PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ontario Federation of Labour Executive Board Meeting, January 30, 2012

NEW AFFILIATIONS TO THE OFL SINCE OCTOBER 2011

NEARLY 100,000 MEMBERS JOINED THE OFL FROM 2009 TO 2011. WE ARE PLEASED TO WELCOME MORE NEW AFFILIATES THIS YEAR.

CUPE LOCAL 4914	400 MEMBERS
PSAC LOCAL CEIU – 000647	369 MEMBERS
PSAC LOCAL UTE – 00052	124 MEMBERS
TOTAL	**893 MEMBERS**

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) represents 54 unions and one million workers. It is Canada's largest provincial labour federation.

President's Report, *Ontario Federation of Labour,* Executive Board Meeting, Jan. 30, 2012

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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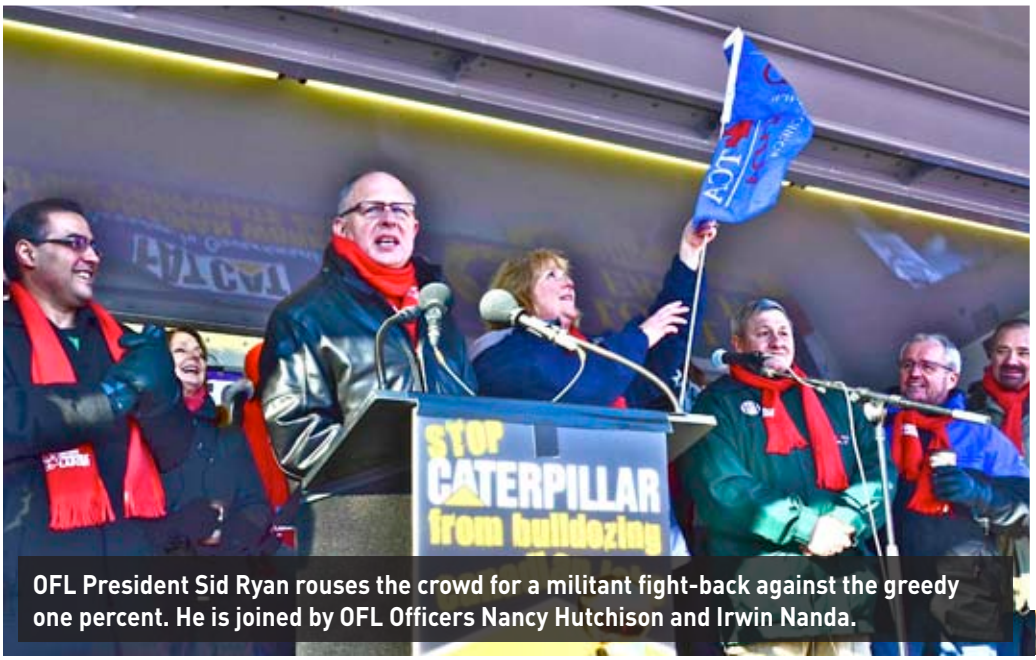
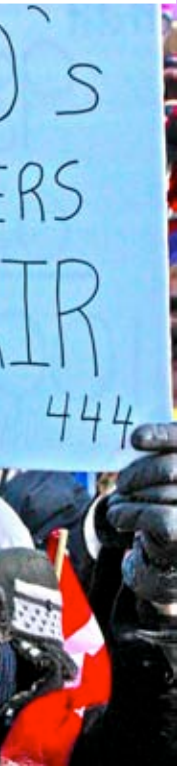
CAW National President Ken Lewenza denounces state-sponsored corporate greed to a boisterous crowd of 15,000 in downtown London.



OFL President Sid Ryan rouses the crowd for a militant fight-back against the greedy one percent. He is joined by OFL Officers Nancy Hutchison and Irwin Nanda.

PART 1: ISSUES & CAMPAIGNS



Massive London Day of Action Takes on Corporate Greed

More than 15,000 trade unionists and supporters descended upon downtown London, Ontario on January 21 in an overwhelming display of solidarity with the members of CAW Local 27. Dubbed a "London Day of Action Against Corporate Greed," the rally was held in Victoria Park, the site of last year's Occupy London tent city. The downtown location served as a powerful symbolic connection to a movement inspired to defend the interests of "99 percent."

"For workers across the province, Electro-Motive/Caterpillar has become the poster child of the greedy one percent," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "This lockout represents everything that is wrong with a Harper government that rewards greedy corporations with public tax dollars while they bulldoze their workers in pursuit of obscene profits."

Electro-Motive Diesel, a subsidiary of U.S. industrial giant Caterpillar Inc., locked-out its 500 Canadian employees on New Year's Day in an attempt to force them to accept a pay cut of over 50 percent, dropping hourly wages for some from $35 to $16.50. This wage cut was one part of a $30 million concession package tabled in a year in which Caterpillar enjoyed multi-billion-dollar profits and a 20 percent boost to production over 2010. The company, known for bringing in scab labour to break unions, is rumoured to be planning to move production to a U.S. plant in Indiana where workers get paid even less.

When word of the lockout spread, Ryan contacted CAW President Ken Lewenza to offer support and issued a media release promising labour movement support in preventing scabs from crossing picket lines. Ryan and new OFL Officers Nancy Hutchison and Irwin Nanda each visited the picket line within the first few days of the lockout. When the CAW announced plans for a solidarity rally on January 21, the OFL swung into action to promote it as a full-fledged Day of Action. An OFL call-out, poster and various online materials helped to raise awareness and build momentum for the day.

The thousands of protesters piled onto 70 buses that were met by ten thousand more who travelled by car or came out from the community. Buses travelled to London from 20 communities as far away as Niagara, Ottawa and Sudbury. American workers even drove in from the GE Plant in Erie, Pennsylvania and the Caterpillar plant in La Grange, Illinois to support their locked-out Canadian counterparts.

The rally was addressed by representatives of the CAW, the locked-out workers, their families, community members and London Mayor Joe Fontana. Labour movement speakers included London and District Labour Council President Patty Dalton, OFL President Sid Ryan, CLC President Ken Georgetti, and CUPE President Paul Moist. Interim NDP Leader Nycole Turmel also delivered solidarity greetings and was joined on the

CLC President Ken Georgetti calls out Harper.

