

THE ONTARIO

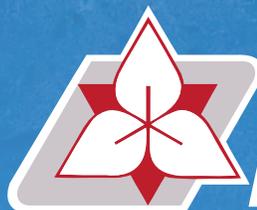
WE WANT

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR  
CONVENTION 2015

2016-2017 ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

**ACTION PLAN**

FINAL VERSION, AMENDED AT CONVENTION



ONTARIO  
FEDERATION OF  
LABOUR



**ONTARIO  
FEDERATION OF  
LABOUR**

**2016-2017 OFL ACTION PLAN (FINAL VERSION WITH AMENDMENTS)**

**13<sup>th</sup> OFL Biennial Convention • November 23-27, 2015 • Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL)**

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

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## CREATING THE ONTARIO WE WANT

*We will succeed by continuing on a trajectory from the defensive or reactive to the offensive or pro-active, and by championing visionary, big, bold ideas about the Ontario We Want.*

The *Ontario We Want* requires our collective action and the resolve to keep fighting until our demands are met. The *2015 Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Action Plan* builds on the success of effective and collective political mobilization like the [#StopHudak](#) campaign, and applies what we have learned with the goal of replicating our success. Together, we will pursue big, bold ideas rooted in our shared values.

A united and properly-funded labour movement is essential, and must be a cornerstone of our federation to realize our vision for the *Ontario We Want*. Together, we will **engage government** and policy makers at every level; **champion equity** by giving voice to those that have been marginalized; **build our movement** by expanding our reach and capacity; and **mobilize our members** to transform our province and our country into a society that is founded on a true, collective and inclusive agenda.

The OFL and affiliates will succeed by:

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### ENGAGING GOVERNMENT

- Asserting labour's voice in public policy discussion, debate and legislation by remaining on the offensive, continuing to be more pro-active than reactive and by championing visionary, big, bold ideas about the *Ontario We Want*;
- Invigorating union organizing efforts by solidifying changes in Ontario's labour laws. This will involve further consultation with the government's Special Advisors for the Changing Workplaces Review and pressuring the provincial government to implement the recommendations of the OFL submission on labour law reform;
- Entrenching our demands for labour law reform by developing a comprehensive dynamic campaign and activating our movement through mobilization to regain card-check certification, enact anti-scab legislation, restrict temporary agencies, establish successor rights in the contract sector and fight for \$15 & Fairness across the province;

*We will entrench our demands for labour law reform by expanding workers' rights and union security, developing a campaign and activating our movement to ensure that every job is a pathway out of poverty.*

*Building labour leadership that is reflective of our movement.*

*We will continue to forge the bonds between workers and communities that will effectively harness our grassroots power.*

- Charting a shared strategy that forges a pathway to achieving our vision for an inclusive and equitable Ontario;
- Promoting a multi-stakeholder discussion about job creation and training through a Labour Market Partners' Forum; and
- Harnessing our power and resolve by demanding strong public services, demonstrating to stop privatization of Hydro One and ensuring that a culture of health and safety and justice for injured workers is attainable by restoring the funding for the OFL's Occupational Disability Response Team (ODRT).

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## **CHAMPIONING EQUITY**

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- Ensuring every action of the OFL is viewed through an equity lens;
- Challenging our movement to reimagine itself beyond our immediate membership, to include all working people, the unemployed, the precariously employed, the retired and the many other diverse equity-seeking communities who are being marginalized in today's economy;
- Developing leadership reflective of our movement, by hosting a bi-annual "OFL Equity in Leadership Summit" designed to empower members to lead their Locals, Councils, Unions and the Federation into the future;
- Organizing and mobilizing around pay equity with the goal of closing the gender wage gap once and for all;
- Advancing equity throughout our communities by championing employment equity; and
- Reinvigorating the fight for a 'Migrant Workers' Bill of Rights' in Ontario.

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## **BUILDING OUR MOVEMENT**

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- Uniting and adequately funding our movement;
- Building on the success of the Ontario Common Front, which, in just four years, has grown into an alliance of over 90 community and labour organizations from across the province. Drawing inspiration from other labour-community coalitions that have strengthened social movements and mobilizations, we will continue to forge bonds between people and communities that are needed to effectively harness our grassroots power;
- Dedicating resources to our community efforts like the Ontario Common Front;
- Supporting and strengthening an infrastructure of progressive organizations, including think tanks, foundations, media outlets and training and education centres across the province that will help coordinate our messages and build our capacity; and
- Embracing digital activism to grow our social media networks and online footprint.

*Launching and supporting campaigns and direct actions that force progressive ideas into the public conversation and onto the political agenda.*

*The OFL will act as the conduit for a province-wide campaign to entrench the Ontario We Want into public policy through action.*

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## **MOBILIZING OUR MEMBERS**

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- Mobilizing for a mass labour-community rally at Queen’s Park early in 2016 to demand the **Ontario We Want**;
- Developing the activists capacity of our movement through an official ‘OFL Activist School’ and by increasing our digital activism;
- Mobilizing to make labour law reform, union security and workers’ rights a primary focus in the coming term, including a mass rally to coincide with the October 7, World Day for Decent Work;
- Responding to humanitarian crises both at home and abroad; like the provision of clean water to First Nation reserves, or by sponsoring Syrian refugees to come to Ontario; and
- Launching and supporting campaigns and direct actions that force progressive ideas into the public conversation and on to the political agenda. This will include continuing to support important campaigns, such as Fight for \$15 & Fairness, Raise the Rates, Keep Hydro Public, Pay Equity, Growing Public Services, Protections for Migrant Workers, Kill a Worker Go to Jail, as well as those campaigns and direct actions that advance our agenda for the **Ontario We Want**.

Now is time for unions and our community partners to make real our vision for the **Ontario We Want**. The OFL will act as the conduit for a province-wide engagement and campaign to entrench our demands into action; to engage government and policy makers at every level; to include a voice for those that have been marginalized; to build agency and capacity within our movement; and to mobilize a movement that will transform our province and our country.

Together, we will redefine what is possible and drive our movement forward.

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[Labour unions must become] the voice for a boldly different economic vision, one that provides solutions to the attacks on working people, on poor people, and the attacks on the Earth itself, then there will be no worries about the continued relevance of the labour movement.

- Naomi Klein, Activist and Author

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INTRODUCTION

# DEMANDING THE ONTARIO WE WANT

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## A BOLD VISION BACKED BY ACTION

The OFL has led a new and reinvigorated labour movement in the task of building an activist infrastructure to meet the challenges of inequality, injustice and a corporate agenda that has infiltrated Canadian politics at every level.

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) has led a new and reinvigorated labour movement in the task of building an activist infrastructure to meet the challenges of inequality, injustice and a corporate agenda that has infiltrated Canadian politics at every level. In doing so, we have engaged government policy, put equity and inclusiveness at the centre of our organization efforts, built an expansive community alliance and mobilized our members like never before.

Together, we put 10,000 people on the streets of Hamilton in support of steelworkers, 15,000 in London in support of autoworkers, 30,000 in Toronto in support of school teachers and support staff and we rallied for workplace rights in every region of Ontario. We have built an unprecedented labour-community alliance of over 90 groups that began the pushback against Rob Ford's privatization plans, challenged McGuinty's austerity cuts, demolished Hudak's anti-union agenda and catapulted inequality into the mainstream media. Our movement mobilized our activist base across Ontario to hold the Harper government to account.

**However, now there is an opportunity for Ontarians to move beyond defending the jobs we have, to start demanding the jobs we deserve, the services we need and the *Ontario We Want*.**

In 2013, author and activist Naomi Klein called on labour unions to become “the voice for a boldly different economic vision, one that provides solutions to the attacks on working people, on poor people, and the attacks on the Earth itself, then there will be no worries about the continued relevance of the labour movement.”<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely these values that have guided the transformation of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

It is time for working people to put forward big, bold ideas about the kind of society we want to live in. We cannot be constrained by goals that today seem distant – like equity and equality for all, a green economy, free tuition, retirement security, universal pharmacare or a guaranteed minimum income. These are the very ideas that are inspiring and motivating communities into action.

*We must once again begin mobilizing in the streets to galvanize public opinion, monopolize the public debate and prove once and for all that people power trumps corporate money.*

However, no government of any political stripe will adopt labour’s vision into public policy or the laws of the land unless it feels widespread public pressure. While the strength of the corporate right is built on money, the strength of the labour movement comes from people. We must once again begin mobilizing in the streets to galvanize public opinion, monopolize the public debate and prove once and for all that people power trumps corporate money.

By joining together under the aspirational banner, the **Ontario We Want**, we can forge a movement of working people, environmentalists, students, Indigenous communities and marginalized people to protect the interests of the next generation by putting forward a bold vision - backed by action.

Inside Ontario’s House of Labour, we are building a new kind of labour movement, but in the streets, we are fighting for something much bigger – we are fighting for the Ontario, indeed the Canada, we want.

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## RETROSPECTIVE: WHAT WE LEARNED?

We know that success or failure depends upon how well the OFL can unite and mobilize local leadership and labour activists on the ground. Without a well-funded movement, dynamic and visible leadership and an activist labour movement, our campaigns will fall flat.

Planning coordinated campaigns, mobilizing our activist networks and executing other tactical measures is the framework for a successful political agenda.

