much business to the board. I was reappointed to the OPSEU Pension Trust as a trustee until December 31, 2005. **Maurice Gabay** of Local 599 was appointed an OPT trustee for a three year term. The Board approved the change to the OPT plan text, negotiated last spring, for the Factor 80 re-opener of laid off employees. We also authorized the OPT to use our rate stabilization fund to cover a deficit in the plan. We

also gave an update on the study that we are conducting in the BPS sector. We are developing a database that outlines the state of pensions in every BPS sector and every unit.

OPSEU Environmental Program

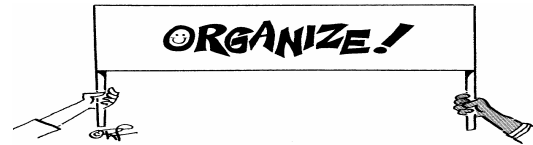
Convention 2005 passed a resolution calling for greater environmental action; education and specific targets to improve our health and the environment. The Executive Board established a working group to breathe life into that resolution.

Liquor Board Employees Division (LBED)

Nancy Pridham provided the Board with an update on LBED. On August 18th, LBED members votes 83% to ratify a contract two days before a scheduled strike. Benefits will be provided by the OPSEU Joint Benefits Trust. LBED will have its own division in our BPS sector, much like MPAC. The local structure still needs to be configured.

LBED is truly a part of the OPSEU family. They participate in the OPSEU Pension Trust. They are public servants. They struggle against privatization. They were an inspiration to all of us during their strike vote and strike preparation mobilizations.

Welcome
to
OPSEU



Political Action Program

The Board's Political Action Committee reported on their planned consultation with the membership on OPSEU affiliation with the NDP. In the next months, you will have your chance to voice your views. Stay tuned.

Violence in Toronto

Terry Downey reported on the problem of increasing violence in Toronto and the Labour Council campaign. The Board voted an additional \$10,000 for us to address this issue with our allies in the community and the labour movement.

Update on Ontario Human Rights Commission Campaign

Terry Downey gave the Board an update on the community consultations and campaign to deal with the many challenges at OHRC. The task force is hoping to have a public forum involving community representatives.

Human Resource and Skills Development of Canada (HRSDC)

The Board passed a motion endorsing the work of a community and labour coalition fighting the funding changes at HRSDC. Please read the report by Holly Kirkconnell on page 13.

The Hospital Profession Division – For A Provincial Approach

by Patty Rout, Chair HPD, OPSEU Region 3 EBM

The Hospital Professionals Division (HPD) represents 14,000 members in over 60 hospitals. We have 91 different collective agreements in Hospitals in Ontario covering over 200 classifications.

In the recent central award, arbitrator Stanley Beck awarded 3 percent in each of the two years expiring March 31 2006. The award included key improvements in working conditions such as 4 hour call back, a key negotiation issue for years. Vacation, shift premiums, benefits and accommodation language improvements were included in the new agreement. The award also ensures that part-time employees on maternity leave or parental leave receive their percentage in lieu benefits. The team worked very hard to accomplish these improvements.

On September 18th at the HPD divisional meeting in Toronto, delegates voted to have a provincial negotiation procedure. This new procedure allows participation in a Provincial Demand set for all locals whether in or out of central bargaining.

All locals at the provincial demand-set will vote on all bargaining issues. Only locals who participate in central bargaining will elect the bargaining team.

Member locals still have the option to stay out of the central bargaining process and will still need to vote on whether they will participate in a central bargaining process. I cannot emphasize how important it is to have everyone in Central. This would allow us to have one strong voice on all our issues.

In hospital bargaining, the central collective agreement sets the industry standard for all of our professions. Recently, an arbitration awarded 3 and 3 percent wage increase to a local who was not in Central, but the local was not awarded the Central wage grid. This whipsaw approach creates disparity in our bargaining as arbitrators point to those locals not in Central. If we had all units in the central contract then this could not happen.

The central team worked very hard to address the issues of the severe shortages in many professions. With a greater number of locals in central bargaining we will have a better chance of accomplishing this.

Divided we lose; together we become a stronger voice for Health Professionals in Hospitals today.

We are all aware that with LHINS and P3s we face huge challenges. With one strong provincial contract we – OPSEU- can and will better represent all of our members!

Other News

The December Educational

The last weekend educational for 2005 is scheduled for December 10th and 11th. The application deadline is October 17th. Applications are available from the Regional office.



Labour Council Forums

Labour Council is holding three forums for union activists in the GTA. It all looks fascinating. The focus is the Municipal Elections in November, 2006.

The first forum, 'On The Ground and At The Ballot Box' occurs on Saturday, November 12th at Metro Hall, 55 John Street at King Street. It is designed for union members and community activists to get involved in their local communities as well as the 2006 municipal elections. Mayor David Miller and Hassan Yussuff from the CLC are the guest speakers.