CAW L.27 President Tim Carrie overwhelmed by support.

Interim NDP Leader Nycole Turmel, with NDP MPPs and federal leadership candidates, declares party support for CAW L.27.

stage by several NDP MPPs and federal leadership candidates. Occupy activists joined the rally to strong applause. After the rally, thousands made their way to the CAW Local 27 picket line on the outskirts of London where they closed down the road in solidarity with the locked-out workers.

For workers across the province, fighting Electro-Motive/Caterpillar means fighting every greedy, foreign-owned corporation that buys up Canadian companies in order to gut wages and benefits or move production out of the country. The *Investment Canada Act* is intended to protect national interests by requiring "consideration of a 'net benefit' to Canada when approving foreign takeovers of Canadian companies." However, as with U.S. Steel last year, and so many other companies, the Harper government has proven itself to be unwilling to enforce the Act or, as in the case with Caterpillar, even disclose the terms of the purchase.

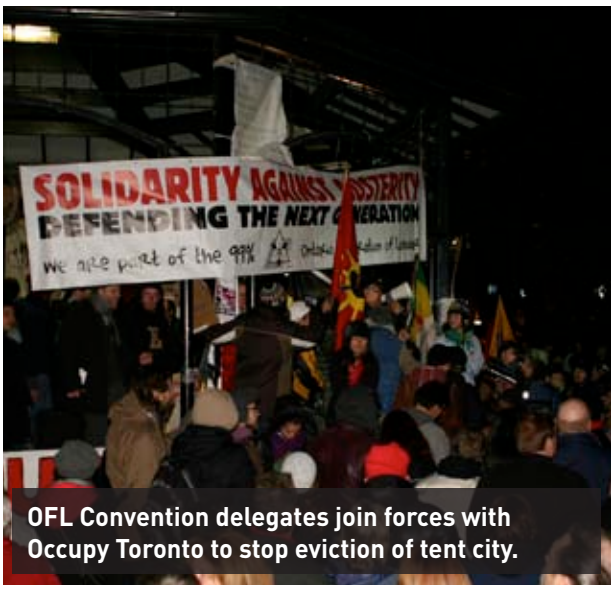
6 buses raised $4,340 for CAW Local 27:

$1900	OPSEU Region 5
$730	OFL Bus
$665	Brantford LC
$525	Durham LC
$320	Grey Bruce LC
$200	Waterloo LC

The London Day of Action sought to draw attention to Harper's failure to protect Canadian jobs and interests. It also called upon Premier Dalton McGuinty to support fair collective bargaining by banning the use of scabs in labour disputes.

"This isn't simply about protecting the jobs of 500 workers, it is about taking a stand against the worst kind of state-sponsored corporate greed," said CAW President Ken Lewenza. "Prime Minister Harper is spending billions of taxpayer dollars to subsidize tax cuts for profit-rich corporations that simply take our cash and our jobs. It is time he stood up for Canadians."

The energy and solidarity at the rally was palpable and those who attended agreed that it served to mark the beginning of a year of renewed labour militancy and resistance against corporate greed. The message for all employers in the private and public sectors was simple: "support decent jobs and benefits or it won't be business as usual in Ontario."



OFL Convention delegates join forces with Occupy Toronto to stop eviction of tent city.

You Can't Evict an Idea! Occupy Spirit Stays Strong

The OFL threw its support behind the Occupy movement from the first Canadian rally on October 15 and maintained solidarity through to the aggressive evictions of Occupy camps in London and Toronto.

The Occupy movement was born out of the adversity faced in the years since the global economic recession of 2008 and the wave of corporate greed and neo-liberal austerity that followed it. The sharp disparity between the obscenely wealthy one percent and the remaining 99 percent has inspired people from all walks of life to take to the streets to demand economic equality.

Throughout the 2011 OFL Convention in November, the Occupy movement was a central focus. On three occasions during the convention, more than a thousand delegates emptied out of the meeting hall to take their anti-austerity message to the streets, in solidarity with the Occupy movement.

The day after Occupy Toronto was evicted from St. James Park by Mayor Ford, the OFL bused Occupy activists from across the province in to Toronto to meet together for the first Occupy Ontario general assembly. Since then, the OFL Officers have continued to meet with Occupy activists in order to plan renewed actions in the spring.

Jan. 17 rally organized by Toronto & York Region Labour Council and Stop the Cuts Coalition.

Collective Action Stops Toronto Budget Cuts

After a year of mobilization that kicked-off with a massive labour-community rally organized by the OFL, the Toronto and York Region Labour Council and community partners on April 9, 2011, public outcry against deep cuts to Toronto programs and services became too great to ignore.

In a stunning reversal, Toronto City Council voted down Mayor Rob Ford's slash-and-burn budget and staved off nearly $20 million in service cuts. Ford suffered a major political defeat as previously sympathetic councillors joined with progressive councillors to halt his agenda with a vote of 23-21.

Among the cuts that were blocked was the closure of three homeless shelters, reductions in servicing to dozens of transit routes, a $2.3 million reduction in community grants, cutbacks to library services, and the elimination of free youth programs at priority centres. But while residents celebrated the saving of those programs, city employees are still on the chopping block, with over 1000 positions being cut in this budget.

Those Councillors who had the courage to stand up to the Mayor's cuts deserve to be congratulated. Now let's see if the sell-off of TCHC homes and Toronto Hydro can be turned around as well.

KI Chief Donny Morris calls for support from delegates at OFL 2011 Convention.

OFL to Aboriginal Affairs: No More Waiting. Change NOW!

The terrible legacy of colonialism, residential schools, racism, ongoing federal and provincial obstruction continue to hamper the aspirations of Aboriginal people in Ontario and Canada. In December, images of desperate conditions in the James Bay Cree community of Attawapiskat flooded our TV sets. The crisis prompted a letter from the OFL to Prime Minister Stephen Harper and a close working relationship with NDP MP Charlie Angus who continues to be a bright light in Parliament demanding an end to forced poverty. OFL President Sid Ryan said in his letter to the Prime Minister: "After a state of emergency was declared and only when, a month later, the Red Cross cargo plane was landing, did you finally take action and it was not to facilitate a solution; rather, your response demanding to know the whereabouts of the $50,000 allegedly paid to 'every man, woman and child in the community,' triggered such an outpouring of racism and hatred that it is now part of the historical record. You played on the centuries-old stereotype to deflect attention away from your government's inaction and obstruction."

OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda joins Aboriginal Circle members at the first meeting of 2012. Planning underway to increase action and support for social and economic justice.

Attawapiskat is one of many reserves in dire circumstances. With this reality in mind the OFL Aboriginal Circle met on January 23 and 24 and defined a critical work plan focused on active support for health, housing, education and economic and social justice for Aboriginal peoples. It's an ambitious agenda that will move the Federation into the centre of the escalating equality fights that will inevitably take place this year. At least one of these, Kitchenuhmaykoosib Inninuwug (KI), or Big Trout Lake First Nation, became a focus for OFL convention delegates who voted to support KI's struggle against the exploitation of its land by mining companies. The provincial government's continued refusal to protect the lands and sacred and ceremonial areas is allowing the newest mining company, God's Lake Resources (GLR), to violate KI protocols.

In November, KI sent the Minister of Northern Development and Mines a letter outlining its numerous and serious concerns. It is now late January and the lack of formal response to the First Nation is a stark example of the problems they are encountering. KI Chief Donny Morris was compelled to write the provincial government yet again requesting information on GLR activities on their land.

In a letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty, OFL President Sid Ryan, Aboriginal Circle Chair Joanne Webb and Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda said: "the continued lack of communication is extremely troubling and places KI at a serious disadvantage; it also belies the government's public statements on the importance of respectful and cooperative dialogue with Aboriginal peoples."The OFL is demanding the government deliver on its 2008 promise of a joint panel to resolve KI's outstanding issues. KI and supporters are also calling for a moratorium to be placed on mining and exploration until an accord can be reached.

KI has invited the OFL President to lead a union delegation to its territory in late spring to help achieve a more prominent provincial and national media profile and place maximum pressure on the provincial government.

In the meantime, every union and local is encouraged to sign on to the KI statement of support.

Visit www.kilands.org and click on "Take Action."

Aboriginal Circle Calls on Affiliates

Appoint an Aboriginal delegate to represent your union. Contact: Human Rights Director Janice Gairey: 416-443-7655 or jgairey@ofl.ca

Former TD Chief Economist Don Drummond contemplates cuts and privatization.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

Economic Synopsis

December data from Statistics Canada showed unemployment edging up slightly to 7.5 percent as the economy shed 26,000 full-time jobs. These losses were offset by an increase of 43,000 part-time jobs and an increase of 31,000 self-employed. USW Economist Erin Wier noted that employment in manufacturing declined again, bringing the total manufacturing job loss over the past nine years to 627,000. According to Wier, employment in manufacturing is at its lowest level – 1.7 million – since the Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey was introduced in 1976.

Statistics Canada reports that earnings losses for those laid off from the manufacturing sector has increased significantly between 1998-2000 and 2005-2007. Whereas men laid-off between 1998 and 2000 experienced an earnings loss of 7 percent, the 2005-2007 cohort experienced a loss of 18 percent. For women, this loss increased from an already high rate of 17 percent for the 1998-2000 cohort to a startling 35 percent for the 2005-2007 cohort. This data does not reflect the impact of the 2008 economic crisis on lost earnings.

At the same time, there continues to be widespread misconception that Canada is facing a labour and skills shortage. In fact the data tells us a different story. While there may be a mismatch between skills and employment in some very specific sectors, the January 2012 Statistics Canada vacancy survey (derived from the Business Payroll Survey) shows the number of workers without jobs exceeds job vacancies by a national ratio of 3.3 unemployed workers for every available job. There are simply not enough jobs to go around.

In Ontario unemployment jobs ratios are even higher, with over 316,000 unemployed workers competing for 90,000 jobs. On a national scale, the highest unemployment to jobs ratios by sector were in forestry (37.4:1); education services (10:1); construction (5.1:1); and manufacturing (4.8:1).

In Ontario, wages have been largely stagnant over the previous year, average weekly earnings increased by only 1.7 percent from October 2010 to October 2011, an increase lower than inflation. Job loss, changes from full-time to part-time employment, and stagnant and declining wages conspired to constrain consumer spending, which in turn undermined economic recovery in the province. The cuts in jobs and services contemplated by Drummond can only exacerbate this trend.

Drummond Commission Expected to Support Privatization

In 2011, the Ontario government announced the establishment of the "Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services." Headed by former TD Bank Chief Economist Don Drummond, the Commission has been granted a sweeping mandate to recommend cuts to public services when it releases it's report at the end of January.

According to a report commissioned by the OFL, Drummond is expected to advocate cutting many government ministries by up to 30 percent; reducing health care spending and coverage; contracting out services; downloading costs on municipalities; allocating funding based on performance; consolidate service delivery, replace staff with online resources; and more.

In past provincial budgets, the government announced the elimination 5,000 public sector jobs and plans to keep spending levels below inflation. Yet, Ontario already spends less on public services than nearly every other province. Clearly, the provincial deficit was not caused by public spending. The more likely culprits are subsidies offered to the private sector during the 2008 economic crisis. Since then, revenue growth has failed to surpass bail-out spending and job creation remains the best bet for balancing Ontario's books. Meanwhile, McGuinty's corporate tax cuts have widdled away public revenue while business investment continues to decline.

The Drummond Commission has shaped up to be McGuinty's primary vehicle for driving the austerity agenda. It is a frontal assault on the "social wage" of all Ontario workers—not just the public sector.

The OFL held a special session for Heads of Unions on January 26 to discuss the implications of the Drummond Commission. Presenters included the Ohio AFL-CIO President Tim Burga, Ontario Health Coalition's Natalie Mehra, and Fred Hahn, Toby Sanger and Chris Watson from CUPE.