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### THE ATTACK ON WORKERS’ RIGHTS

*“Courage, my friends;  
‘tis not too late to  
build a better world.”  
- Tommy Douglas<sup>2</sup>*

In 2014, Ontario Conservative Leader Tim Hudak campaigned on a promise to introduce right-to-work labour laws in Ontario, similar to laws on the books in bordering American jurisdictions - Michigan and Wisconsin.<sup>3</sup> Tim Hudak was the most radical conservative politician north of the U.S. border, and labour across Canada watched the OFL closely to see how this Canadianized “Tea Party” movement could be defeated. Hudak’s blatant attack on unions intended to gut Ontario’s labour movement, and in the process, strip the basic rights of every worker.<sup>4</sup> However, **we were ready to defend our position, we were pro-active and we mounted a strong defense.**

With the strength of our community partners like the Ontario Common Front, affiliate unions, labour councils, and activists across the province - the OFL led a broad and bold province-wide campaign to [#StopHudak](#) and his destructive agenda.

Central to our campaign was a coordinated media strategy including unprecedented social media outreach.

*New technologies, like social media, are game changers in driving a collective conscience.*

The [#StopHudak](#) campaign delivered:

- 1,094 traditional media mentions with a cumulative circulation of 47,934,700
- 21 daily email updates and 136,385 emails delivered
- 1664 tweets, and 788 Facebook posts reaching an audience of 629,774<sup>5</sup>

Our general membership and our community allies are challenged daily to reconcile the collective good within a society that rewards individualism and authenticity.

New technologies, like social media, are game changers in driving a collective conscience. We must embrace these technological tools, and use them to our advantage. Organized labour must adapt to changing communication realities, by finding more imaginative ways to get our message across, by engaging our grassroots in the process.

By election day 2014, Ontario voter's overwhelmingly rejected Hudak and the Progressive Conservative's politics of division. The result of our collective efforts forced Hudak to resign, and sent a message to Stephen Harper in Ottawa as he prepared for the 2015 federal election. That message was clear – any attack on the rights and freedoms of workers, our sisters and brothers, will be met with our collective force and will result in a similar fate.

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### **A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGNS**

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Using the [#StopHudak](#) campaign as a blueprint to guide our future campaigns, we know that comprehensive planning and action oriented mobilization are the key drivers of success.

To [#StopHudak](#) we:

- Planned a comprehensive campaign, including research, education, media strategies (traditional and social), and political action;
- Created a “war room” to act as a central decision making mechanism, and nerve centre for our campaign;
- Evolved and adapted our strategies to meet the changing demands of the campaign;
- Dedicated financial resources;
- Staffed our campaign with union book-offs, poll cats, and an experienced team of activist leaders and organizers; and
- Mobilized like never before by taking the OFL on the road with 15 regional community meetings across Ontario.

To replicate our success in the future we must engage members one-on-one in well organized workplace campaigns. Attacks on workers' rights and growing inequality cannot be defeated by a single union committee or by a handful of dedicated activists.

*Attacks on workers' rights and growing inequality cannot be defeated by a single union committee or by a handful of dedicated activists.*

If defending our members and our movement is a top priority for every union organization, then envisioning the big bold ideas that will transform society and hitting the streets to demand they be adopted - is our task eternal.

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### **INFORMING OUR POLITICS**

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There are many lessons to be learned from the grueling 78-day federal election campaign of 2015. Discussing the policies, strategies and results will prove a useful exercise, and should be encouraged. The process of renewal begins with reflection, harnessing set-backs will prove essential should we not wish to repeat the same mistakes, or see similar results. Reflecting on the recent federal election, what appears indisputable is that when the 'desire for change' is strong, anything is possible.

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The electorate's overwhelming desire for change was clearly a driving influence and was evidenced in the outcomes. The Liberals, not the NDP, were able to present themselves as the agents of "real change." NDP members are asking themselves why their party tried to win government by accepting the campaign strategy of its opponents, rather than seeking to redefine politics. South of the border, Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders is making headlines and inspiring a generation with a bold critique of capitalism. Across the pond, the U.K. Labour Party has been reinvigorated with the election of Jeremy Corbyn and his unapologetic advocacy for a return to the welfare state.

A positive that our movement can take-away from these occurrences is that mass mobilization and a desire for change are powerful forces. Additionally, what at first may appear unthinkable or improbable is certainly possible and achievable.

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### **MOBILIZING AGAINST AUSTERITY**

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The fact that our organizing and mobilization stopped Hudak in his tracks has emboldened the 'right wing' in Ontario. In May of 2015, Ontario's Progressive Conservative (PC) party rejected the 'social conservative' leadership bid of Christine Elliott, in favour of the so-called 'pragmatic conservatism' of Patrick Brown.<sup>6</sup>

*Those who would seek to undermine union security and workers' rights are busy planning their next attack.*

It is important that politicians at every level, of any stripe, understand the magnitude of the labour movements determination. We have drawn a line in the sand. Those who would seek to undermine union security and workers' rights are busy planning their next attack, so it is incumbent upon our movement to strengthen its resolve.

Kathleen Wynne's Liberal Government is clearly well down the road of austerity, privatizing public services, and creating a tenuous labour relations climate in Ontario.

*New technologies, like social media, are game changers in driving a collective conscience.*

Ontarians need a significant course correction before additional damage is done; the focus of labour's efforts must be on changing the direction in which our province is heading. Kathleen Wynne's brand of austerity, poses just as large a threat as the former PC leader of Ontario - Tim Hudak's anti-union agenda.

The 2011 OFL Convention Action plan declared:

*If left unchecked, the austerity juggernaut threatens to wipe out the social and economic gains made by previous generations. There is no doubt that resisting austerity in all its forms is the most important obligation our generation has toward the next generation. Indeed, the health and well-being of our children and the planet are depending on us.*<sup>7</sup>

Two years later, even the International Monetary Fund (IMF) began backing away from austerity, a policy approach it recommended for years in countries around the world. In January 2013, the IMF publicly admitted that it had misjudged the true devastation that austerity would cause and that in some cases the negative impact of deep spending cuts on economic growth were more than three times greater than previous calculations had estimated.<sup>8</sup>

While the very foundational philosophy that underpinned the austerity agenda is called into question, we must organize and mobilize to ensure the **Ontario We Want** values progress over austerity. Ontario's Liberal government attacked workers' rights by introducing Bill 115 in an attempt to strip the Charter Rights of educational workers.<sup>9</sup> We must continue to vigorously oppose these and similarly backward, archaic and regressive legislative edicts with a coordinated and vocal collective effort.

*How can a public debt...be significantly reduced? There are three main methods, which can be combined in various proportions: taxes on capital, inflation, and austerity. An exceptional tax on private capital is the most just and efficient solution. Failing that, inflation can play a useful role: historically, that is how most large public debts have been dealt with. The worst solution in terms of both justice and efficiency is a prolonged dose of austerity." – Thomas Piketty*<sup>10</sup>

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### **AUSTERITY IS NOT THE ANSWER**

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The first lesson that we can take from the history of government debt is that we are not facing a brand new problem. Economists like Thomas Piketty, and Paul Krugman have known for years that prolonged austerity measures is both inefficient and unjust. Austerity is not the answer. We were right to fight austerity at every level of government, but the fight is not over. Organized labour must continue to advance a vision for Ontario that values the voice of workers', and improves the lot in life of all Ontarians.

The OFL will command public attention and spark new conversations about the future of our province by proposing solutions to our collective economic, environmental, social and political challenges. Even if they appear radical, visionary ideas rooted in progressive values are what is needed because they are capable of capturing the public imagination, shifting what is deemed acceptable and driving people to take action.

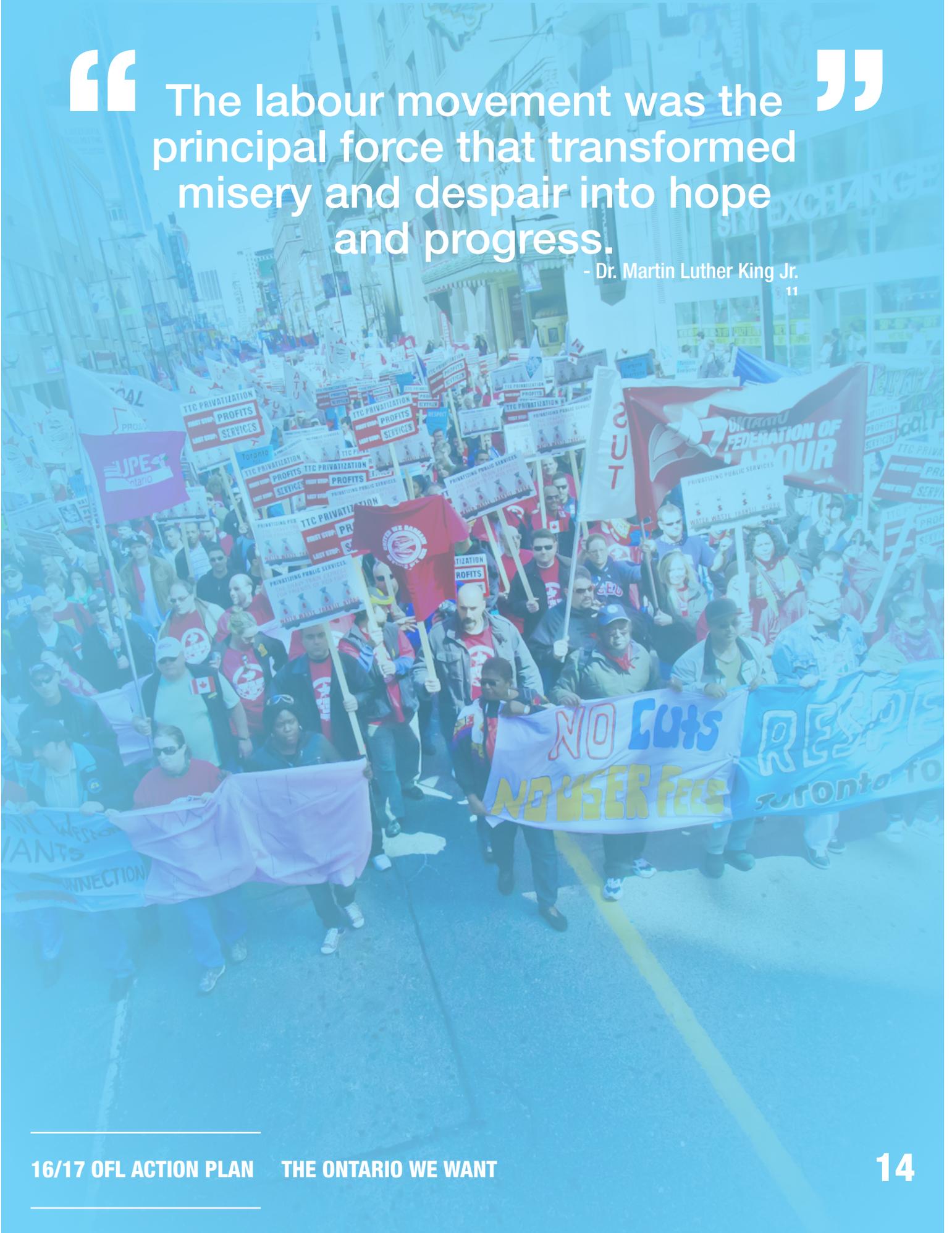
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The labour movement was the principal force that transformed misery and despair into hope and progress.

