

The primer for city politicians about FMTA and OCAP connections

First, here is Sarah Vance, long time OCAP organizer and currently working on FMTA's tenant hotline. For more about her, go to <http://www.causepimps.ca/sarah-vance/top.html> [not a link. Paste to browser]

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This post has been reviewed by the Toronto Media Co-op editorial committee.

STORY about **POVERTY** posted on DECEMBER 13, 2009 by **MICK SWEETMAN**

Poverty activists use fake transfers to ride streetcars

by **MICK SWEETMAN** →TORONTO NEWS, →POVERTY ELIMINATION, →DOMINION STORIES

Linchpin.ca

TORONTO — At a streetcar stop at Queen and Bay streets Saturday about 50 anti-poverty activists boarded a westbound streetcar after showing the driver protest “transfers” made by the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) in what they called a “pilot program” for fighting the fare hike.

Driver and passengers seemed in good spirits as protesters chanted “Hey, Hey, TTC! Public transit should be free!” Protestors distributed OCAP “transfers” to passengers and hung a banner out the window reading “Fair rates not fare hikes” as the streetcar headed toward Spadina Avenue.



Sarah Vance rides the Queen streetcar in protest of the high cost of transit compared to other cities. Photo: Linchpin / Mick Sweetman

One man identified only as Al said, "I know Toronto believes that they are against global warming, especially the government. But if you're going to charge people \$3 there and \$3 back I believe they're going to take more cars to work than they will take the TTC. They are not against global warming if they're going to hike up the TTC fares."

Toronto transit riders cover almost 80% of the TTC's operating costs making it one of the least-funded mass transit systems in North America. OCAP demanded that TTC be provincially and federally funded and made affordable and accessible to all.

Heroux asked, "Where are those politicians? Where are you on this issue? How dare you allow this to happen? You cowards."

The rabble-rousers then rode the rocket to Yonge Street where they met a group of protesters who did not, or could not, join them on the inaccessible streetcars.

Griffin Epstein, an organizer with the disability-rights group DAMN 2025 (the name references a government target to make Ontario barrier-free by 2025) said she was, "Super glad people were able to get on public transit and I hope people will be able to do it more often in the future."

~~This article was originally published on <http://fortress-toronto.com>~~

The rolling protest was against the TTC increasing fares to \$3 starting on Jan. 3. The price hike is 25 cents a trip and an increase of over 10% for a monthly pass. Advocates of poor and working people say transit costs are already too high. The fare hike comes at a time of economic recession and job losses, growing poverty, and dangerously low social assistance rates.

"We are going to hand out many tens of thousands of these transfers across the city so come the third people will try and use them. I would encourage everyone to do that," said OCAP member Gaetan Heroux. "We also want to make a plea to the TTC drivers, when they see these transfers that they honour them in solidarity with poor people who can not afford to get on the TTC."

Getting off the streetcar near John Street protesters crossed the street and waited a few minutes to catch an eastbound streetcar, but it speed past the stop.

OCAP organizer Liisa Schofield said, "Enough is enough - We need actual affordable transit, and we need an income that we can survive on! We are willing to fight for what we need."

As the next streetcar approached, protesters stood in the road blocking its path. The streetcar slowed gradually before stopping and allowing the protesters on.

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Also in Poverty:

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Here is the Toronto Star article that has set off so much nastiness. Vance and Geordie Dent are clearly affiliated with both FMTA and OCAP.

Note also the very nasty threats and defamation against named targets. It is typical FMTA rhetoric. This Svetlana Kremko even used her own name. She is a volunteer and likely a paid staff person with FMTA.

The screenshot shows the Toronto Sun website interface. At the top left is the logo for 'TORONTO SUN' with the URL 'torontosun.com'. To the right of the logo are navigation links for 'Autos', 'Careers', 'Classifieds', 'Homes', and 'SUN TV'. Below the logo is a search bar. A horizontal menu contains various categories: 'Home', 'News', 'Sports', 'Entertainment', 'Comment', 'Columnists', 'Life', 'Tech', 'Travel', 'Money', 'Autos', and 'SUN'. Below this menu are links for 'Letters', 'Editorial', 'Cartoons', and 'Columnists'. The main content area shows the date 'Sunday, January 16, 2011' and a 'Subscriber Services' button. The article title is 'Tenant gravy train: Levy' by Sue-Ann Levy. The article text discusses the Federation of Metro Tenants' Association (FMTA) and its funding. At the bottom, there are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+, and a plus sign for more options. The article text is as follows:

Comment | Columnists / Sue-Ann Levy
Tenant gravy train: Levy
Handouts, rent banks, sole-sourced deals galore drive industry watchers crazy
By **SUE-ANN LEVY**, TORONTO SUN

Last Updated: November 18, 2010 6:52pm

For more than 10 years a tenant group — with strong ties to left-wing city bureaucrats — has seen its sole-source contract not only renewed, no questions asked, but its funding has more than quadrupled as well.

