

June 25, 2010



# PRESIDENT'S ACTION UPDATE

CANADA'S LARGEST LABOUR  
FEDERATION ADVOCATING FOR  
ONE MILLION WORKERS

OFL/FTO

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

SID RYAN - PRESIDENT



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

June 2010 marks the six-month anniversary of the new leadership team that was elected in November 2009.

In light of this milestone, this issue of the Action Update highlights the accomplishments of the Ontario labour

movement over the previous six months.

It is an impressive list and it shows us that when we all work together, we are an unstoppable force.

It is fair to say that the OFL has significantly expanded and improved its government relations work. Not only have we increased the dialogue between the OFL and government, I am proud to say that we have increased the involvement of Executive Board members, affiliate leadership and staff.

By more effectively deploying our human resources, we are more capable of influencing the political decision-making process—and I think it shows in our work to-date.

I think it is also fair to say we have boosted the OFL's media profile. Whether it is demanding that employers be held accountable for workplace deaths and injuries, calling for pension reform or standing up for human rights, the OFL has established itself as a reliable and positive source of information and commentary.

While there is certainly more to be done, I hope you agree we have taken some excellent steps in just a few short months. I look forward to working with all of you in a united and effective provincial labour movement.

In solidarity,

Sid Ryan,  
President, Ontario Federation of Labour

## CAW RETURNS TO THE OFL

On June 1, the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) officially rejoined the OFL. This development would not have been possible without the leadership of CAW President Ken Lewenza, who has always believed in the power and strength of a united labour movement.

“This renewed unity has already re-invigorated the labour movement,” said President Sid Ryan. “It will make our work stronger and more effective as we take on the issues that will improve the lives of Ontario workers and their families.”



## PENSION REFORM: REAL POSSIBILITY FOR CANADIAN WORKERS

Modernizing the Canada Pension Plan is now firmly on the public agenda as a result of the work of the CLC, OFL, affiliates and retirees who embraced the campaign.

During the recent provincial and territorial finance ministers meeting the OFL released a

poll it commissioned demonstrating that a majority of small businesses support Labour's proposals to increase premiums and allow CPP benefits to increase. The poll was crucial in refuting statements made by Catherine Swift, President of

the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which suggested small business owners were opposed to improving the public pension system.

Labour's work with Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan paid off as did the OFL/CLC Pension Summit held

in March. The fact that the labour movement was able to win support from the Ontario government has meant that reform of the public pension system is finally a real possibility for millions of workers in Canada.



## **KILL A WORKER, GO TO JAIL**



Launched in December 2009 in the wake of the tragic death of four workers, the OFL's "Kill a Worker, Go to Jail" campaign has been effective. The campaign refers to the fact

that in 2004, the Criminal Code of Canada was amended to allow prosecution of employers who fail to provide safe work places. In January, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) launched a 90-day health and safety blitz to improve employer compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and its regulations. The MOL also established an Expert Panel on Occupational Health and Safety, with representation from the OFL. On May 20, in response to another workplace death of a worker in Whitby, President Sid Ryan sent a letter to the Durham Regional Police, reminding them of their responsibility to consider charges under the Criminal Code.

## **OFL WINS \$2 MILLION TO IMPROVE THE LIVES OF INJURED WORKERS**

The OFL's Occupational Disability Response Team has just been awarded approximately \$2 million in additional funding over the next 2.5 years to improve the work of the labour movement in re-integrating injured workers into the workplace. "This is the OFL's first significant increase in project funding in over a decade," said President Sid Ryan. "There's no doubt that the lives of injured workers will be improved by the depth and breadth of this new initiative."

## **PRIVATIZED SERVICES RESTORED TO PUBLIC SECTOR**

The Ontario labour movement scored a major victory in the campaign to restore labour market re-entry (LMR) services back into the public sector. On June 23, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) announced that labour market re-entry services will be returned to the WSIB where CUPE 1750 members will be shaping and delivering these critical services. In addition, all training associated with the program will be returned to Ontario public colleges and universities.

## **ANTI-WORKPLACE VIOLENCE PROVISIONS BECOME LAW**

After 14 years of activism, Ontario's labour and women movements have won anti-violence amendments to Ontario's *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. The amendments came into force on June 15, 2010.

This is a significant milestone for women and others who are too often the victims of harassment and violence at work and in their communities.