”

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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## PART ONE

# ENGAGING GOVERNMENT

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## A VOICE FOR ALL WORKERS

*Within the general public, there is an alarming lack of awareness and knowledge about the great achievements and victories that trade unions have secured for the benefit of all.*

Our objective is clear. The OFL will engage governments and policy makers with political pressure at every level – to ensure that the demands of the campaigns we wage and the actions we mobilize around, receive the attention and importance they require and deserve. The principles we support and champion, like equity and equality, must be understood and valued by those that govern, or wish to govern in the future.

Article 2 of the OFL Constitution clearly defines the purposes of the Federation. We exist to promote the interests of our affiliates, and to advance the economic and social welfare of the workers of Ontario,<sup>12</sup> but we also have many other purposes.

Decades ago, Mike Harris and the Conservatives began putting forward radical ideas like the privatization of public services, dismantling the social safety net and tax cuts for wealthy corporations and the rich. These ideas that were once unthinkable have now become routine public policy. Conservative ideologues developed long-term plans for how they wanted to remodel society and the economy to maximize corporate profit. They then set about establishing, funding and supporting a host of think tanks, lobby groups, media outlets and other organizations that have helped coordinate their messages. The “right” built their capacity and reshaped public discourse so that a marginal and anti-social corporate agenda became accepted as inevitable and mainstream.

We have watched how these movements take root, and are witnessing the devastating effects on equality, equity and health outcomes across our communities.

Within the general public, there is an alarming lack of awareness and knowledge about the great achievements and victories that trade unions have secured for the benefit of all. We stand on principle for social justice, equity and equality, and can take pride in our leadership role in those endeavors. Standard academic curricula tend to ignore our contribution to society, this knowledge gap must be filled by the trade union movement. Our stories must be told. Our demands must be taken seriously.

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## LABOUR'S VOICE IN PUBLIC POLICY

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*Without a strong progressive voice from labour, the needs of labour and indeed the struggles of working people across the province are rarely considered as a priority.*

The Ontario Federation of Labour has a role to play in shaping public policy. When policy is developed in a vacuum, without a strong progressive voice from labour, the needs of labour and indeed the struggles of working people across the province are rarely considered as a priority. This must change.

Throughout history, unions have won victories at the bargaining table and expanded those achievements to the entire population through legislative change. In so many ways, from abolishing child labour to establishing a minimum wage, to winning parental rights and same-sex benefits, we should be proud of our contribution, we should trumpet our success.

We must find consensus on the issues that matter most to our movement. In doing so, we will build trust and confidence, carry a common message forward, shift public opinion and dominate the political discourse. To that end, the OFL encourages continued debate and discussion on the issues of importance to our organizations specifically, and to our movement in general. We will continue to seek consensus on our collective interests, and to promote our position.

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## THE FIGHT FOR \$15 & FAIRNESS

*Employment and hard work should lift people out of poverty, not entrench them in it.*

For good reason, labour law reform has long been a demand of our movement. As we fight to regain the protections once afforded, and in some cases, delineate our position on emerging trends and realities that confront union security, like precarious employment and a growing sharing and creative economy, we are truly on the cusp of an important and historic period in our existence.

We can no longer work in isolation.

Current labour market threats do not simply affect unionized workers. In fact, many Ontario workers are struggling to get by. More and more decent jobs are being replaced by precarious work. The fastest growing jobs in Ontario are in the service sector, where wages are the lowest. Even before the recession, our economy was shifting to low-wage work. In 2014, 33 percent of workers had low wages, compared to only 22 percent in 2004, the *Toronto Star* reports.<sup>13</sup> In 2014, the Ontario government took the encouraging step of increasing the provincial minimum wage to \$11 an hour and introducing the province's first annual inflation adjustments. In October of 2015, the minimum wage increased to \$11.25. However, the fact remains that any worker earning less than \$15 an hour is living below the poverty line. In some areas of the province the living wage is more like \$18.52 an hour.<sup>14</sup> Employment and hard work should lift people out of poverty, not entrench them in it. Studies show that when workers can provide for their families, they also contribute to the local economy and have a net positive impact on the economy.

*A united labour movement has the capacity to win historic gains that lift the standards for every worker.*

With trade unionists standing shoulder-to-shoulder with non-unionized workers, a united labour movement has the capacity to win historic gains that lift the standards for every worker, expand union security and ensure that every job is a pathway out of poverty. Such a movement will also demonstrate the power and potential of union membership to entire sectors of non-union workers, while cutting against the “politics of envy” that have too often been used to drive a wedge between workers.

In September 2015 the OFL submitted a comprehensive list of recommendations on how to reform Ontario’s *Employment Standards Act* (ESA), and *Labour Relations Act* (LRA).<sup>15</sup>

Our submission was the result of over a year of consultation, collaboration, and passionate debate. The OFL’s labour law reform committee embraced this once in a generational opportunity to establish consensus on a number of important issues aimed to provide a footing for our growth, and foundation from which to extend our gains and to build a culture of inclusiveness for all working people.

The OFL will call for the following (non-exhaustive) list of demands:

*The labour movement must unite with community allies to put an end to the attacks on unions and dismantle the roadblocks to unionization.*

1. Measures to make it easier for workers to join and keep their unions;
2. A legislated, indexed minimum wage of at least \$15/hour;
3. Equal pay for workers regardless of their status as full-time, part-time, or temporary; or their age, gender, student status or area of work;
4. Adequate hours;
5. Paid sick days; and
6. Proper enforcement of the laws.

The labour movement must unite with community allies to put an end to the attacks on unions and dismantle the roadblocks to unionization.

**ACTION 1:** *Ramp up pressure on the Government of Ontario regarding legislative reform, specifically the *Employment Standards Act*, *Labour Relations Act*, and *Pay Equity Act*, by expressing the OFL’s case for reform, and mobilizing support for our demands within the *Fight for \$15 & Fairness Campaign*.*

**ACTION 2:** *Demand the Ontario Government move forward with the Ontario Registered Pension Plan (ORPP) for workers who do not have workplace pension plans and work with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to demand enhancements to the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP).*

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## **FIGHTING FOR UNION SECURITY**

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*We must make labour law reform a priority within our movement, ramp up our lobbying efforts with policy makers, and back our demands with action*

It is essential that affiliate leaders, activists, members and staff be engaged in a collective effort to lift working standards for every worker, demand union security and workers' rights across the board. Although the OFL, labour councils, affiliates and community partners have submitted their recommendations to the province's Changing Workplaces Review, the work is far from over. Now begins the task of engaging government and policy architects by swaying the legislative agenda, to ensure that labour's voice is heard and our recommendations are enacted. This process will be arduous and we must rise to the challenge.

The OFL will convene a special meeting of all affiliates, labour councils and community partners to ensure that labour's coordinated campaign to "win rights at work" and "union security", measures up to the magnitude of the challenge before us.

The meeting will address the following questions:

1. How will the issue of Labour Law / ESA reform be made a top priority of labour and all its components?
2. How can union leaders, activists, members and staff be engaged at every level?
3. How can we ensure that adequate resources are devoted to this effort?
4. What are the next steps in our mobilization campaign?

The province's Special Advisors on labour law reform and the Minister of Labour are acutely aware of our demands. However, we must make labour law reform a priority within our movement, ramp up our lobbying efforts with policy makers, and back our demands with action - by taking to the streets to demand our recommendations be implemented.