In 1999, when I first reported on the “purchase of service” contract given to the Federation of Metro Tenants' Association (FMTA), the group got \$97,510 to run a hotline service.

This year, the group got \$446,760 to operate the hotline, educate tenants and provide outreach.

The FMTA money comes out of the shelter, support and housing budget — the same people who brought us the \$11.5-million Peter St. shelter boondoggle.

In 1999, FMTA had 5,000 members. Interim executive director Geordie Dent told me Thursday they have anywhere from 1,000-3,000 members at the moment.

In 1999, the hotline took nearly 7,500 calls.

According to statistics provided by city spokesman Pat Anderson, the hotline responded to 7,566 calls and e-mails to Sept. 30.

The tenant gravy train doesn't end there.

For at least eight years, tenant uberlord Coun. Michael Walker has presided over a special fund that gives grants to tenants disputing above-guideline rent increases.

Walker's vote-buying pet project has a budget of \$75,000 this year.

This year the city also has access to \$1.9 million in provincial rent bank money, which gives loans to people in danger of being evicted from their apartments for rent arrears. Some \$570,000 of that goes to administration, the rest for no-interest loans averaging \$1,725 each. Anderson reports the repayment rate of those loans is a mere 40%.

Then there's Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation (CERA), which got \$80,705 in city money to help "extremely vulnerable" tenants at risk of being evicted.

All of this drives paralegal Harry Fine crazy for one simple reason.

He feels precious taxpayer money is being used to fund "cronies and organizations" duplicating what the province does very ably.

Fine, a former Landlord Tenant Board adjudicator who now operates his own business advocating for landlords, says there are about 80 community legal clinics — 13 alone in Toronto — that deal largely with landlord and tenant matters.

In addition, he says, at every LTB office in Toronto, there are lawyers paid for by the Advocacy Centre for Tenants (another provincially-funded organization) to give advice to and represent tenants at their hearings.

The LTB also has its own hotline, he says, which provides "far better advice" than the FMTA.

Fine feels both CERA and the city's Tenant Defence Fund are no longer necessary, either. He says a policy document on the rights of tenants issued by Barbara Hall of the Ontario Human Rights Commission in 2009 makes it "near impossible" for a landlord to evict a tenant.

He doesn't understand why the city would be dishing out grants to fight rent increases when "fair" provincial adjudication is there for tenants.

"Considering the duplication and almost obscene support for tenants provincially, the city has no place providing duplication of services," he says.

Fine and others have also expressed concern with FMTA's secrecy and the radical left affiliations of several of its 10 full and part-time staff.

Dent, who writes on a website called MediaCoop (among others), has openly expressed anti-Israel sentiments and advocated for the G20 protesters in his blog.

Sarah Vance, listed as one of FMTA's hotline counsellors, was a former spokesman and employee of OCAP. Kelly Bentley, one of FMTA's outreach organizers, is also a former OCAP member.

When asked about the musings on his blog, Dent contended his writing is in no way "related" to FMTA.

He also insisted their work does not duplicate that done by the province, noting the LTB does not have a good handle on city bylaws or how a variety of legislation related to tenants fits together.

But a tenant activist, who did not want to be named, said sole-sourced contracts like that given to FMTA must be stopped and a full audit done of whether they've delivered good value for the millions they've received in the past 10 years.

"What's really needed is an independent review by somebody outside of shelter, support and housing who has no vested interest," the activist said.

sue-ann.levy@sunmedia.ca

Your Comments

138 Comments | [View/Leave Comment](#)

Sue anne is scum who only went after Sarah Vance because either Levitt or Rourke told levy that Sarah is vulnerable with breast cancer.

You are all going to get fucked in the end assholes.

I bet Rourke and Levitt were jerking each other off when the got this fake story in the Toronto Scum.

You know you better not write any more crap like this.

Wouldn't be a shame if hundreds of Sun boxes were damaged again?

[Svetlana Kremko](#), December 30th 2010, 11:39pm

An article in an anarchist publication praising OCAP's behavior, by Geordie Dent.

Geordie is a paid staff person with OCAP. He is fairly senior, though it is hard to determine these people's exact position.