Federation Presidents Stand Up for Health Care

On January 16, the first day of the Council of the Federation meeting, the OFL and the other provincial or territorial labour federations issued an open letter calling on the Premiers of Canada to reject the Harper Government's "plan" for health care. The letter was a response to an announcement made by the Harper government in December 2011 that proposed significant cuts to health care funding, beginning in 2017. The cuts were announced after the federal government refused to negotiate a new Health Accord before the current one expires in 2014.

After the letter ran in the *Hamilton Spectator*, the *Toronto Star*, and papers in other provinces, the Premiers announced their unanimous opposition to the Conservative health funding formula.

Heads of Unions Lobby Ontario Finance Minister

Despite the cancellation of pre-budget hearings due to conflicts in the new minority government, the OFL secured its quarterly meeting with Finance Minister Dwight Duncan. Set to take place on February 15, the meeting is open to the OFL's 16 Heads of Unions and will likely address Drummond's recommendations, the government's austerity plans and McGuinty's plea for voluntary wage restraint. The OFL will challenge corporate tax cuts and call for labour law reform.

Social Assistance Review

The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario was established by the McGuinty government in November 2010. The Commission released a discussion paper in June 2011 and the OFL made a submission in September. On January 25, OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda and Research Director Pam Frache met with Co-Commissioner Frances Lankin, to review labour's opposition to various regressive proposals being considered.

The Commission is expected to release an options paper in February and a final report in June 2012.

Labour Adjustment Advisory Program

Since the implementation of the Labour Market Development Agreements between the federal and provincial governments, the province delivers EI Part II benefits. The provincial government has maintained an Adjustment Advisory Program (AAP) with designated staff to facilitate action to support laid-off workers, including support for worker-led action committees and centres designed to provide peer support for laid-off workers, such as navigating the EI system, assistance with education and training, job searches, personal and emotional support and a plethora of other critical services.

In October 2011, the OFL Labour Adjustment Committee met with senior staff within Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to re-affirm the labour protocols that guide all aspects of the adjustment process. These protocols, signed by both MTCU and Labour representatives, will be used to train all action committee or action centre partners. The revised protocol is expected to by signed by mid-February. Copies of this agreement can be obtained from the OFL (contact Research and Education Director Pam Frache at pfrache@ofl.ca). It is critical that all unions engaged in labour adjustment issues have copies of this protocol.

Unfortunately, in December 2011, the MTCU suddenly eliminated the AAP Advisory staff classification that ensured provincial staff could focus on adjustment issues and develop a level of expertise in adjustment-related programs and policy. The result of this restructuring will mean a loss of expertise and much broader job descriptions for all public sector employees working in the department. There is speculation that such restructuring is designed to facilitate the layoffs that the Ontario government tabled in the 2011 Ontario Budget.

The OFL Labour Adjustment Committee will be meeting with senior MTCU staff at the end of January and has requested a meeting with Training, Colleges and Universities Minister Glen Murray.

Employment Insurance

In November 2011 the Mowat Centre, an Ontario-based policy institute released a paper to reform the Employment Insurance (EI) system. The Centre was mandated to develop commentary on federal issues from an "Ontario perspective". The cornerstone of the recommendations is to reduce expenditures from the EI accounts and redirect such costs to individuals through the implementation of a "forgivable" Job Seeker's Loan program ("Temporary Unemployment Assistance" TUA). The OFL wrote a detailed response to the report and at the November 2011 OFL Convention, an emergency resolution was adopted to oppose such Income-Contingent Loan Repayment schemes as a funding model for social insurance and income support programs like EI. Some work has begun in reaching out to labour-community partners about the danger of moving away from payroll tax-funded programs to user-pay based systems, regardless of the extent of "forgiveness" presented in any particular model.

The Labour Adjustment Committee has requested a meeting with the co-commissioners of the Commission for the Review of Social Services—Frances Lankin and Munir Sheikh—to oppose any moves to implement ICLR schemes for social assistance, disability supports or other social programs as suggested in a variety of reports, including the Caledon Institute.

In 2011, the federal government laid-off hundreds of EI processing staff, affecting PSAC members across Canada. These layoffs have resulted in a significant backlog in EI claims processing. Delays in EI processing times cause delays for workers waiting to receive their EI income entitlements and can affect access to training programs like Second Career.

Supporting laid-off workers continues to be important. Despite reports that employment is increasing, December 2011 data shows that 26,000 full-time jobs were lost and replaced with either part-time jobs or self-employment. As austerity measures are implemented at all levels of government, support for laid off workers will remain critical.

EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Commemorative IWD Pins and Posters in Production

The OFL Women's Committee 2012 March 8th Project reflects women's spirit, sisterhood and solidarity and the work all women workers do in climbing over the barriers in the workplace and in the community. For the second year, the OFL has produced a commemorative poster and a pewter pin that are unique works of art that trade union sisters will wear for many years. The 2012 theme celebrates the diversity of sisters in our movement and the sisterhood and solidarity we share in moving forward to an equable and just society – Rising Up: Sisters Share Hope, Vision, Solidarity.

Posters will be available in limited quantities in both English and French and pins will be sold at cost, plus a $0.25 cent donation for a provincial women's organization. Pins are available to affiliates at $3.00/ea for orders of 500 or more. Orders of less than 500 will cost $3.50/ea. In order to get the pins produced and shipped to affiliate head offices in advance of IWD, all orders must be placed before February 15.

For information, visit www.OFL.ca or contact Carrol Anne Sceviour, OFL Director of Human Rights-Women's Issues: 416-443-7670 or csceviour@ofl.ca

Advocating for Human Rights

In addition to the ongoing work promoting equity and social justice, the OFL issued several statements during the past reporting period to recognize important dates on the human rights calendar. Among the most recent OFL statements are:

- Dec. 3: United Nations' International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- Dec. 6: National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
- Dec. 10: International Human Rights Day
- Dec. 18: International Migrants Day

All of the OFL's statements can be found under the NEWS section on the website at: www.OFL.ca

Two years ago, OFL President Sid Ryan joined Dilshod Marupov, the sole survivor of the devastating 2009 Christmas Eve scaffolding disaster, in calling for justice for workers killed or injured on the job. The next criminal court date for company bosses is expected in May 2012.