***ACTION 3:*** *Convene a special meeting of all affiliates, labour councils and community partners in January 2016, to mobilize union involvement in the campaign for labour law reform.*

***ACTION 4:*** *Ensure that our labour law reform campaign receives priority in our organizations and measures up to the magnitude of the challenge before us.*

***ACTION 5:*** *Develop a robust communication strategy that utilizes traditional and social media to raise the profile of the campaign.*

***ACTION 6:*** *Produce information bulletins to be displayed on union boards in workplaces throughout Ontario, that inform members of the issues and importance of this campaign.*

**ACTION 7:** *A component of the campaign will be to plan and execute a mass mobilization in Toronto to coincide with the October 7, 2016 – World Day for Decent Work.*

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**CARD CHECK  
CERTIFICATION**

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*Mandatory representation votes do not ensure democracy and “freedom of choice” for workers.*

It is fundamental to any meaningful labour law reform to restore what was a key feature of the Ontario labour relations system for over 40 years – card-based certification and to eliminate mandatory certification votes. The card-based system for selection of a union is prevalent in most Canadian jurisdictions and ensures effective freedom of association. The mandatory vote system, which replaced it, by its nature, leaves employees vulnerable to employer coercion and unfair labour practices so they cannot fully and freely express their true wishes.

We must call upon all our allies, whether they be in government or on the opposition benches to support our efforts with respect to this ‘once in lifetime’ opportunity for legislative change. The data is quite clear. Contrary to the views of its proponents, the introduction of mandatory representation votes does not ensure democracy and “freedom of choice” for workers. Instead the use of representation votes creates an opportunity for an employer to engage in both subtle and not so subtle intimidation and coercion, such that any vote will not constitute an accurate reflection of employee wishes. Mandatory representation votes give employers significant opportunities to frustrate and interfere with the democratic decisions taken by workers to unionize, as Karen Bentham’s research on eight Canadian jurisdictions documents.<sup>16</sup>

*The Labour Relations Act should be reformed so that workers vote only once to join a union by signing a union card.*

High on our list of *Labour Relations Act* (LRA) reforms, is a return to card-check certification.

The OFL’s September 2015 submission to the Changing Workplaces Review entitled “*Labour. Law. Reform.*” recommends that:

*The Labour Relations Act should be reformed so that workers vote only once to join a union by signing a union card. When a majority of workers have done so, the union should be certified.*<sup>17</sup>

We must fight for legislative labour law reform like card-check certification, legislation that will make it easier for unions to be recognized or alternatively harder for employers to frustrate union recognition and organizing drives.

**ACTION 8:** *Within our coordinated labour law reform campaign make a return to card-check certification a priority focus, and demand that policy makers adopt our proposals.*

**ACTION 9:** *Take the OFL on the road across Ontario with a series of regional meetings to educate and drive awareness of the need for legislative labour law reform.*

**ACTION 10:** *The OFL will make priority a concentrated effort to organize precarious, non-unionized workers, particularly those working for temporary agencies, and those temporary and casual workers caught in the perilous “contract trap.”*

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### **ANTI-SCAB LEGISLATION**

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*A union’s primary economic sanction – the strike – is effectively negated by allowing employers to use scab labour.*

Back in 1992, when the NDP government’s labour law reforms were passed, commonly referred to as Bill 40, Ontario became the second province in Canada, Québec being first, to implement what is known as “anti-scab legislation”. This legislation was aimed at limiting the number and type of replacement workers that an employer can use to maintain operations during a legal strike or lockout.

The purpose of such legislation is to avoid the bitter and sometimes violent confrontations that are often associated with the use of scab labour by placing legal restrictions on its use, and to attempt to promote a more level playing field in the collective bargaining process.

The Harris Conservatives repealed the anti-scab reforms along with numerous other reforms for short-sighted political reasons. We maintain that it is time to move beyond such ideological blinkers and examine the merits of the case.

An anti-scab provision, contrary to the belief of some employer representatives, does not undermine industrial relations. Over 95% of all collective agreements are settled without a strike or lockout. Less than 5% of collective agreements end in a dispute and most of these do not involve scab labour. The only employers who are affected, therefore, are that very small minority who make a deliberate decision to be confrontational.

If the right to resort to economic sanctions forms an integral part of the collective bargaining process in a democratic society, and the Supreme Court of Canada has found that it does, then the pros and cons of anti-scab provisions must be viewed from this perspective. We suggest that a union’s primary economic sanction – the strike – is effectively negated by allowing employers to use scab labour. To render more equality in the alleged “balance of power” between employers and employees, it is vital that employers be prohibited from using replacement workers during a legal strike or lockout.

Further, anti-scab legislation focuses the efforts of both parties on the real bargaining issues that divide them as opposed to picket line instances that can only embitter the situation and inhibit settlement.

*Anti-scab legislation focuses the efforts of both parties on the real bargaining issues that divide them .*

- ACTION 11:** *Within our coordinated labour law reform campaign, make attaining anti-scab legislation a priority, and while we wait for legislative change, we must defend our workplaces from scab labour.*
- ACTION 12:** *Together we will urge policy makers to adopt our proposal, and back our request with action by supporting striking workers on the picket lines in Ontario, especially if scab labour is being employed.*
- ACTION 13:** *Develop a registry of employers that routinely use scab labour, and when applicable, organize a province-wide boycott of their products or services.*
- ACTION 14:** *The OFL and affiliates will outreach to those workers being used as scab labour, educate them to understand our opposition to the practice and help them to not be used by employers while strike actions occur.*

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#### **SUCCESSOR RIGHTS IN THE CONTRACT SECTOR**

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*The Labour Relations Act must be modernized to protect the rights of the growing number of workers employed by subcontractors.*

Currently, legislation provides successor rights when a business is sold or transferred. Since the 1950s, Ontario legislation has recognized that employees who have democratically decided to form a union should not lose their collective bargaining rights – and employers should not be able to circumvent their obligations – when a business is sold or transferred. Such provisions were strengthened in the 1960s. In the early 1990s these provisions were extended, not just to the sale or transfer of a business, but also to the contract services sector. Unfortunately, during the previous Conservative government, these and other critical improvements to the *Labour Relations Act* were dismantled, including those provisions that protected some of the most vulnerable workers in society.

The loophole that allows contract workers to suddenly lose their modest improvements in wages and working conditions to a non-union competitor on the basis of under-paying its employees is a legislative gap that must be corrected in the interests of both responsible employers and their employees. Simply put, the *Labour Relations Act* must be modernized to protect the rights of the growing number of workers employed by subcontractors.

The *Act* should extend the same successor rights that exist for other private and public sector employees, to those in the contract services sector. By doing so, it will ensure that when a collective agreement has been established, the provisions of this agreement are not lost just because the uniform changes.

*The Act should extend the same successor rights that exist for other private and public sector employees, to those in the contract services sector so that gains are not lost just because the uniform changes.*

This measure will have a threefold positive impact:

- It will ensure that if a different contractor employer wins the contract, it must honour the existing collective agreement and allow the workers to keep their modest improvements in pay and benefits.
- It will help ensure that competition takes place – not on the backs of the lowest paid workers – but on other meaningful factors like quality. It will help create a floor on wages and benefits in the contract services sector.
- It will level the playing field between employers who treat their employees fairly and those who do not.<sup>18</sup>

**ACTION 15:** *Within our coordinated labour law reform campaign, make successor rights in the contract sector a focus.*

**ACTION 16:** *Demonstrate our resolve by taking to the streets to demand our recommendations be implemented.*

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## TEMPORARY AGENCIES

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On the heels of the last recession, the temporary staffing industry is developing new practices that promise, as one firm boasts, “Just-in-time staffing [that] enables you to produce maximum results without the overhead of a full-time employee.”<sup>19</sup>

For instance, an agency classifies an employee as an independent contractor and assigns her to work at a group home. The agency deducts seven percent from her \$11 hourly wage. Because she is misclassified as an independent contractor, she receives no employment standards entitlements from the agency. She works 48 hours in three days.

Industry sources say contract staffing is lucrative because the contracts offer a recurring revenue stream. Demand for this kind of staffing is projected to grow.

According to Statistics Canada, the temporary staffing industry generated \$12.5 billion in revenue in 2013, up from \$8.3 billion in 2009. Over 50 percent of revenues are generated in Ontario.<sup>20</sup>

The OFL’s Changing Workplace Review submission recommends:

“Changes to the ESA should ensure that temporary agency workers receive the same wages, benefits and working conditions as permanent workers doing the same work as temporary workers.”<sup>21</sup>

*“Just-in-time staffing [that] enables you to produce maximum results without the overhead of a full-time employee.”  
- Mary Gallatly  
Workers’ Action Centre*

*Temporary agency workers should receive the same wages, benefits and working conditions as permanent workers doing the same work.*

**ACTION 17:** *Work with affiliates and community allies to develop a long-term strategy to confront and restrict the use of temporary agencies and temporary status employees, as well as other forms of precarious employment in every sector of the economy.*

**ACTION 18:** *Conduct a mapping of where in the public sector temporary agencies are being used and outreach to these workers. Expose and demand that government departments that use temporary agencies must cease the practice immediately. In addition, we should also map our labour organizations to ensure that within our own structures the use of temporary agencies is forbidden.*

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## REDEFINING POLICY PRIORITIES

*“A health care system – even the best health care system in the world – will be only one of the ingredients that determine whether your life will be long or short, healthy or sick, full of fulfillment, or empty with despair.”*  
– The Honourable Roy Romanow

22

We have known for well over a century that the primary factors that determine whether your life will be long or short, healthy or sick, full of fulfillment, or empty with despair – are the living conditions experienced over the individual’s entire lifespan.<sup>23</sup> As such, these living conditions are important measures, which the academic community have come to refer to as the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH).<sup>24</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) describes SDOH as “the conditions of daily life – the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age” and how they result from inequitable distribution of power, money, and resources – the structural drivers of conditions of daily life – globally, nationally, and locally.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed, as early as 1948 the WHO defined health as a complete state of physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.<sup>26</sup>

In light of the overwhelming consensus in the medical and scientific community on the centrality of the social determinants of health, the OFL will adopt a research framework that explores how our memberships’ social locations like indigenous status, disability status, race, gender, sexual orientation and identity interact with social determinants of health, including but not restricted to:

- early life (there is now consensus in the scientific community that the years between 0-5 are crucial to the development of a healthy adult). Affordable, accessible and quality childcare is but one pillar of this determinant;
- accessible education;
- employment and working conditions;
- food security;
- health services;<sup>27</sup>
- income and income distribution;
- social exclusion;<sup>28</sup>
- social safety net; and
- unemployment and employment insecurity.<sup>29</sup>

The SDOH, and similar ecological systems theory suggests that the life course from childhood through adulthood, or the structural drivers of conditions of daily life, is an essential component and contributing factor that may influence our behavior in varying degrees. Urie Bronfenbrenner believed that a person’s development (health) was affected by everything in their surrounding environment.<sup>30</sup>

Understanding the intersection of these dimensions will inform our public policy directives and ensure our movement values the lived experience of our members, and our communities at large.