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Anti-poverty protestors disrupt financial district

by Geordie Gwalgen Dent

[Toronto Media Coop](#)

TORONTO — Under a blanket of hail, rain and cold weather, 250 anti-poverty protesters marched on the financial centre of Toronto on Nov. 5, The Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) organized march took aim at government policy during the recession. The Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario held a separate march on the same day to the Ontario legislature.

“We wanted to participate [on] that day and march into the financial district to point out who is benefiting within this crisis,” says Lisa Schofield, an organizer with OCAP.



Criticizing the \$75 billion bailout for chartered banks in October last year Schofield said that money had not flowed similarly to social housing and social assistance, "Our specific demands are around income. We're demanding a raise to assistance rates of 40%, less hours to qualify for the EI system, a raise in minimum wage ... justice for non status people and justice for First Nations communities."

Other speeches were made against the federal Foreign Temporary Worker Program, First-Nations drinking water quality, fare increases by the Toronto Transit Commission and recent labour practices by Cadillac-Fairview.

Marching and disrupting traffic in the financial district, protesters also dropped banners near the Bank of Montreal and Toronto-Dominion offices, one of which proclaimed "capitalism is broken".

A number of protesters also disrupted one of the oldest conservative private clubs in Canada, the Albany Club, where Mike Harris is slated to speak next week.

"I'm here because I'm angry and sick," said protester Fatima Ali, "We have children without food, sick kids without education. Everything is hard. Welfare is not enough."

Schofield said that the decision to go through the financial district and cause disruption was deliberate, "For us the purpose was to target the people we see are pulling the strings and benefiting from the crisis. When they say tough times ahead they clearly don't mean for the banks or people in the financial district. With the deficit we can anticipate that [the Ontario government] will be cutting services and this was our first response to that. For us it was a chance to be on the offensive about what we feel is ahead."

Despite the disruption, both protesters and observers on Bay Street seemed to find the march reasonable.

"I support work against poverty," says Colby Leare, a visitor from San Francisco, "I respect the work of OCAP."

"I think it's good," added Karl Shannon, a manager in the financial district. "They can do what they want, get to fight for what they want and it draws attention — that's good."

Schofield said that the march is only the start for OCAP, "I think more than before, that the point of November fifth was that people are feeling the economic crisis and feeling the threat of potential cuts to come and we're used to this language of 'tough times ahead'. That's why we went into the financial district. We hope it is the start of ways we can respond. If there are going to be cuts to social services we're going to be hearing about them in March at the provincial budget. This is the launching of our resistance to that."

Item on FMTA message board soliciting donations and support for OCAP activists, running the activities out of the OCAP office. Our tax dollars at work.

Toronto Tenants Unite!

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Together we are strong!

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Posted by Ken on 7/22/2010, 11:09 am

11 of Toronto's leading poverty activists were arrested yesterday for asking for OW and ODSP to be brought up to livable levels.

We are asking for a raise of 55% to bring it back up to the level it was at before Mike Harris made massive cuts. The present levels after inflation under the Dalton McGuinty government are much worse than even under Harris! Now heartless Dalton is cancelling the special diet program for those who have special medical needs.

Please help support the legal defense of John Clarke, Rachel Huot, Marque Brill, Anne Abbott who has cerebral palsy and the other 7 champions of the poor by making a donation to help defend them against these unwarranted arrests. Call the OCAP office with your pledge at 416-925-6939.

Message Thread:

◦ Increase welfare rates! - **Ken** 11:09 am Today

« Back to thread

Here are some people on a message board somewhere. It is not clear where. But they certainly have the right idea about FMTA and what to do about them.



fs

Jan 11, 2011 4:00 PM

@ MikeE re: Tenant fund

I think you are wrong in suggesting the City of Toronto Auditor General should investigate this fund for financial improprieties. It should be the OPP!

Agree **1** | Disagree **0** | ! Alert a moderator



MikeE

Jan 11, 2011 2:28 PM

To: Uncool on the finances of your Tenant Defence Fund

The Tenant Defence Fund was said to be created to fight rent increases against poor tenants. Last years fund was \$335,000 but only \$75,000 going to those grants and many were exceptions to upscale buildings that did not meet the low income criteria. \$260,000 went towards an untendered contract renewed without question for a decade to organize tenants to promote the grants - that's 77.7% went to overhead to promote the grants that were the whole point of the fund and only made up 23% of the total. \$100,000 should not have been slashed it should have been the whole \$260,000 in that sole-sourced contract. The city's Auditor General should be brought in to investigate this huge imbalance and if there were any improprieties involved in awarding 10 large consecutive untendered sole-sourced contracts.

Agree **4** | Disagree **0** | ! Alert a moderator