The second forum, 'Women in Politics: Getting Involved', is scheduled for Saturday, February 18th. This forum is designed to increase the participation of women within their unions and communities. This forum is organized by the Women's Committee at Labour Council.

The third forum, 'Progressive Action at City Hall, School Boards' is scheduled Saturday, May 6. This forum will bring together forces to elect progressive voices at City Hall and School Boards. Bob White and Zanana Akande are the guest speakers.

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

I strongly encourage your participation. We need strong and progressive forces in our school boards and city councils.

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

Labour Education Centre

In the last issue of *The Rapaport Report* I talked about the Labour Education Centre. Their education programs on union nuts and bolts and labour studies are second to none.

I noticed in their fall bulletin a course called 'Foundations of Trade Unionism'. The course intends to provide a political and historic background to our work as trade unionists.

I would urge you to consider this course. It is on Wednesday evenings and begins on October 12th.

More information is available at www.lec-passporttolearning.org.

Contact the Labour Education Centre at 416-537-6532.

MTO Activists Fight The Cuts

The Ministry of Transportation has been taking some licks from activists in Local 506. Led by Local President **Joe Daniel**, a core group of about ten OPSEU activists has been fighting the threatened transfer of road safety inspection to the OPP and to municipalities as well as the loss of 70 road inspectors.

The OPSEU folk have been using every tactic in their activist kit. **Publicity** – article in the August 24th Toronto Star, many live radio interviews, features in Canada Truck News, TV interviews and regular press releases. **Lobbying** – communications with every MPP, visit with Gilles Bisson, and talks with umpteen local politicians and councilors. Mayor Mike Bradley of Sarnia sent a letter of support. The Ontario Safety League has pitched in with a call for filling the vacancies.

The Ministry admitted to having a review of the truck safety inspection and to a moratorium on hiring.

Yes, public servants do it better. It would be a terrible mistake and terribly dangerous to interfere with the great track record of MTO truck inspectors.

Brother Daniel and the Local 506 LEC is hoping that the Ministry scraps the review and fills the 70 vacancies.

Joe Daniel can be reached at jdaniel@rogers.com

Health Action Assembly

The struggle for public health care goes on and on. The fight is being led by the Ontario Health Coalition.

The OHC 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.

The OHC is fighting the good fight, arguably the fight of our lives. Protecting public health care might very well be our most important legacy. The stakes are high. Try to attend. There is a small fee. The OHC can be reached at 416-441-2502 or at their web site at www.ontariohealthcoalition.ca.



"We don't call it cuts, it's called service level adjustment!"

CAAT Support Bargaining by Rod Bemister

President, Local 561, Chair of the CAAT Support Bargaining Team

There is a saying that “the third time is the charm”. Let me say that particular notion could not be further from the truth. This was my third time that I have had the honour and pleasure of serving on the CAAT Support Bargaining Team, and my first time as Chair of the Team.

Each round of bargaining is a learning experience one that every member should try. For the most part members only see the surface of what goes on in bargaining. They don't see the reasons why things have been done, why decisions have been made, how those decisions are arrived at, what needs to be done behind the scenes, and the mix of thoughts and emotions that go through your head.

Heading into this round of bargaining, expectations of where this team could take us were high. I'm proud to say that we were able to take the membership further than they have been in 26 years, since OPSEU's very first strike and Ontario College Support Staff's first strike back in 1979.

With these expectations in mind we started our bargaining journey for a new Collective Agreement. If the team was going to lead the members, we knew we had to do things differently. We learned from past rounds the we needed to:

- a) stick to our pre-determined timelines
- b) bargain smarter by using the information we had on hand
- c) cut down on the shopping list of demands that usually accompany us to the table
- d) unite the membership; and
- e) get the team and the members over a strike vote.

On February 14th we started bargaining with a plan in mind, timelines in place and a strong team to push things along. The only question was, were these factors enough to unite the membership and get over a strike vote.

On June 23rd, the team told the employer that we were going back to the membership to vote on this contract and later on informed them that we would be taking the strike vote on the same day (CAAT members need 2 votes, one to turn down an offer and one to authorize a strike). We then started to make plans for membership meeting across the province. I personally attended 13 of the 24 Colleges across Ontario, the message was simple, this offer is not good enough for you, it needs to be turned down and you need to authorize a strike.

On August 4th, for only the third time in history CAAT Support members were asked to turn down a contract offer (with the exact same money as the OPS received) and give the bargaining team a strike mandate. The members responded by giving us a 93% rejection

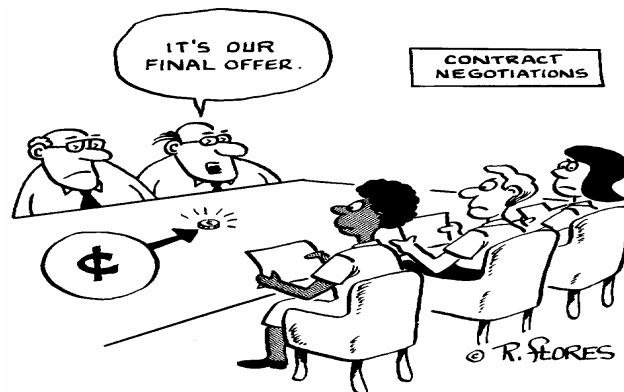
of the contract offer and an 85% strike mandate. This put the team in driver's seat, with a mandate in our back pocket, we started the Locals on the mission of getting strike ready. This was only the second time in 26 years that we might be on strike. The sheer volume of organization that was needed to get things done was overwhelming. When we went out in 1979 there was no such thing as paperwork and the only policy in place for strike pay is that you would receive it after 3 weeks.