HEALTH AND SAFETY/WCB

OFL Gears Up Fight for Precautionary Principle

It's been five years since Justice Archie Campbell's ground-breaking report on what went wrong in Ontario's response to the SARS crisis, but there is still no action on its major recommendation: the Precautionary Principle. Justice Campbell called it "the take home message" of the entire report, but Ontario's Ministry of Labour continues to balk at enshrining the principle and other standards in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

The precautionary principle is an approach to eliminating hazards before they cause harm. It requires that when an activity raises threats of harm to human health or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause and effect relationships are not fully established.

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development echoed the principle:

"In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by states according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost effective measures to prevent environmental degradation."

The principle of precautionary action has four parts:

1. A duty to take action to prevent harm before it happens. If there is a reasonable suspicion of harm, there is an obligation to try to prevent it;
2. The burden of proof of harmlessness of a new technology, process, activity, or chemical lies with those who wish to use or introduce it;
3. Before using a new technology, process, or chemical, or starting a new activity, there is an obligation to examine alternatives, including the option of doing nothing; and
4. Decisions applying the precautionary principle must be open, informed, democratic and must also include affected parties.

OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison told the media in January that we must see immediate action in instituting this principle to prevent harm.

Send your examples of preventable disease or injury in the workplace

No names will be used. No workplaces will be identified. Contact Laurie Hardwick: 416-443-7657 or lhardwick@ofl.ca

OFL Officer Nancy Hutchison joins injured worker activist Richard Hudon at Christmas demonstration at the Ministry of Labour.

OFL Renews Call for Jail Terms for Dangerous Bosses

The OFL marked the second anniversary of the Christmas Eve scaffolding deaths of four Toronto construction workers with a renewed demand for the use of the criminal code to punish those whose negligence results in a worker's death.

The incident was the impetus for the OFL's successful "Kill a Worker, Go to Jail" campaign and ushered in an Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety that produced 46 recommendations to reduce workplace deaths, injuries and occupational diseases. However, Metron Construction owner Joel Swartz and two executive officers have not yet been prosecuted on four counts of criminal negligence causing death and one count of criminal negligence causing bodily harm. Their next court date is expected some time in May.

Since the 2004 criminal code provision – known as "the Westray Bill" – became law, there have been more than 500 deaths and 1.5 million injuries in Ontario; yet, there has not been one successful prosecution. Although its maximum sentence allows for life imprisonment, not one boss has spent even one day in jail.

The OFL called on the province, the courts and the police to ensure that all possible tools are being utilized to reduce workplace deaths and injuries.

OFL hosts first affiliate meeting with Ontario's New Chief Prevention Officer George Gritziotis in December.

WSIB Funding Review Final Report Expected Soon

In early November, Professor Emeritis Harry Arthurs met with all stakeholders and announced that he is considering recommendations from the OFL and injured worker groups to deal with full indexing of injured workers' benefits going forward, as well as a more flexible approach to WSIB funding. He noted that the WSIB's experience rating program needed to be reconfigured to put "health and safety" and "return to work" at the forefront. In order to achieve this goal, rigorous study would be required and initiatives must be subject to a sunset clause to evaluate the work and ensure that the objectives are met. His report is expected at any time.

2011 WSIB Death & Injury Stats

In the first 11 months of 2011, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) received a total of 409 fatality claims. Of the 85 traumatic deaths reported from on-the-job incidents and 280 occupational diseases, only 240 claims were allowed. During the same reporting period, the WSIB received 222,459 claims, out of which only 167,320 have been allowed.

PART 2: MEET THE NEW OFFICERS

Sister Nancy Hutchison is an Activist First

OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison.

Sister Nancy Hutchison is no stranger to breaking barriers. She is renowned as a health and safety activist and a trailblazer. She was the first woman ever to be employed at the Campbell Red Lake Gold Mine and Dickenson Gold Mine and has never stopped fighting for workers' rights.

"Right-wing governments are exploiting people's fears about the economy to convince them that decent wages and social programs have to be sacrificed, when these are the things that offer our only protection. In the past year, we have seen inspiring displays of labour-community solidarity, from Wisconsin and Ohio to London and Toronto. By taking our battle from the bargaining table to the streets, we can fight with the community to defend social equity and protect worker's rights."

From her early days in the gold mine, Nancy saw how corporate greed resulted in indifference to the safety of workers. Her outrage triggered her activism.

"Exposure to health and safety dangers was part of our daily work. We shovelled cyanide in confined spaces with no protection and no ventilation. When I became pregnant with my first son in 1980, the company refused to temporarily re-assign me to work that wouldn't expose me – and my foetus – to toxic substances. I was forced to take maternity leave before giving birth and return to work when my baby was only three months old. It infuriated me that the company didn't care if my family was healthy as long as I was productive. I have been an activist ever since."

Nancy went on to serve as an executive member of USW Local 950 in Red Lake and became active on the negotiating committee. In 1995, Nancy became an International Staff Representative with the United Steelworkers and was assigned to locals in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. In 1996, she was promoted to the position of Steelworkers Health & Safety Coordinator for District 6 (Ontario & Atlantic Provinces) and in 2011 she was promoted again, this time to the position of USW Canadian National Health, Safety & Environment Department Leader. As with so many trade union leaders, Nancy was driven into leadership by her activism.

"My Local 950 President, Gordie Prest, and our USW Staff Rep, Moses Sheppard, saw my determination and called on me to help defend the compensation claims of dying miners, their wives and their widows. We travelled all over, wrote up claims on our breaks, and we never turned down a dying worker or a widow who wasn't union, because defending every worker was the right thing to do. It was the most tangible illustration of the value of a union that I can imagine: workers defending other workers."

As OFL Secretary-Treasurer, Nancy wants to make sure that support is available to every worker.

"We need to be united to fight the austerity agenda. Strengthening labour councils, supporting affiliates and bringing in new ones will reinforce the grass-roots activism of the OFL. Together, we need to focus on reforming Ontario's labour laws to remove the barriers to unionizing, ban scab labour and level the playing field. If the boss' strategy is to divide and conquer, then our strategy must be unity and militancy."

Corporate Greed is Brother Irwin Nanda's Biggest Priority

Optimistic about the work ahead, Brother Irwin Nanda sees the labour movement's biggest asset as its membership.