**Figure 1. A Model of the Determinants of Health**

*The World Health Organization Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) as: “the conditions of daily life – the circumstances in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age” and how they result from inequitable distribution of power, money, and resources.*

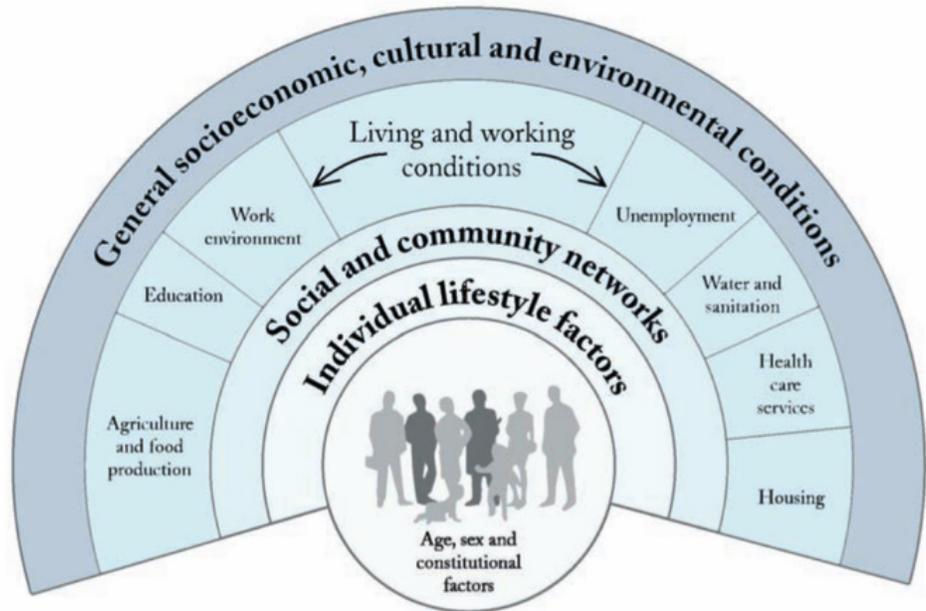


Figure shows one influential model of the determinants of health that illustrates how various health-influencing factors are embedded within broader aspects of society.

Source: Dahlgren, G. and Whitehead, M. (1991). Policies and Strategies to Promote Social Equity in Health. Stockholm: Institute for Futures Studies.<sup>31</sup>

The OFL will partner with academics, organizations like the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) and the Broadbent Institute to host progressive research roundtables that will include labour union researchers and key allies. Together, we will begin to roll out major “discussion papers” that generate bold new approaches to issues of public policy. The emphasis will be crafting “draft legislation” to demonstrate how our ideas could become reality. The release of each discussion of white paper will be coupled with its own media strategy and lobby campaign. (eg: Affordable childcare, Free Post Secondary Education, Universal Pharmacare, Exploring a Guaranteed Annual Income, Good Green Jobs, Public Auto Insurance, Migrant Workers’ Rights, etc.)

**ACTION 19:** *Develop and execute a research agenda that places the social determinants of health at its core.*

**ACTION 20:** *Partnering with academics and community partners the OFL will develop a series of progressive research papers with concrete, viable recommendations that inform our directives, and provide a platform for collaboration with all stakeholders on issues that define the Ontario We Want.*

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## LABOUR MARKET PARTNERS FORUM

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*The Labour Market Partners Forum would bring together labour, business and government on a regular basis to discuss, debate, research and advise on public policies and initiatives that might improve our collective fortunes.*

For years, the OFL has been lobbying the Liberal Government to create a Labour Market Partners Forum. This body would include various unions, employer interests, labour councils, the Ontario Common Front, Ontario Government Ministries like: Education, Training Colleges and Universities, Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, and Labour.

The Labour Market Partners Forum would bring together labour, business and government on a regular basis to discuss, debate, research and advise on public policies and initiatives that might improve our collective fortunes. Some potential areas to explore are a guaranteed net annual income, and emerging opportunities like the green and creative economies.

Despite repeated commitments of support from various finance and labour ministers, the OFL has yet to see any action from the government to get this forum started.

The OFL will lead the way.

**ACTION 21:** *Take the initiative to create the “Labour Market Partners Forum”, with the goal that it can eventually become a government-led initiative.*

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## SUPPORTING A STRONG PUBLIC SECTOR AGAINST PRIVATIZATION

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The OFL through its affiliates and allies at the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), labour councils and community partners will continue to advocate and mobilize for strong publicly owned and fully funded social programs and public services at every level of government - municipal, provincial and federal.

Coordinating with labour councils is essential to fighting-back against regressive policies in communities across Ontario. Many activists feel just as passionate about the contracting out of their municipal services, as they do the sale of Hydro One, cuts to postal services, or the closing of Veteran’s Affairs offices. Strong communities are supported by strong public services.

The OFL will engage government and mobilize activists around the creation and preservation of strong public services by supporting campaigns with the objectives of stopping the further privatization of crown corporations, halting the privatization of public services, questioning the increased reliance on P3’s (Public Private Partnerships), and the contracting out of municipal government services.

*The OFL will engage government and mobilize activists around the creation and preservation of strong public services .*

- ACTION 22:** *Demand that governments respect the public service sector, and protect and create more good public sector jobs.*
  - ACTION 23:** *Our movement will defend against the contracting out and privatization of public services.*
  - ACTION 24:** *Educate our movement and the community about the impacts of privatization on public services.*
  - ACTION 25:** *With our affiliates, coordinate and support comprehensive strategic anti-privatization campaigns with research, education, media strategies, and political action.*
  - ACTION 26:** *Promote public services as the foundation of resilient, healthy and vibrant communities.*
  - ACTION 27:** *Strengthen labour's image as a defender of decent jobs, and the protector of communities.*
  - ACTION 28:** *Defend public education by demanding the removal of user fees for post secondary tuition.*
  - ACTION 29:** *The OFL will outreach to those in the public sector (municipal, provincial or federal) making less than \$15 an hour, and*
  - ACTION 30:** *The OFL will support a public media campaign that highlights workers' rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), and that educates workers' about how to be active health and safety advocates, and about their right to refuse unsafe work.*
  - ACTION 31:** *The OFL with the CLC will demand, and hold to account, any government that seeks to reduce or eliminate sick leave and pensions of public sector workers.*
  - ACTION 32:** *With our community partners, the CLC, and affiliate unions we will fight for the restoration and increase of frontline public sector workers, that provide valuable services such as those offered by Service Canada, and Veterans Affairs offices.*
  - ACTION 33:** *The OFL will develop a campaign that values and utilizes our public libraries. As such, the OFL will encourage all labour councils, affiliates, their members, and the general public to register for a library card, and utilize public library facilities.*
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*Kathleen Wynne was not elected on a mandate to dismantle public assets by privatizing Ontario's electric utility.*

## **HALTING THE SALE OF HYDRO ONE**

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Kathleen Wynne was not elected on a mandate to dismantle public assets by privatizing Ontario's electric utility - Hydro One, this decision must be halted, and reversed.

The OFL is greatly concerned with the sale of Hydro One. Ombudsman Andre Marin has also raised concerns that his office won't retain the power to investigate public complaints about the massive electricity company after it passes largely into private hands. As you know, the government plans to privatize the utility and install an internal ombudsman instead.<sup>32</sup> Like Marin, the OFL is extremely wary of the sale of Hydro One, and we will organize and mobilize in united opposition.

***ACTION 34:*** *Join with all affiliate unions, community partners and allies, starting early in 2016, to organize province-wide demonstrations in the fight to stop Premier Wynne's decision to sell Hydro One. The OFL will escalate actions for a mass demonstration at Queen's Park to "Stop the Sale of Hydro One", our public utility, our public asset, for the public good.*

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## SECURING SUPPORT FOR THE ODRT

*For 25 years, the ODRT has been a vehicle for advocating for unionized injured workers, sharing knowledge and best practices, providing a labour perspective and implementing training programs with measurable benefit.*

The OFL's Occupational Disability Response Team (ODRT) is a vital component, and system partner in Ontario's compensation and health & safety structures. In the 25 years since its inception, the ODRT was funded by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), and has been a vital resource for injured workers and workplace representatives in understanding and navigating Ontario's complex workplace compensation system, policies, codes and requirements under the law.

