





# WE WANT

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR  
CONVENTION 2015

## EDITOR'S NOTE:

The articles contained in this Convention Report are compiled from eight issues of the OFL President's Report to give a snapshot of the work undertaken by the OFL over the past two years. The reporting period for this report is November 2013 through to November 2015.



## THE ONTARIO WE WANT: 2015 CONVENTION REPORT

**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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## HOW LABOUR STOPPED HUDAK



# HUDAK'S NOT SO HIDDEN AGENDA

**LABOUR GEARS UP TO DEFEND WORKER'S RIGHTS AND DEFEAT THE HUDAK CONSERVATIVES**

It isn't alarmist or over dramatic to say that everything that unions stand for – securing fair wages and decent benefits, elevating working standards, ensuring safe workplaces, providing retirement security, defending social justice and generally raising the bar for everyone – is at stake if Tim Hudak's Progressive Conservatives form the next government of Ontario.

That's because Tim Hudak's hidden agenda for a low-wage economy is, well, not so hidden. He has been up front about applauding jurisdictions that have squeezed out unions and where, according to U.S. Bureau of Labour Statistics, workers earn an average of \$5,766 less than their counterparts in neighbouring states. Hudak has set his sights on stripping Ontario workers of their collective bargaining rights and making union dues payment individual and optional. Can your members afford it?

The consequences for working people in every sector will be devastating if Ontario's labour movement is dismantled to pave the way for a low-wage economy.

At the recent OFL Convention, delegates passed a sweeping resolution to put the campaign to stop Tim Hudak ahead of all other union work and to launch a fierce crusade for the hearts and minds of the voting public.

***The Conservatives have launched an aggressive attack on workers' rights ... Defending workers' collective rights must be the top priority of our movement and every union organization in the province.***  
- OFL Convention Resolution

The period between now and the calling of the next provincial election is the critical window of opportunity for organized labour and its community allies to launch a campaign to defeat Hudak and his divisive agenda.

However, convention delegates called for a different type of campaign; one that does not in-

clude waving placards or chanting slogans about the Rand Formula. At the same time, they gave a strong mandate for the OFL and its affiliates to be more active than ever before as the champions of social justice. Therefore, the campaign will have two distinct components:

1. To engage union members in person-to-person conversations about the dangers of the Hudak agenda and to empower them to take this conversation back to their dinner tables and community gatherings.
2. To engage our Common Front partners in creating regional groups in every community to identify local issues, mobilize for social justice and defeat Hudak's Conservatives at the polls.

To do this, every union officer, every local staff rep and every labour activist must be engaged in the campaign to reach out to every one of our one million members, their families and neighbours across Ontario.

The timeline is tight! With a provincial election rumoured this spring, we cannot wait to act!



## LET'S DEFEND **OUR RIGHTS** AT WORK

### CAMPAIGN ROLL-OUT BEGINS WITH REGIONAL MEETINGS

Full participation at "urgent, all union, all local" regional meetings is a crucial first step in the campaign to stop Tim Hudak. This type of action cannot be left to the usual labour activists. Every grievance officer, health and safety rep and bargaining committee member also has an important role to play in reaching out to the full union membership.

Locals are being called upon to cancel or postpone some routine union work in order to make these regional meetings a big success. The stakes are so high that we cannot afford to be "too busy with other things" to fight to defend free collective bargaining in Ontario.

Regional meetings are already set in some locations, but plans are under way to bring them to every corner of the province. These meetings must draw labour leaders from every union and every local. Here are the first round of meetings that have been scheduled:

- Feb. 27 Durham (Unifor Local 222 Hall)
- Mar. 6 Toronto (OFL Building)
- Mar. 18 Sudbury (USW Local 6500 Hall)
- Mar. 20 London (Unifor Local 27 Hall)
- Apr. 1 Thunder Bay (Location TBA)

In every other region, connect with your local labour council for details or visit: [www.ofl.ca/index.php/campaigns/workerrights](http://www.ofl.ca/index.php/campaigns/workerrights)

## #STOPHUDAK MEDIA OUTREACH

**1,094**

Traditional media mentions

**47,934,700**

Cumulative circulation

**\$1,820,52**

Equivalent advertising value

**38-6**

Letters to the editor and op-eds published

**21**

Daily email updates

**136,385**

emails delivered

**1,664**

Twitter posts tweeted

**788**

Facebook posts

**629,774**

People reached on Facebook



PHOTO: LYNN SIMMONS

# THE INSIDE STORY OF THE UNPRECEDENTED WORKERS' RIGHTS CAMPAIGN AND HOW THE U.S. "RIGHT-TO-WORK" MOVEMENT WAS KEPT OUT OF CANADA

When our last President's Report was published in April, we did not know that we were only weeks away from an election in Ontario that risked the destruction of our labour movement.