"The heart and soul of the union is the membership. As leaders in our unions, we have an obligation to challenge all of the barriers that our members face so that they can accomplish their full potential. Equity isn't a goal we can achieve; it is a process that we have to live."

Since Irwin started working at Canada Post in 1987 he has been active on the shop floor and in leadership. He served as Shop Steward, National Trustee, Regional Union Representative, Grievance Officer and National Director for the Metro Toronto Region of CUPW. When he wasn't dealing with grievances, he has used his position as a platform for providing support to other unions. During the past year, Irwin played an active role in defending his members and building labour solidarity for CUPW during the summer lockout by Canada Post.

"When I started working at the post office, I was one of only 30 part-timers who worked a shift of 250 workers. We were isolated by the employer and among the most disenfranchised in the union. Many workers wouldn't speak up because they were afraid of the employer. It convinced me that the only solution was to work together. One week, when our pay cheques didn't come, my co-worker Walter Woloschuk and I shut down the equipment and took all the workers to the office to announce that we weren't working until we were paid. Our standoff ended about an hour later when our cheques were magically released. When the full-timers learned what we had done, we earned a lot of respect."

Throughout his 12 years as a full-time officer of CUPW, one of Irwin's active goals was to change the face of the union. When he was first elected to the CUPW executive board in 1999, he was the only person of colour out of more than 50 full-time national and regional officers. He came to see equity as one of his most important priorities as a labour leader.

OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda.

"I started holding weekly shop floor meetings during break times. People really loved it and it drove the employer crazy that workers would give up a break to come hear about the union. Once I had workers' attention, I began to actively encourage members from the various equity-seeking groups to get involved in our union. Today, there is diversity right through the leadership of my region and at any function, workers from equity-seeking groups represent the majority."

With a solid background in equity and social justice, it is no surprise that broadening this work is one of Irwin's priorities as OFL Executive Vice-President.

"By 2014-15, the majority of workers in Ontario will be from racialized communities and we will need the skills and determination of every one of them. After all, it is just a tiny minority with concentrated wealth who are shaping public policy around their own interests. Our strength is our diversity and it is time to build a common front to champion community needs over corporate greed."

1,500 pack the convention hall in an incredible display of labour unity.

Hutchison, Ryan and Nanda elected to lead OFL.

MP Olivia Chow recognized as child care hero.

PART 3: AFFILIATE & LABOUR MOVEMENT SOLIDARITY

2011 OFL Convention Gives Mandate for Labour Militancy

The 2011 OFL Convention opened with a fist-pumping video documenting the incredible work of the labour movement over the past two years. President Sid Ryan welcomed delegates to a packed hall, lit up by multi-media projection screens. With over 90,000 new members in the Federation and delegate registration exceeding the 2009 Convention by nearly 600, there was little doubt that the labour movement is ready to take on the austerity agenda.

"The leaders of Canada are not on Bay Street; they are right here in this room. We make Canada work and we are standing on the shoulders of the workers who came before us. If the top one percent want to strip us of our jobs, our dignity and our rights, then they'll have a fight on their hands," Ryan told the thunderous assembly.

On the second day of Convention, tables were removed to accommodate nearly 1,500 delegates who packed the Grand Ballroom for the OFL election. Sid Ryan (CUPE) and Nancy Hutchison (USW) were acclaimed as President and Secretary-Treasurer, respectively. Irwin Nanda (CUPW) and Sandra Griffith-Bonaparte (PSAC) both ran for Executive Vice-President, with Irwin winning the position. All three officers called for greater labour unity in the fight against austerity. The long line-ups of passionate nomination speeches was a testament to the activist credentials of all of the candidates who stood for election. On behalf of the OFL, Brother Ryan thanked outgoing officers Marie Kelly and Terry Downey for their hard work and commitment to the labour movement.

The theme, "Defending the Next Generation," pervaded the meeting, from documents and banners to the discussion on the floor of the Sheraton Centre's Grand Ballroom. This convention focus on the future of jobs in Ontario and the devastating impact that corporate greed and the austerity agenda will have on future workers related closely to the message

Occupy Activists Christie and Octavian receive standing ovation from the Convention delegates.

of the Occupy movement and the Toronto Occupy camp that was taking place at St. James Park only a few blocks away. The Occupy Toronto camp became a central focus of the meeting when Toronto police announced plans to evict the protesters on the opening day. Inspired by the optimistic and militancy of the Occupy movement, the assembly twice voted to adjourn sessions early and, on three separate occasions, nearly the entire delegation joined the Occupy protesters in solidarity. The final convention rally focused on corporate crooks on Bay Street and targeted the Bank of Montreal, in particular, for bankrolling the despicable Infinity Rubber, which has kept their workers out on strike for 22 months.

The impromptu rallies and the passionate interventions at the microphones revealed a revitalized labour movement that was ready to take action.

Each day, debate centred around one of the four policy papers:

- Prevent, Protect, Compensate for the Next Generation
- The Power of Diversity in the 21st Century
- Toward a Common Front Against Austerity
- Retirement Security and the Fight for the Future

Meeting debate was also energized by empowering panel presentations on fighting for unorganized workers and inspiring guest speakers that included AIDS activist Stephen Lewis, MP Olivia Chow, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath, Argentinian Labour Leader Pablo Micheli and many others. New York State AFL-CIO Secretary-Treasurer Terry Melvin gave a barn-burning speech on the citizen-labour alliances that have taken root across the U.S. "The proponents of neo-liberalism have realized that unions are a threat to corporate power and they have launched a campaign in statehouses across the land to curb or eliminate public sector unions," he told delegates. "Workers with their unions are the last, best defense against attacks on working people everywhere."

A concrete Action Plan, based on feedback from the membership at Convention is will be considered at the January 30 Executive Board Meeting.

OFL Award Recipients Included:

NDP MP Olivia Chow – Child Care Champions Award

Photographer Vincenzo Pietropaolo – OFL Cultural Award

NPD MPP Jagmeet Singh & NDP Candidate Vrind Sharma – OFL Youth Award

Injured worker activist Karl Crevar – OFL ODRT WCB Award

Labour Council delegates at OFL Convention.