As the compensation system continually evolves to meet the changing needs and demands of employers and workers in the Province of Ontario; the ODRT is the vehicle for advocating for unionized injured workers, sharing knowledge and best practices, providing a labour perspective and implementing training programs with measurable benefit. Educating and driving awareness about the benefits of a comprehensive disability prevention strategy, benefits all workplace parties.

Funding for this vital program abruptly ceased in 2014. In its current form, the ODRT is reliant on funding from the WSIB to staff, research, update curriculum and administer the ODRT program. Since the funding has been cut, the ODRT's ability to deliver against its objectives has been substantially diminished.

Two critical actions regarding the ODRT must be considered:

1. Within the WSIB's new framework and application process for research and training grants, the OFL will apply for a research and training grant, and extensively lobby for the restoration of ODRT program funding; and
2. The OFL should explore alternative funding models to sustain operations of the ODRT, with a goal to making the program self sufficient, viable, and autonomous.

*The OFL should explore alternative funding models to sustain operations of the ODRT, with a goal to making the program self sufficient, viable, and autonomous.*

**ACTION 35:** *Heighten engagement with the WSIB and the Minister of Labour to restore funding to the ODRT and engage government to directly fund the ODRT as a designated entity, through an order in council or equivalent action.*

**ACTION 36:** *The OFL will convene a meeting of workers' compensation and health and safety advocates from affiliate unions and community partners with the aim of exploring changes and structures required to make the ODRT a self-sustainable, autonomous, labour supported project.*

**ACTION 37:** *The OFL will vigorously demand that all workers in the Province of Ontario be covered by the Workers Compensation System, regardless of the regulation of their employers. (i.e.: federally regulated industries, or private schools)*

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The sharpest increases in wage inequality in the Western world have taken place in the United States and Britain, both of which experienced sharp declines in union membership. Canada, although its economy is closely linked to that of the United States, appears to have had substantially less increase in wage inequality – and it’s likely that the persistence of a strong union movement is an important reason why.

- Paul Krugman

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## PART TWO

# CHAMPIONING EQUITY

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## PUTTING EQUITY AT THE CENTRE

*It is critical that equity be integrated at the core of our organizations and practiced in the daily work of our movement.*

Championing equity requires planned structural changes and deliberate approaches within our movement. It is critical that equity be integrated at the core of our organizations and practiced in the daily work of our movement. This includes our governance structures, programs, campaigns, and human resources.

It has taken considerable energy to overcome the road blocks but the Ontario Federation of Labour has an equity lens and inclusive objective at the heart of a bold new approach to grassroots activism. We are challenging our movement to reimagine itself beyond our immediate membership, to include all working people, the unemployed, the precariously employed, the retired and the many diverse communities who are being marginalized in today's political, economic and social realities. Creating more accessible opportunities for leadership training and development is a crucial practical step toward making our organizations more inclusive.

**ACTION 38:** *Expand the OFL's objective of inclusiveness by viewing all of our actions through an equity lens.*

**ACTION 39:** *Give voice within our movement to the many diverse equity seeking communities who are marginalized.*

**ACTION 40:** *Create and deploy an annual monitoring mechanism to measure our inclusiveness outcomes.*

**ACTION 41:** *Create more accessible opportunities for mentorship, leadership and training for equity seeking groups.*

**ACTION 42:** *The OFL, its affiliates and labour councils will be encouraged to create, adopt, or update action plans which include guidelines for:*

- *Identifying and eliminating existing systemic barriers which prevent the full participation of under-represented, equity-seeking groups;*

- *Developing equity and diversity education that reviews all courses and curricula for race, gender, sexual orientation, disability and class biases;*
- *Conducting equity research; and*
- *Measuring outcomes.*

**ACTION 43:** *The OFL’s Disability Committee will conduct an audit of all facilities and room set-ups, to ensure accessibility requirements are met and exceeded, and to ensure that all meeting spaces are accessible to all members.*

**ACTION 44:** *The OFL will ensure that during convention, and as required, that microphones are set-up for persons with mobility devices.*

**ACTION 45:** *The OFL will respect and honour both official languages in Canada. In addition, the OFL will ensure that translation services be provided for those members that wish to utilize them.*

**ACTION 46:** *The OFL will provide tools for Labour Councils to preform an audit of their office space, and that any meeting space used, is also fully accessible.*

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**LAUNCHING AN OFL  
‘EQUITY IN LEADERSHIP’  
SUMMIT**

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*The OFL must make a concerted effort to encourage better gender balance in trade union leadership and create a culture and climate of empowerment that leads directly to a labour leadership that is reflective of the diversity of the membership.*

Equity-seeking communities and marginalized people, such as women, racialized people, Indigenous people, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities and youth require particular attention in our drive for inclusiveness within our movement. Women workers and other workers from equity-seeking groups continue to be woefully under-represented in the leadership of the labour movement. The OFL must make a concerted effort to encourage better gender balance in trade union leadership and create a culture and climate of empowerment that leads directly to a labour leadership that is reflective of the diversity of the membership. At the same time, the labour movement must make organizing inroads into many sectors where women, racialized people, youth and other marginalized workers are employed in far greater numbers.

Informed by the 2014 working document published by the Toronto & York Region Labour Council, “A Leader’s Guide to Strengthen Unions, Moving Beyond Diversity, Towards Inclusion and Equity,”<sup>34</sup> the OFL will convene a bi-annual “Equity in Leadership Summit”, with the express goal of empowering our equity seeking communities by equipping them with skills and tools to “lead” our movement forward. This unique educational offering

will feature workshops on: leadership theory, emotional intelligence, understanding diversity, conflict resolution, political action training and communication strategies for leaders.

The leadership of our movement should be reflective of our movement. Like Ontario, we are truly diverse. We are at our best when all voices are reflected, and our collective voice represents a drive toward equity and inclusion.

**ACTION 47:** *Create and coordinate a bi-annual “OFL Equity in Leadership Summit” with the goal of empowering our equity seeking communities by equipping them with skills and tools required to “lead” our movement forward.*

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## CLOSING THE GENDER WAGE GAP

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*Unions help  
to reduce  
pay inequality.*

According to the most recent Statistics Canada data, Ontario's gender wage gap ranges from 12-31.5%.<sup>35</sup> We know that trade unions are increasingly and frequently counting more women than men among their rank and file membership. Unions help to reduce pay inequality.

Ontario's Minister of Labour, Kevin Flynn announced:

*Our government is committed to women's equality in Ontario. We have strengthened women's economic opportunities and have taken down barriers that prevent full participation by women in the labour force. Building on the progress we have already made, the advice of the Steering Committee will help us further improve economic outcomes for women in Ontario.<sup>36</sup>*

As the government of Ontario seeks input to develop a strategy which will help close the wage gap between men and women, the OFL is once again uniquely positioned to provide a progressive perspective on this important issue. We must make it easier for unions to certify and better represent workers' in the province of Ontario. With input from affiliates, equity committees', labour councils', and community partners like the Ontario Equal Pay Coalition, the OFL can further champion equity by reinvigorating a provincial campaign that forces the issue of Pay Equity for Women into our daily conversations, and then into law.

We must ensure that the voices of women, including women of colour, women with disabilities and young women, are documented and understood, considered, and acted upon with a sense of urgency.

*The OFL can further champion equity by reinvigorating a provincial campaign that forces the issue of Pay Equity for Women into our daily conversations, and then into law.*

As suggested earlier, rarely will government adopt labour’s vision for public policy or the laws of the land unless it feels widespread public pressure to do so. To that end, we must mobilize around the issue of pay equity, to ensure that the gender wage gap is closed once and for all.

Unions give voice to all workers in the province, unionization is clearly the pathway out of poverty, and is essential to stem the tide of inequality. We will only realize our vision of inclusiveness, when we view all policy (public and internal) through an equity lens.

**ACTION 48:** *Support and encourage Women to share their stories with the Province’s steering committee on closing the gender wage gap.*

**ACTION 49:** *Prepare multiple briefings and submissions that frame our collective demands of equal pay for equal work.*

**ACTION 50:** *Unite to reinvigorate and mobilize a campaign around “Pay Equity for Women”, with the expressed goal of closing the gender wage gap in Ontario.*

**ACTION 51:** *A tenet of the “Pay Equity for Women” campaign must address the lack of enforcement, and call for renewed Pay Equity Proxy Adjustments.*

**ACTION 52:** *The OFL and its affiliates will work with community partners to ensure the “Pay Equity for Women” campaign also address the need for non-unionized women to benefit from pay equity legislation. Social locations like age, race, ethnicity and disability factor into disadvantage when these women attempt to access legislation.*

**ACTION 53:** *The OFL, with the help of the CLC and affiliates, will renew pressure on the federal government for federal pay equity legislation.*

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## **EMPLOYMENT EQUITY**

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*Racial exclusion is rooted in structures and systems that appear to be race-neutral but exclude or discriminate against people of colour.*

The OFL recognizes that Indigenous people, people with disabilities, members of racial minorities and women experience higher rates of unemployment than other people in Ontario. In addition, we recognize that people in these groups experience more discrimination than other people in finding employment, in retaining employment and in being promoted. As a result, they are underrepresented in most areas of employment, especially in senior and management positions, and they are overrepresented in those areas of employment that provide low pay and little chance for advancement. The burden imposed on the people in these groups and on the communities in which they live is unacceptable. However, some provinces, like Ontario, have abandoned employment equity legislation.<sup>37</sup>

Racial exclusion is rooted in structures and systems that appear to be race-neutral but exclude or discriminate against people of colour. The OFL must lead the charge to ensure that employment equity is once again a priority, for all employers, for all levels of government.

