

# OFL President's Action Update

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

I would like take this opportunity to give you a brief update on the many recent activities and ongoing projects that have been keeping us busy here at the OFL. While we face great challenges, these are exciting times, and we must seize on the real opportunities we have to effect positive change for the working people of this province.



OFL President Sid Ryan and Ontario union leaders meet Finance Minister Dwight Duncan and Labour Minister Peter Fonseca

Currently, our efforts are concentrated in four key strategic directions: building solidarity; improving governmental relations; a renewed focus on core issues; and a movement building campaign to champion good green jobs and protect public services: *Communities That Work*. Together, we can do great things. Join us.

In solidarity,

Sid Ryan, President

## **Building Solidarity Within Labour and in Our Communities**

Building real power for change begins with strengthening existing relationships and forging new alliances. A major priority of the OFL is to work more closely and co-operatively with our affiliate unions, the Canadian Labour Congress and local Labour Councils. You can already see the results of this approach in Ontario labour's unified voice at Queen's Park, in the OFL's highly collaborative Communities That Work campaign, and in the upcoming pension summit that the OFL is co-sponsoring with the CLC.

At the same time, we are also developing an increased focus on building collaborative relationships with progressive community groups outside of the house of labour. Last month's workshop on organizing, servicing and bargaining for precarious workers, which we co-sponsored with the Worker's Action Centre, was wonderfully received, both by our own union activists and by the many community activists who attended.

Both inside and outside of our movement, there is tremendous enthusiasm for building new progressive alliances to create an economy that serves the needs working people, rather than corporations. At the OFL we are developing a comprehensive outreach and engagement strategy to build solidarity and co-operation with community allies. All of us will have a role to play, and we look forward to working with you on this vital initiative as it goes forward.

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## **Improving Relations and Influence with Government**

It has been an exceptionally busy month on the governmental relations front. In early January, the OFL was accompanied by the leadership of 15 of our affiliate unions for a pre-budget consultation meeting with Finance Minister Dwight Duncan and Labour Minister Peter Fonseca. The Ministers very clearly heard a unified message from unions representing over a million workers in all sectors of our economy: Ontario needs a “jobs budget” that preserves and creates jobs and vital public services.

The meeting was an extremely productive and constructive exchange between a unified Ontario labour movement and our provincial government. It was agreed at the meeting that, going forward, all of the parties would meet on a quarterly basis for regular dialogue and consultation.

In response to heavy pressure from the OFL, our affiliate unions, the Ontario Building Trades Council and local Labour Councils, the Ontario government has announced a major review of the province’s workplace health and safety systems in the form of an Expert Advisory Panel on Workplace Health and Safety. The OFL has been asked to delegate a representative to the expert panel and we look forward to consulting with you as we go forward with the important review.

## **A Focus on Core Issues**

The preservation and creation of good jobs and vital public services; the protection and enhancement of workplace pension plans and the campaign to extend retirement security to all through an enhanced CPP; reform of the fatally flawed workplace health and safety and WSIB systems; and, combating the growing scourge of precarious work. These are the issues that will form the core focus for the OFL going forward.

Strategically, it is important that we concentrate our energies in a few key areas. At the same time, we recognize that each of these issues also lies at the intersection of gender, race and human rights struggles. These core social justice values of equity and fairness for all will be deeply embedded at the centre of our approach to all of these issues, rather than incorporated in the end as add-ons.

## **Communities That Work**

The Ontario Federation of Labour, in a partnership with our affiliates, has launched *Communities That Work*, a long-term campaign to make Ontario a better place for all of us.

Our short-term goal is to urge the McGuinty government to make communities stronger by focusing the next Ontario budget on saving and protecting good jobs and desperately needed public services, not Bay St. driven deficit-cutting. In the longer term, we plan to join with community and social partners to play a big part in the 2011 provincial budget discussions, as well as in the October 2011 provincial election and beyond.

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