As we reported then, our province-wide tour of regional meetings was unifying our unions. It was unlike anything we have done since the Days of Action in 1990s. These meetings, mandated by a unanimous convention resolution, proved to be essential to our success in stopping Hudak!

On May 2, Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath announced she would not support Liberal Premier Kathleen Wynne's budget.

Without the support of the NDP, the Liberal minority government would fall and the province would be plunged into an election.

The same day, unwilling to go through the motions of a budget vote that her party would surely lose, Premier Wynne visited the Ontario Lieutenant Governor and announced voters would go to the polls on June 12, 2014.

Fortunately, we had been preparing for an election for months through sixteen town hall meetings across Ontario to educate and organize the labour leaders and activists.

So when the election campaign began, the OFL, its affiliates and district labour councils mounted an unprecedented mobilizing and communications campaign.

Our goal was to prevent Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak from winning the election and forming government. Unions had to deny him the opportunity to push Ontario into chaos through the most right-wing policies ever proposed by a party leader in Canada.

We established our own province-wide campaign to coordinate labour's election

***I refused to preside over the demise of the labour movement on my watch***  
– Sid Ryan

strategy from our offices in suburban Toronto. We fought the election on the airwaves, over social media, and door-to-door.

"Hudak planned to use austerity budgets that would gut social programs for Ontarians, cut 100,000 public services jobs, and bring in legislation that directly attacked the labour movement's ability to defend the rights of its members," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "I refused to preside over the demise of the labour movement on my watch."

It was a gruelling six-month-long campaign, and the stakes for Ontario had never been higher. When the votes were tallied, it was clear the Workers' Rights campaign was the big winner.

The Progressive Conservatives under Tim Hudak had failed in their bid to take control of the Ontario government and were confined to the opposition benches, capturing only 27 seats, 10 fewer than the last election in 2011.

Humiliated by his defeat, that night Tim Hudak announced he would be stepping down as party leader.

"It was the OFL's moment; a huge victory for the labour movement," said John Cartwright, President of the Toronto and York Region Labour Council, who had urged our unions to launch the Workers' Rights campaign at the OFL convention in 2013.

The Liberals won the most seats, 59 of 107, so Kathleen Wynne returned to power with a majority government and she remained Premier of Ontario.

For the NDP, it was sad news for several MPs who lost their seats. Nevertheless, the party made gains in other ridings, including winning Oshawa which had not been held by the NDP since 1995. The NDP finished election night with 21 seats, the same number held when the

election was called. However, with the Liberals winning a majority of seats, the NDP would no longer hold the balance of power.

The amazing campaign built by the OFL has averted a disaster by preventing Hudak from winning the election. Let's look back at how the Workers' Rights campaign began at our convention, and why it was successful at stopping Hudak!

## POLITICIZING THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The foundation of the Workers' Rights campaign was laid at the OFL convention in November 2013, a full six months before the election was called.

A resolution from the Executive Board called on the unions present to take action to defeat Tim Hudak's Conservatives.

The motion passed unanimously. Delegates from unions across the province attending the convention were briefed on the full extent of the anti-labour agenda of the Hudak Conservatives.

"You could have heard a pin drop in that hall," said Sid Ryan, describing the reaction of local leaders and activists when the Hudak agenda was laid out in detail.

Tim Hudak's planned attack on labour was presented clearly in a position paper from the party in 2012.

The Progressive Conservatives called it "Flexible Labour Markets." The Toronto Star called it "a declaration of war against organized labour" and "deliberately provocative."

We produced our own review of the Conservatives' plan. At the very core of Hudak's proposal was the elimination of the so-called Rand Formula – a grand bargain between workers and owners dating back decades, which ensured that all workers who benefited from a collective agreement negotiated by a

union had to pay their fair share of union dues.

Not even former Tory premier Mike Harris tried to unravel Rand.

This radical attack would bolster the power of the corporations to drive down wages and benefits, pushing the rights of workers backward by two or three generations. It was a Wisconsin-style plan made for Ontario.

***I will not be leading  
the Ontario PC party  
in the next  
election campaign***  
***- Tim Hudak on election night***



There was no doubt Hudak was a "clear and present danger" to the labour movement.

The Conservatives' plan would result in the following anti-union measures:

- Any requirement that workers pay union dues would be illegal.
- All clauses in collective agreements that require workers to join a union would be illegal.
- Dues check-off by employers in the public sector would be banned.
- Private sector employers would have the sole discretion to include or ignore dues check-off requirements.
- The progressive voice of labour would be severely curtailed by limits on union funding for community, social and political campaigns.
- The Conservatives also plan to privatize the WSIB, placing injured workers in the hands of private insurance companies.