**ACTION 54:** *Create and mobilize a campaign highlighting the systemic discrimination evidenced within Ontario's labour market.*

**ACTION 55:** *Develop employment equity resources and educational opportunities for affiliate members and the broader public's consumption.*

**ACTION 56:** *Pressure the Provincial government to establish an Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate.*

**ACTION 57:** *Re-engage the Provincial government to ensure the Anti-Racism Secretariat outlined in the Human Rights Code Amendment Act is assigned adequate resources and that the mandate to advance racial justice is a prerequisite throughout Ontario.*

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#### **MIGRANT WORKERS' BILL OF RIGHTS**

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*The circumstances that make migrant workers so deserving of protection also make them vulnerable to exploitation.*

Many migrant workers who find themselves working in Canada encounter a new and unfamiliar country, where they do not know the laws and often don't speak the language. In many cases, they have travelled from some of the world's most economically depressed conditions to strive for a better life for their families. The Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) found that between 2002 and 2012, the number of foreign workers in Canada increased more than three-fold from just over 100,000 to 338,000, with a pause only in 2009 during the recession.<sup>38</sup> The circumstances that make migrant workers so deserving of protection also make them vulnerable to exploitation.

While major changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) fall to the federal government, the Ontario government should pursue comprehensive reforms to ensure migrant workers are protected from exploitation, including a Migrant Workers' Bill of Rights.<sup>39</sup>

**ACTION 58:** *The OFL will demand that the Ontario government introduce an Ontario Migrant Workers' Bill of Rights and legislative changes that would establish a registration and licensing system for employers and recruiters, provide the financial and human resources needed for proactive enforcement, and ensure that human and labour rights are protected.*

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The trade unions need a dual strategy: On the one hand they must stay strong on the shop floor and grow stronger. But on the other hand they must – as the genuine representatives of people’s interests – extend their mandate. This means absorbing the world that people really live in, developing other social models, allowing utopias.

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- Oskar Negt  
40



## PART THREE

# BUILDING OUR MOVEMENT

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## THE POWER OF PEOPLE

*Key to the success of central labour bodies is in their ability to unite their affiliate members, and harness the collective power for the betterment of all.*

Key to the success of central labour bodies is in their ability to unite their affiliate members, and harness the collective power for the betterment of all. To solidify our movement and ensure it has the tools required and capability to execute our goals, we must ensure it is well funded.

To grow our movement, the OFL and affiliates must deepen and expand our community organizing efforts. The labour movement understands that the time is now to reach out to new supporters, to build dynamic partnerships, and broad networks. We have already begun this work, but there is still much work to do. As Unifor demonstrated with their renewed commitment to organizing and community chapters, it is time to magnify and duplicate those efforts in order to expand our strength, power and influence. Community chapters will give those who have generally been excluded from union membership a collective voice.<sup>41</sup>

In Ontario, the OFL and affiliates will work together with the Ontario Common Front to support these and other similar efforts to ensure they reach their maximum potential. We must be coordinated and united to move our vision forward and build a movement so big and so strong that it will overwhelm corporate power and transform our society. The time for engaging new supporters through organizing is now. With people power as the base of our movement, we will continue to grow because together the *Ontario We Want* is achievable.

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## ESTABLISH THE OFL AS THE VOICE FOR ALL WORKERS

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It is commonly understood that unions have made a significant contribution to the promotion of progressive labour legislation and have championed the eradication of neoliberalism, in all its forms. However, a major roadblock has been identified in our ability to successfully build our movement.

*Unions give voice to all workers in the province  
Unionization is clearly a route out of poverty, and helps to stem inequality.*

The Ontario Federation of Labour, which has given voice to unionized workers, is once again partnering with diverse and vulnerable communities to mount a vigorous defense for the rights and interests of every worker.

We are confronting the harsh reality that declining union density coupled with an increasingly precarious workforce and labour market are dragging down wages and benefits faster than union standards can pull them up. Unions give voice to all workers in the province, unionization is clearly a route out of poverty, and helps to stem inequality.

By removing the barriers to unionization, we achieve two outcomes. Firstly, we provide hope and optimism to unorganized workers in Ontario that there is a pathway out of poverty and out from under the trap of precarious employment. Taking the first step towards equality and fairness involves “joining a union”. Secondly, we invigorate our movements organizing efforts by leveling the playing field, making the steps required to certify a union easier - is our best hope for reversing the decline in union density in our Province.

**ACTION 59:** *Build our membership, and renew and grow the broader labour movement.*

**ACTION 60:** *Increase our capacity for growth, through targeted education and training opportunities.*

**ACTION 61:** *Outreach to the community to build strong and resilient alliances around our common interests and causes; connect and build our coalitions; support and strengthen communities.*

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## **A UNITED AND FUNDED FEDERATION**

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*We could not have built strong unions if members had not funded their existence.*

*This cornerstone of union security and survival must also apply to the affiliation and funding of central labour bodies like the OFL.*

A united and properly funded labour movement is essential to the success of all working people. We must ensure that our central labour bodies like the CLC, OFL and labour councils are adequately resourced. According to the most recent Statistics Canada data, there are an estimated 1,572,400 unionized workers in the province of Ontario,<sup>42</sup> yet approximately only one-third of them, around 540,000 remit dues to the OFL. This leaves far too many unionized workers in Ontario benefiting from the collective work of our movement without making their contribution in the form of per capita remittance. Ostensibly, what results is an underfunded central labour body and a fractured movement, both with limited potential.

Union security clauses and the Rand Formula were won in 1946, and have been a feature of most collective agreements ever since. Supreme Court Justice Ivan Rand reasoned that those who benefit from Union won “gains” - ought to contribute to the upkeep of the organization that made it all possible.<sup>43</sup> Everyone gains, everyone pays. We could not

*We must ensure that the democratic processes and fundamentals that define unions and houses of labour, are respected and upheld.*

have built strong unions if members had not funded their existence. This cornerstone of union security and survival must also apply to the affiliation and funding of central labour bodies like the OFL.

Hence, we will never build a united labour movement if union leaders or their locals withhold their per capita payments, go on a “dues strike” or disaffiliate from central labour bodies, without a legitimate cause for their action.

The Constitution of the Canadian Labour Congress, Article 5 “Federations of Labour and Labour Councils”, Section 4 states:

- a. All affiliates must require their local unions to join federations and labour councils where such exist.
- b. All directly chartered locals must affiliate with their federation and labour council.
- c. All labour councils must affiliate with their provincial or territorial federation.<sup>44</sup>

We must strengthen the language in Article 5 of the CLC Constitution and devise provisions for its enforcement.

Central labour bodies (like the CLC, OFL, and labour councils) have mechanisms and procedures for settling our disagreements inside of our movement. These mechanisms and processes must be robust, with defined consequences for those that usurp them. We must ensure that the democratic processes and fundamentals that define unions and houses of labour, are respected and upheld.

We must open up the transparency and accountability of the Federation related to our finances and decision-making. We must engage with and promote participatory democracy for delegates to the bi-annual convention, by allowing them to debate and make recommendations regarding the budget of the Federation, as well as deepen the financial literacy of delegates on the status of the Federations finances.

***ACTION 62:*** *The OFL will submit resolutions to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) Convention that calls for the strengthening of Article 5, and/ or any other applicable articles of the CLC Constitution, and that establish within provisions for enforcement.*

***ACTION 63:*** *At the 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention, encourage debate and discussion, or propose amendments to the OFL Constitution that strengthen Article 7 “Duties of the Secretary-Treasurer,” with direction to include a detailed verbal and written financial report of the Federation at Convention, and a budget process for delegates to convention to be part of the budget proposal and approval process.*

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## GROWING THE ONTARIO COMMON FRONT

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*“The Ontario Common Front will bring together groups, organizations, and individuals across Ontario that are working to expose growing inequality and propose workable solutions to fix it.”*  
- Ontario Common Front  
Mission Statement

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In cities and towns across Ontario, we are inviting people from all walks of life to join union members in building a broad-based movement to call on government to deliver the opportunities we need, the jobs we deserve and, indeed, to create the *Ontario We Want*.

Labour and community activists can build a strong, viable and coordinated progressive infrastructure in Ontario, and across Canada. We can no longer allow our political party, our think tanks, our unions, and our organizers to work in isolation or at cross-purposes.

At the heart of the Common Front’s agenda is fighting austerity at every level, and mobilizing a broad based movement to combat injustice, and tackle increasing inequality. Informed by the comprehensive 2015 report entitled “Backslide: Labour Force Restructuring, Austerity and Widening Inequality in Ontario”,<sup>46</sup> it is quite evident that Ontarian’s need a unified and broad-based platform in which to respond to continued austerity threats, growing inequality and injustice.

It is time for the OFL and affiliates to legitimize and fund directly the incredible work of the Ontario Common Front. The goal is to grow our grassroots and expand our base of support through neighbourhood outreach in every city, every town and every community in the province. We must transform the Ontario Common Front from a network of activists into a nexus of action. The Ontario Common Front requires dedicated resources, both human and capital resources.