On August 29th we entered our last week of negotiations with the employer. On September 1st, 5 days before our announced walk out date we reached a tentative agreement with the employer. I am proud to say that the team did not back off of any of the demands we had left on the table on June 23rd and were able to achieve each one of them.

Our biggest disappointment was the reaction we received after we reached our tentative agreement, and the unhappiness that was out there. However, during many e-mails and Local visits we were able to show members what we achieved either by what was going to be in our Collective Agreement, what we fought off from going into our Collective Agreement and the intangible items we received through the bargaining process such as:

- 1) This was the first time in many years that every College was moving in the same direction
- 2) Management knowing that we were no longer prepared to let them walk over us
- 3) A higher profile of what College Support Staff do through our media coverage
- 4) The team gaining the confidence to call a strike vote
- 5) The members getting over the fear of giving us the strike mandate
- 6) The knowledge of what it takes to plan and set up for a strike
- 7) A solid communication base to build upon in the future

We also tried to get the members to understand, bargaining is not limited to just this round and that the gains we receive today are the building blocks for rounds to come and just because we are not sitting at a table across from the employer, that bargaining does not stop. In fact, the next round of bargaining starts with the signing of this agreement.



Upcoming Events

Greater Toronto Area Council Meeting – Wednesday, September 28th
 Region 5 Weekend Educational – October 1-2
 Labour Council Membership Meeting – Thursday, October 6th
 Region 5 Retirees Meeting – Tuesday, October 11th
 Executive Board Meeting, October 19-20
 Health Action Assembly – Saturday, October 29th
 PWC Woman's Conference – November 4-6
 Labour Council Political Forum – Saturday, November 12th
 OFL Convention, November 21-25
 Region 5 Weekend Educational – December 10-11
 Executive Board Meeting, December 14-15



Economic Pessimist

Economic Optimist

Region 5/OPSEU Contact Information

Terry Downey, Regional Vice President - terry.downey@sympatico.ca

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 - 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

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

HRSDC Funding Changes Threaten Community Agencies

By Holly Kirkconnell, Local 512

Do you remember when Unemployment Insurance became Employment Insurance? That was in 1996 when the Act was changed resulting in slashed benefit levels and increased requirements for benefit entitlement such that now in Ontario less than one third of unemployed workers receive EI. That Act also changed the way in which employment assistance services are provided for unemployed workers. Initially these services were downloaded from direct federal government workers to community agencies, Boards of Education and community colleges. Now they are being opened up to the private sector.

In 2004, a Call for Proposals process was implemented where community agencies and private companies had to bid for contracts with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). Elements of competition and chaos were introduced into the community sector. Through this flawed and inefficient process, a number of long standing and effective community agencies lost their funding sometimes to private companies who had no experience with the client group at all!

Local 512 is a composite local made up of community agencies in the Broader Public Sector and over half of which rely on HRSDC funding. Members of Local 512 have been working actively with others to fight these changes. A broad coalition was formed which includes community agencies and umbrella groups, the United Way, Community Social Planning Councils, unions and labour bodies, with the support of politicians. Significant media coverage was obtained including articles and an editorial in the Toronto Star, and a lobbying campaign of MPs and the Minister is ongoing.

In February, Sault Ste. Marie NDP MP Tony Martin raised in the House of Commons the issue of the adverse impact of the new directives. He was successful in having it referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills Development, Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Hearings were held in March and the committee's report containing 20 solid recommendations, was tabled in the House in May. The government has 120 days within which to respond to the report, which is *now*. Hopefully this will occur when the House reconvenes this week.

All of this hard work and effective organizing has paid off. At a meeting of the coalition on September 20th, it was reported that a Joint Working Group of Voluntary Sector and Federal Government representatives has been established to work on four areas: establish a permanent system of consultation between the voluntary sector and HRSDC; appoint a "Fairness Advisor"; work out issues relating to administrative costs and burden; and provide transition funding for agencies that have lost contracts.

There appears to be a genuine effort being made on the part of the government to deal with the problems created by their admittedly flawed policies and procedures. As for the voluntary sector, we have a strong, skilled team to negotiate on our behalf. It is looking

hopeful. I think the government underestimated the collective strength of workers and their communities!

What can you do? Call or email your MP to urge him/her to support the 20 recommendations of the Standing Committee report. Tell her/him that public services are most effectively delivered publicly!



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.