

# League of Rock strikes chord with basement musicians

Not a school, not a jam session – the League lets 9-to-5ers fulfill their rock star fantasies

**LINDA WHITE**  
Special to The Sun

As teens, many people dreamed of making it big like the bands they idolized. Before long, they traded in their guitars for briefcases and settled into the Monday-to-Friday rat race. Fast forward a decade or two and they're finally fulfilling their rock star fantasies at the League of Rock.

"You join, name your band,

pick three songs and learn them well enough to play live and record in a state-of-the-art studio. You walk out with a three-song CD and have tasted the politics, challenges and collaborations of the industry," League of Rock founder Terry Moshenberg says of the experience.

The Toronto multimedia wizard understands firsthand the power of fulfilling your dreams. He pioneered international debit card tech-

nologies, but when his company, Moshen Media, was forced into lengthy litigation, he found himself pondering his future.

He noticed a couple of interesting trends: friends were dusting off their guitars and the professional rockers he listened to while growing up were retiring. He put two and two together and made some calls to a few friends in the music business to get a feel for the viability of launching something like the League.

"Quite frankly, I wasn't expecting the response I got. The musicians I spoke with loved the idea," says Moshenberg, who's married to Erica Ehm, MuchMusic's first female VJ. "I decided to create the first national league for non-professional adult musicians. If you want to play hockey, you join a league, but there was no place for adults who wanted to join a band."

A natural entrepreneur, he was the first kid on his block to sell balloons and went on to invent scented balloons and a board game called Tongue Twisters. His latest venture has struck a chord with basement musicians who spend their days toiling

as accountants, lawyers, personal trainers, mechanics, veterinarians and countless other professions.

Their average age: 45 years. "The League is for people who attain their dreams," Moshenberg says. "They are primarily successful. It's not for kids who want to be rock stars. It's for people who don't need money, don't need fame and don't want groupies. They want to meet nice people and play good music."

The League is not a school and is not a jam session. Members can take workshops with professional musicians from bands such as Triumph, Rush and Platinum Blonde. Also on board are James McCartney, one of the original members of the Yardbirds, and Robin Le Mesurier, who has played guitar with Rod Stewart's band.

For Michelle Ostrowski, 48, an ad sales rep with a major newspaper, the experience has been life changing. "I always wanted to play the drums, but in my generation, girls didn't do that. Instead, I took piano lessons for 10 years."

She finally fulfilled her dreams in her mid-40s. After



Michelle Ostrowski, business person by day, rocker by night.

taking drum lessons for three years, she joined the League. "It's networking, meeting new people and gaining new experiences. I don't want to stop," Ostrowski says after completing two sessions.

Five of the League's bands played at Grey Cup festivities in Toronto in November.

"It's amazing to watch what happens to these people," Moshenberg says. "The release that happens from work is amazing ... This is a real chance for people to get the rock out."

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Left to right: Chris Stott, creative producer, League Of Rock; Dan Clancy, Lighthouse lead singer and League Of Rock coach; Tony Louriero, drummer, AtticaRox; and Terry Moshenberg, League Of Rock founder.

## 10-WEEK SESSIONS

The League of Rock gives amateur adult musicians with careers a chance to play and jam with other like-minded musicians. It offers 10-week J.A.B. (Join a Band) sessions, full-day intensive workshops and team-building and corporate retreat events.

For more information, visit [www.leagueofrock.com](http://www.leagueofrock.com).

# Unemployment rate steady at 5.9% despite job losses

**JOHN WARD**  
The Canadian Press

Canada suffered the worst monthly net loss of jobs in 3½ years in December, but observers say that doesn't mean the economy is about to take a sharp turn for the worse.

"The unemployment rate is still at its 33-year low," said Dawn Desjardins of the Royal Bank, adding that the overall picture looks good.

Canada shed 18,700 jobs in December after seven months of rising employment. The jobs data released last Friday by Statistics Canada were a surprise, reversing economists' consensus forecast for a gain of 15,000 jobs.

The overall unemployment rate held steady at 5.9%, lead-

ing many to speculate that the retraction was only a blip.

"It's still very strong growth for the year as a whole and a lot of those jobs were full time," Desjardins said.

For all of 2007, the number of jobs grew by 370,000 or 2.2%, similar to the 2.1% gain recorded in 2006.

## Employment growth

It marked the 15th straight year of national employment growth, powered by a 6.5% increase in jobs in government, schools, utilities, hospitals and other public-sector enterprises.

Despite the December dropoff, Canada's economic fundamentals remain strong, with unemployment "the lowest in a generation," Finance Minister Jim Flaherty

## 18,700 job dip in December just a blip

said after a speech in Toronto last Friday.

"In past two years more than 700,000 jobs have been created," Flaherty said.

"Employment is up in every province, all provinces and Ottawa have surpluses."

Desjardins and others suggested the Bank of Canada is still likely to reduce interest rates on Jan. 22, its next scheduled rate-setting date, to counter uncertainty emanating from the United States and the strong Canadian dollar.

As expected, the struggling manufacturing sector was the hardest-hit in December, dropping 33,000 jobs as the high loonie continued to bite hard into export sales. For

the year, factory employment slumped 6.2% after falling 2.4% in 2006, Statistics Canada said.

Flaherty said the loss of manufacturing jobs in December was not an aberration.

"We'll continue to see some job reductions in the manufacturing sector and the forestry sector, and for good reason.

"We do have the pressure from the dollar, which was volatile and happened quite quickly and does not give industry much time to adjust. So that's a challenge."

December's 51,300 private-sector job losses were partly offset by the creation of 10,700 positions in the public

sector and the addition of 21,900 in the ranks of the self-employed.

Doug Porter of BMO Capital Markets said he doesn't expect to see a big interest rate cut, especially since wages in December were up 4.9% over a year earlier — well above the inflation rate of 2.5%.

## "Baby steps"

"The pronounced uptick in wages and the still low jobless rate suggest that the cuts will continue in baby steps," he said.

For December, Alberta was the only bright spot in the employment front, adding 21,000 jobs. That gain was offset by losses in six provinces, including Ontario and Quebec.

"Overall it is more of the same, in some regards," Desjardins said. "It is the service sector that continues to generate the employment gains. Goods producers, mainly manufacturers, are still under quite a bit of pressure."

Garth White of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said the small drop in jobs in December is no reason "to hit the panic button."

"When we surveyed our members, who are 60% of total employment, 31% of them said they were going to increase full-time employment in 2008, 60% said they were going to maintain their jobs," he said. "That's a positive sign."

Self-employment grew by 4.5% for the year as a whole.