*The goal is to grow our grassroots and expand our base of support through neighbourhood outreach in every city, every town and every community.*

**ACTION 64:** *To formalize the Ontario Common Front and create a tighter bond with the OFL, the Ontario Common Front should be represented on the OFL Executive Council.*

**ACTION 65:** *To legitimize the work of the Ontario Common Front we recommend the provision of a stable source of financing, and a dedicated coordinator to oversee its direction.*

**ACTION 66:** *Develop and deliver local workshops in cooperation with labour councils, on the content of the Common Front’s Report “Backslide: Labour Force Restructuring, Austerity and Widening Inequality in Ontario.”*

**ACTION 67:** *The OFL will call on affiliates, and allies to participate in the Common Front General Assembly scheduled for 2017.*

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## **BOLSTERING LABOUR COUNCILS ONLINE**

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*The labour movement must look toward the future, and solidify our relevance in the age of digital activism.*

Digital communications are changing the way we connect with our members, organize, and deliver our messages to the broader public. As social media like Twitter, Facebook and on-line communities increasingly become the manner in which we communicate, the labour movement must look toward the future, and solidify our relevance in the age of digital activism. The OFL and affiliates must exploit the potential of social networking sites and digital activism as a means of expanding our reach and sharing knowledge about our vision. By attracting and engaging membership and increasing our visibility, we build our digital footprint, indeed, we build our movement.

***ACTION 68:*** *Create “Sub-Nations” for any interested Labour Council through the OFL’s database management and online communications platform, NationBuilder. This will allow Labour Councils the ability to develop websites, databases and electronic communications with members. Each of these sub-nations will be linked with social media accounts.*

“

Unions raise the wages of their members, who tend to be in the middle of the wage distribution; they also tend to equalize wages among members. Perhaps most important, they act as a countervailing force to management, enforcing social norms that limit very high and very low pay. They also mobilize their members to vote for progressive politics.

- Paul Krugman

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## PART FOUR

# MOBILIZING OUR MEMBERS

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## THE UNITED VOICE OF LABOUR

*When we rise together with a united voice and when we march against injustice, our movement is at its best.*

The *Ontario We Want*, and the vision that we are fighting for, will remain elusive if not backed by a united movement that focuses our collective impact. When we rise together with a united voice and when we march against injustice, our movement is at its best. Bold policy ideas, equity and equality for all, unions intent on growing our movement, and mobilization of our entire membership – are the key components of making the real change that we want.

The Ontario Federation of Labour has made mobilizing our membership, and our community partners the greatest of priority. We are close to reaching the critical mass that will make governments and those that wish to govern, take stock of our demands.

The OFL will call on affiliates and allies to mobilize for a mass rally at Queen’s Park early in 2016 to demand the *Ontario We Want*. This rally will be timed with the pre-budget cycle at Queen’s Park, with the goal of kicking off budgetary discussions on the issues we have framed, rather than those chosen by the Premier and Finance Minister.

**ACTION 69:** *Mobilize our members – issue by issue - driven by a bottom-up approach to worker action. (Labour Law Reform, Pay Equity, Kill A Worker Go To Jail, and more)*

**ACTION 70:** *Call on affiliates and allies to mobilize behind a province-wide “Day of Action” and a mass rally at Queen’s Park in early 2016 to demand “The Ontario We Want.”*

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## CREATING AN OFL ACTIVIST SCHOOL

The OFL will partner with the Broadbent Institute, and /or an academic institution to host an annual Activist School for labour union activists and other progressives. This will be our answer to the Manning Foundation. This week-long symposium will be kicked off in May 2016 and will be hosted at the same time every year (1 month prior to the CLC

school). Workshops will include Non-Violent Civil Disobedience Training, Tactical Social Media Training (like ThunderClap, Twitter Jamming, and the newest tactics), How to Build a Local Common Front Chapter, Poll Cat Training, Creative Activism, etc.

This school will operate on a cost-recovery model.

**ACTION 71:** *Create and initiate the “OFL Activist School”, with the goal of building agency in our movement, and creating a learning organization equipped to take our message to the masses.*

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## **RESPONDING TO HUMANITARIAN CRISES**

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*We have always put the interests of those that require our help and assistance at the heart of our unions.*

There are multiple crises that require immediate action. They present as opportunities to show the Labour movements humanitarian leadership, by making living conditions better for those in need of a hand up.

As unionists and activists, we are an integral part of the human family. Our compassion for those that suffer daily, our determination to help and our commitment to social justice, no matter where it is required – is second to none.

Central to the great work and service that unions do on behalf of their members, is the knowledge that as a movement, we have always put the interests of those that require our help and assistance at the heart of our unions. Our ability to pressure government into action, our willingness to lead the charge for change and to speak on behalf of those whose voice has been silenced, is an integral part of our movement.

Within our own borders, we must stand with Indigenous communities in their struggle for the provision of even the most basic of human needs, clean water, housing and food security. As the movement that galvanized our attention demands, we can be “Idle No More.” We must demand implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations,<sup>48</sup> fight for justice and fairness for missing and murdered Indigenous women, the homeless, seniors and the disabled, in fact all those living in poverty.

*The ongoing Syrian refugee crisis ... and those languishing in refugee camps throughout the world, are in need of our help.*

The ongoing Syrian refugee crisis, the plight of those fleeing war-torn Afghanistan and Iraq, and those languishing in refugee camps throughout the world, are in need of our help.

Historically, the labour movement in Ontario, and indeed across Canada, has responded with immediacy and pointed action when injustice and crisis have unfolded. This must continue to be a pillar of our work.

During the Indochinese refugee crisis in the late 1970’s, it was citizen activists, religious groups, and trade unions, that mobilized their communities into action. Many trade union locals stepped up to sponsor Vietnamese refugees. Collective action by grass roots activists pressured the government of the day to ramp up their response, to follow the

lead of concerned citizenry, to do what all good families do; provide for and protect our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

We must duplicate these efforts.

**ACTION 72:** *Launch, support campaigns, and mobilize direct actions that draw attention, remedy injustice and alleviate humanitarian crises occurring at home and abroad.*

**ACTION 73:** *With the CLC, we will demand action and prosperity for all Indigenous peoples, including but not limited to access to clean water, shelter, and food security.*

**ACTION 74:** *With the CLC, secure justice for all Indigenous people by demanding the 94 recommendations outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission be adopted in their entirety, and that a national inquiry and an evidence-based action plan into missing and murdered Indigenous women be established immediately.*

**ACTION 75:** *The OFL, with the support of the CLC, affiliates, labour councils and community partners will engage in membership awareness campaigns and actions intended to amplify and rectify the living conditions and well-being of vulnerable communities like those seeking refuge, regardless of their place of origin, religion, or current location.*

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

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*“The carnage in our workplaces will never stop until negligent bosses are marched out of their executive offices in handcuffs.”*  
- OFL President Sid Ryan

For years now, the OFL has been demanding jail time for employers convicted for putting workers' lives at risk. The OFL's "Kill a Worker, Go to Jail" campaign was launched shortly after the Christmas Eve tragedy in 2009 that shocked workers across the country. The collapse of a swing stage at a west Toronto high-rise resulted in four workers plunging 13 stories to their deaths and a fifth worker was seriously injured. In 2012, Metron Construction received Ontario's first criminal conviction for workplace negligence and a fine of \$750,000.<sup>49</sup>

However, no Ontario employer has ever been sentenced to serve jail time for such a criminal conviction. The OFL will continue to campaign for killer bosses to go to jail.

In 2014, the Ministry of Labour convicted a third party contractor, Swing 'N Scaff, who built and supplied the faulty swing stage, leveling a \$350,000 fine against the company and \$50,000 against the owner.<sup>50</sup> In 2015, a separate criminal trial got underway against the Metron Project Manager, which gave the workers and their families a second chance at justice.

The OFL remains vigilant and anticipates that a prison term will finally be the punishment to an Ontario employer responsible for a workplace fatality.

The OFL with the CLC and all affiliates must keep the pressure on employers to take their occupational health and safety responsibilities seriously and understand that if they kill a worker, they go to jail. The campaign cannot stop until we know that every workplace death is investigated by the police through a C-45 (Westray Law)<sup>51</sup> lens, and we start to see negligent employers sent to jail for killing workers.

***ACTION 76: Reinvigorate the OFL “Kill a Worker, Go to Jail” campaign, to ensure that employers in Ontario take occupational health and safety responsibilities seriously, and drive compliance with deterrence. If they kill a worker, they go to jail.***

CONCLUSION

# ONTARIO WE WANT

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## A UNITED LABOUR MOVEMENT

*Uniting our movement  
with a renewed  
commitment to solidarity  
and harnessing our  
collective impact for  
the betterment of all,  
will lead to the sea  
change that we seek.*

The 2015 OFL Action Plan delivers strategies to harness a united labour movement. It will challenge our movement to reach new heights with a commitment to government engagement, equity inclusion, community building and mobilization.

While the strength of the conservative movement in Canada is money and access to power, labour and social justice activists have a much more powerful resource - people. However, our movement too, must be adequately funded.

Uniting our movement with a renewed commitment to solidarity and harnessing our collective impact for the betterment of all, will lead to the sea change that we seek. Applying political pressure and engaging government in the issues that we deem important, will expedite change. With an equity lens we will include and empower marginalized members within our rank and file, and inspire others to join our fight. We need to build our communities of interest, by expanding our alliances across the province, and we need to demand healthy, prosperous and vibrant communities of place. Of course our strength is in our ability to mobilize our membership, on the shop floor, on picket lines, in support of campaigns, or at the polls. We will work to achieve the goals, priorities and strategic directives outlined in this action plan by pursuing our collective vision for the **Ontario We Want**.

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