Passage of Bill 168 would not have been possible without the united efforts of OFL affiliates and the families of Lori Dupont and



Theresa Vince. Theresa Vince was murdered at work by her boss in 1996 after years of sexual harassment. Lori Dupont, a nurse at Hotel-Dieu Grace in Windsor, was murdered at work in 2005 by her ex-boyfriend who was also a doctor at the Hotel-Dieu Grace.

"The government must ensure that women know their workplace rights and that additional legislative action is taken to ensure no woman has to choose between her safety and her job," said Secretary-Treasurer Marie Kelly.

## **ONTARIO BUDGET 2010: LABOUR MOVEMENT GETS RESULTS**

In the lead-up to the Ontario 2010 Budget, the OFL prioritized four key issues:

- that the Ontario government allocate funding for child care to sustain the existing level of service;
- that the deficit be resolved over a longer period of time--at least five years;
- that special Northern Ontario hydro rates be implemented in to stimulate badly needed economic development in the North; and
- to increase funding for Second Career--the provincial training program for workers without jobs.

While there is still much more work to be done to protect workers and expand public services, the OFL was pleased to note that each of these goals were met when the government committed to:

- \$63.5 million to sustain over 7,000 subsidized child care spaces;
- Address the deficit over seven years--longer than the five year minimum we had established;
- Implement cheaper Northern Ontario hydro rates; and
- provide \$600 million for the Second Career program to assist an additional 30,000 workers.

**OFL WINS ACCESS TO NEW MONEY FOR WORKPLACE LEARNING**

The OFL's proposal for workplace learning initiatives, submitted jointly with the Ontario Literacy Coalition, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association, and others, was approved in February.

Funding for the project came from the Canada-Ontario Labour Market agreement that allocated \$90 million over two years for literacy, but not necessarily workplace-based literacy training.

After concerted lobbying, the Ontario Budget put a portion of those resources for workplace-based literacy projects.

Executive Vice-President Terry Downey and the OFL's Labour Adjustment Committee have worked to advance workplace learning issues.

Funding for the joint workplace learning proposal was formally approved in February, marking the first time since the late 1990's-when the OFL's Basic Education and Skills Training (BEST) program was cut by the Conservative Mike Harris government-that new money has been allocated for workplace-based learning and basic skills initiatives.

**REDUCED HYDRO RATES AND JOB CREATION STRATEGIES**

An April meeting with Energy and Infrastructure Minister Brad Duguid, OFL representatives and affiliates produced positive results in a variety of areas. The meeting was initially to review the implementation of reduced electricity rates for hard-hit northern businesses, as promised in the Ontario budget. It became clear that a variety of ministries would have to be involved in planning and implementing the new rates-ministries such as Economic Development and Finance. While exploring the options for a larger working group involving government, labour and employers, it became clear that such a forum would be a useful part in developing a much more comprehensive jobs strategy.



**TRI-PARTITE "LABOUR MARKET PARTNERS FORUM" GETS TRACTION**

Since federal government responsibilities were transferred to the provinces through the Labour Market Agreements and Labour Market Development Agreements, the OFL and CLC have been calling for the creation of tri-partite bodies—comprised of labour, employer and government representatives—to develop effective jobs and training strategies. "Recent government relations meetings have given us reason to think this proposal could get traction with the Ontario Premier," said President Sid Ryan. "Given there are already similar tri-partite structures in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Québec. A breakthrough in Ontario may pave the way in other provinces and federally."

**COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION MEETING: AUGUST 4 TO 6**

The Council of the Federation—the gathering of provincial and territorial premiers—will be meeting in Manitoba from August 4 through 6. Presidents of provincial federations of labour and the Canadian Labour Congress will be meeting at the same time. Plans are already underway to host a meeting with the Premiers. This Council of the Federation meeting will be an important opportunity to influence premiers on key issues like pensions, job creation strategies, training (including workplace learning), and the need for labour market partners forums in each province and across Canada.

**G20 SUMMIT: PEOPLE FIRST**

The OFL, CLC, affiliates and community allies have been organizing to deliver an alternative vision for economic, social and environmental justice to the world leaders, as they meet in Toronto June 26 and 27.

Dozens of buses have been booked throughout the province and thousands are expected to rally and march on Saturday, June 26 at 1:00 pm (Queen's Park).

The *People First* rally will be the largest event in the calendar of actions leading lead-up to the summit. A round-up of the June 26 *People First* rally will be featured in the next Action Update.