ATU L.113 President Bob Kinnear fires up his members to take on a greedy employer.

Supporting Labour Councils

Making good on a promise to better integrate the work of the OFL with Labour Councils, new Executive Officers Nancy Hutchison and Irwin Nanda headed out on the road to visit labour council meetings in Durham, Hamilton, Kingston, London, Oakville and Toronto. The two officers did more than just deliver greetings from the OFL; they mobilized for the London Day of Action on January 21 and promoted the OFL's Common Front initiative. All three officers intend to travel to every labour council as part of a plan to create stronger relations across the province.

York Transit Workers Strike Against 3 Employers

After more than 12 weeks on strike, Viva members of ATU Local 113 reached an agreement with Veolia Transport after rejecting the company's previous offer in a Labour Board-supervised vote by a margin of 133 to 44. ATU Local 1587 has reached a tentative agreement Miller Transit but the vote will take place after the publication of this report.

Meanwhile, York Region has cancelled its contract with First Canada, where members of ATU Local 1587 went on strike along with Veolia and Miller Transit drivers in October, a move that was designed to force workers to accept the deal. The union has taken the move to the Ontario Labour Relations Board on a complaint of unfair labour practices by York Region.

OFL President Sid Ryan joined the striking workers on the picket line calling on York Region Council to scrap the contracts with private transit operators and replace them with a public transit system that works for riders, workers and the public. The difficulty in resolving these labour disputes puts to lie the argument being made by right-wing politicians in so many cities that contracting out city services leads to stability.

The ATU should be commended for its tenacity in standing firm against three aggressive employers during a long and bitter labour dispute. Their battle with private sector transit is a powerful reminder of the importance of keeping the pressure on municipalities to end the privatization of public services in order to restore accountability and protect the public interest.

City of Toronto Provokes Fight with Workers

The Ford regime is rolling out its plan to either lock out its employees or drive them out with provocative treatment in the coming weeks. On Thursday, January 12, City negotiators walked out of the room after three minutes, giving CUPE 416 notice that they will be seeking a No-Board report. That put the city in a position to lock out workers and the union in a position to strike as of 12:01 am, February 5.

A week earlier, CUPE Local 416 President Mark Ferguson announced the union's offer to roll-over the provisions of the last contract while also agreeing to a three-year wage freeze, in order to prevent public service cuts and save the city $25 million over the term of the contract.

The City flatly rejected their offer.

Hotel workers fight back.

UNITE HERE L.75's Rehka Sharma calls for card-based certification at OFL Convention.

CUPE locals and their members have made it clear that they are not looking for a conflict with the city. They want to go to work delivering important public services to every neighbourhood. CUPE recognizes the financial pressures facing municipalities like Toronto and is prepared to work together to find solutions without cutting services. They are also determined to protect both their jobs and the services that we all rely on. In the face of a belligerent anti-worker agenda centred in the Mayor's office, they deserve our whole-hearted support.

UNITE HERE Ramps Up Fight Against Novotel Hotels

Workers at the three non-union Novotels in Mississauga, North York and Ottawa, Ontario have been struggling to organize under UNITE HERE since late 2008. Independent elected officials have verified strong majority support for the union in each of the non-union hotels two times since the organizing drives began.

Accor, Novotel's Paris-based parent company, has signed an agreement on Trade Union Rights with the Global Union Federation that pledges "not to oppose efforts to unionize its employees." However, in Canada, Accor has elected to systematically oppose workers' efforts to join a union at all three hotels and has disciplined, suspended, and even terminated a number of workers who are known union supporters. In defense of the workers, UNITE HERE has brought the employer before the Province of Ontario's Labour Relations Board on 60 separate charges alleging violations of labour laws at the three hotels.

At its 2011 Convention, the OFL membership showed its resounding support for the hotel workers' determination to overcome the employer's obstacles and bring the union to their workplaces. The OFL issued a media release to make its support known and called on Accor to respect the rights of its Canadian workers.

As UNITE HERE continues to gather incredible political and community support for its union drive, the OFL is on alert to support a boycott of Novotel Hotels the minute one is declared. The OFL continues to closely monitor the situation and work with UNITE HERE Locals 75 and 261 to protect the human and labour rights of workers seeking to organize.

OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison and CLC Executive Vice-President Marie Clarke Walker join outraged parents and allies to protest a proposal to cose 12 child care centres in Peel.

PART 4: COMMUNITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Activism Halts Closure of 12 Peel Region Child Care Centres

A quick response from parents, the Brampton-Mississauga and District Labour Council, the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC), the OFL, the CLC, affiliates and scores of community allies put the brakes on a rushed vote by Peel Region Council to close 12 public child care centres.

In late January, parents in Peel Region learned that Council was considering a report recommending the closure of all of the region's child care centres that was prepared by KPMG – the same group that advised the City of Toronto on sweeping service cuts. Despite media attention, the report was kept secret until January 24, two days before the Council meeting and the same that day parents held a public meeting to call out councillors for failing to consult them before considering such a drastic decision.

At the Council meeting, over 200 parents and supporters joined 59 deputants who told tearful personal stories about their child care needs and called on the Council to delay their vote to allow for public consultation.

While the closures would have stranded 853 children in the region, among the most disadvantaged would have been the parents of children with special needs, who currently benefit from targeted programs run by the Region.

OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison, herself a Peel Region resident, was one of the passionate speakers who presented a deputation to the Peel Region Council and swayed the vote.

Poverty activists have been outraged since province cut the Special Diet Allowance.

Raise the Rates Campaign Targets Poverty

At the OFL's 2011 Convention in November, the membership expressed support for the "Raise the Rates" campaign to restore the province's Special Diet Allowance for people receiving social assistance and improve support delivered through Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). Community and union allies are working together to organize a major pre-Provincial Budget mobilization to challenge the impact of the austerity agenda on poor communities in Ontario.

Cuts at every level of government have exacerbated the livelihoods of those who are most vulnerable in society. The minimum wage remains frozen below a living wage and the ranks of the working poor continue to swell. Welfare and disability payments have fallen by nearly 55 percent in real spending power since 1994. The cut to the Special Diet for people on social assistance has added to the growth of poverty.

The date for action has not yet been set but will likely fall on or around March 16, before the Provincial budget is released. For more information or to get involved, visit: www.ocap.ca/RTR

IWHN Mobile Health Clinic reaches city's poorest and most diverse enclaves.

Public Outcry Protects Immigrant Women's Health Services

Among the many drastic cuts to public services tabled in Toronto Mayor Rob Ford's "Core Services Review" was a 22.5 percent cut to sexual health services for Toronto's immigrant women. The OFL called on the city to reject the $200,000 annual cut to the Immigrant Women's Health Centre (IWHC) that serves 5,000 women in nine languages in hard-to-reach and marginalized communities.

However, an incredible campaign against Ford's cuts resulted in a stunning but narrow defeat of many austerity measures proposed in the City's budget, including the deep cuts to the IWHC. With funding preserved, the Centre will be able to continue to operate its Mobile Health Clinic, which allows doctors to travel to communities across Toronto to see immigrant and refugee patients.

PART 5: UPCOMING EVENTS

February 1: Student Day of Action Declares "Education is a Right"

From coast to coast, students are mobilizing to hit the streets on February 1, 2012 to demand their right to a post-secondary education system that is free of financial barriers, equitable and of high quality.

Come out and show your support for the next generation! For information on events in your community, visit: www.EducationIsARight.ca

February 1: Black History Month Flag-Raising in Windsor

At noon on February 1, the Windsor Emancipation Celebration Corp., Windsor & District Black Coalition and other community partners will kick off Black History Month at Windsor's City Hall Square. There will be a reading of the Black History Month Proclamation followed by a flag raising ceremony.

Other Black History Month events will take place throughout the month in communities across the province.

February 6: Vigil, Forum and Feast for Leonard Peltier

The Canadian Human Rights Committee for Justice and Freedom for Leonard Peltier (LPDCC) and the Indigenous Education Network of OISE/UT invite you to attend the 19th Annual Traditional Prayer Vigil in honour of the People's Struggle to free Leonard Peltier, North America's longest-serving, indigenous political prisoner. The day commemorates Leonard's sacrifice of 36 years of false imprisonment.

Join the event on Monday, February 6, from 1:00 pm to 6:00 pm at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (252 Bloor St. W., in the 7th Floor Peace Lounge).

February 11: Olivia Chow's Chinese New Year Banquet

For many years the annual Jack Layton & Olivia Chow Chinese New Year Banquet has been a time to come together to celebrate and to look forward to the year ahead. This year, please join Olivia Chow and Mike Layton in celebrating the Year of the Dragon.

In honour of Jack Layton, we will be donating all proceeds from the auction and other fund raising activities (during the banquet) to help build a school in the Northern Ontario community of Attawapiskat.

When: Saturday, February 11, 2012

Reception: 6:00 pm Dinner: 7:00 pm

Where: Dim Sum King Restaurant, 421 Dundas Street West, 3rd Floor

To buy tickets or tables, contact: scliff@rogers.com

February 17: Toronto Forum on Anti-Black Racism

A Toronto forum for Black History Month will be hosted by the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) and the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), with support from the OFL. Titled "Anti-Black Racism in the Canadian Criminal 'In-Justice' System Reaches Epidemic Proportions," the event will feature a panel debate on February 17, 2012, from 5:30 pm to 9:30 pm in Room 314, Metro Hall (55 John Street, Toronto).

March: Deadline for Submissions on Ontario's Human Rights System

After significant revisions in Ontario's Human Rights System in 2006, the majority of complainants continue to be under-represented, and many are not able to access the Human Rights Legal Support Center for assistance.

Submit views on how to improve Ontario's Human Rights System before March.

Visit: www.ontariohumanrightsreview.org

March 8: International Women's Day, 2012

International Women's Day (IWD) in North America has been celebrated since 1911 but it draws its origin from a New York City women garment worker stoppage on March 8, 1857. On that date, women garment workers marched to protest their abysmal working conditions, 12-hour days and low wages. Three years later the women garment and textile workers formed their first union.

The OFL will commemorate the 2012 IWD with a unique poster and pewter pin that can be ordered online from www.OFL.ca. Communities and unions will be holding events from March 3-10, 2012.

March 23 & 24: Federal NDP Leadership Convention 2012

The whole country will be watching as New Democrats come together in Toronto to choose their new leader…and the next Prime Minister of Canada. The Convention will take place at the Allstream Centre in Toronto (105 Princes' Blvd). A warm tribute to Jack Layton will be held on Friday, March 23 and the leadership vote will take place on Saturday, March 24. Delegate fees are $349, so register now at: www.leadership2012.ndp.ca/convention

March 28: Sefton Award for Contributions to Labour Relations

The Sefton Award for Contributions to Labour Relations will be presented on Wednesday, March 28, 2012, prior to the Annual Sefton Memorial Lecture that will be delivered by Toronto and York Region Labour Council President John Cartwright. Former OFL Director of Research Chris Schenk will be receiving this year's prestigious Sefton Award for Contributions to Labour Relations.

To attend the lecture and the award ceremony, contact Stephanie Woodsworth at 416-978-5301, or stephanie.woodsworth@utoronto.ca

April 11: "Pink Shirt Day" (or Anti-Bullying Day)

Day of Pink is the International Day against Bullying, Discrimination, Homophobia and Transphobia in schools and communities. Everyone is invited

to celebrate diversity by wearing a pink shirt and by organizing activities in their workplaces, organizations, communities and schools.

For more information, visit: www.dayofpink.org

April 13-15: Ontario NDP Convention 2012

The Ontario NDP Provincial Convention 2012 will be taking place from April 13 to 15, 2012, at the Hamilton Convention Centre (1 Summers Lane). Delegate fees are $310, or $285 for those who register before March 1.

For questions and registration information, contact: convention@on.ndp.ca

Annual Dates to Remember

February:	Black History Month
February 20:	World Day of Social Justice
March 8:	International Women's Day
March 10:	Bottled Water Free Day
March 21:	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
March 22:	World Water Day
March 27:	Anniversary of the OFL
April 22:	Earth Day
April 28:	Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job

PART 6: PHOTO CREDITS

All photos in this publication were taken by Joel Duff except the following.

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