In the ensuing weeks, a team of organizers came together to bring the convention resolution to life through the Workers' Rights campaign.

Our campaign plan was drawn up, which stated boldly, "The OFL campaign for workers' rights must be a different type of campaign. It will not include waving placards or chanting slogans about the Rand Formula. However, at the same time, the OFL and its affiliates should be more active than ever before in broader efforts to raise the profile of labour as a champion of social justice and progressive causes."

The plan put forward three goals:

1. Defend our movement by reducing the number of union members (and family, friends, allies) who vote for the Conservatives.
2. Strengthen the labour movement and the Common Front. Advance the Peoples' Agenda. Identify and develop new and diverse leaders.
3. Lay the groundwork for the strongest-ever labour participation in the upcoming election.

## Election results by party

LIB	59	PC	27	NDP	21	GRN	0	Others	0
38.7%		31.2%		23.7%		4.8%		1.5%	

# DEFATING THE ATTACK ON WORKERS' RIGHTS

## SUBMITTED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, NOVEMBER 24, 2013

Whereas conservatives in Ontario have launched an aggressive attack on workers' rights; and

Whereas defending workers' collective rights must be the top priority of our movement and every union organization in the province;

Therefore, be it resolved that the OFL work with the CLC, labour councils and affiliates to:

- Convene a heads of union meeting to discuss making defeating the Conservative attack on workers' rights the labour movement's central focus;
- Hold regional meetings across the province to provide motivation and support for this work;

- Offer materials and resources specifically addressing Hudak's attack on workers' rights in Ontario to supplement CLC, labour council and affiliate materials;
- Discuss the broader implications of the attack on workers' rights with our Ontario Common Front community partners and allies:

- Strengthen our campaigns through support for alliances and community campaigns that benefit all workers; and
- Encourage affiliates to make their efforts in the upcoming provincial election the most powerful ever.



A large, stylized graphic reading "RISING TOGETHER" in purple and white letters, set against a blue background with a white star shape.

Our team prepared popular education materials for their union membership, informing members about the Hudak threat, and keeping attention focused on the ever-present possibility of the Liberal minority government falling and an election being called.

As one organizing pamphlet informed readers, "The member-focused campaign is essential groundwork for the coming provincial election. Let's work together to ensure their participation in the election is the most effective ever! The stakes have never been higher – for the future of our movement and for the well-being of working people."

### HUDAK REACTS TO RYAN

Last winter the Progressives Conservatives were watching closely as our Workers' Rights campaign built momentum. Some in the party quietly harboured doubts about the leader's near-obsession with attacks on unions.

But Tim Hudak refused to back down from the challenge posed by the OFL.

On January 29 he told TVO's host Steve Paikin that voters want "somebody who is actually going to take the bull by the horns ... that's not going to run away just because, you know, Sid Ryan doesn't like one of your ideas – the head of the (Ontario) Federation of Labour."

Hudak's Conservatives and the NDP went head-to-head in the February by-election in the economically depressed riding of Niagara Falls. It was an epic showdown.

A former Liberal-held riding, Niagara Falls is in the back yard of Tim Hudak's own southern Ontario riding, and also includes his hometown of Fort Erie.

The Ontario NDP was challenging the other parties in the election with Wayne Gates, a former city councillor and president of Unifor Local 199.

OFL affiliates sent plenty of support to the Gates campaign. They engaged their members through town hall meetings, telephone calls, emails and videos. The unions devoted substantial resources to advertising as well.



# TODAY'S LESSON: HOW LOCAL MEDIA USED OUR RESEARCH ON HUDAK'S JOB CUTS



Research by CUPE's Toby Sanger and the OFL's Brynne Sinclair-Waters revealed the devastating city-by-city impacts of Hudak's proposed public sector job cuts and was picked up by media across the province. When Hudak announced these reckless cuts it brought back

memories of Harris' failed, divisive policies. Ontarians are concerned and this research outlining local impacts made the danger of Hudak's brash schemes tangible.

Knowing the risk was so great, concerned citizens across the province got to work in

their own communities to get the word out and do everything they could to ensure Hudak's conservatives were not elected.

Here is a selection of media clippings covering the devastating job losses Hudak's reckless policies would cause:

But according to a recent study published by the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL), the proposed 100,000 cuts to public sector workers will lay off roughly 3,300 Kingstonians, bolstering the city's unemployment rate up by 3.8% to 10.2% overall." — May 28, *Kingston Whig*

Midland stands to lose more than 517 jobs if Tim Hudak's Progressive Conservatives are elected to office June 12, warns the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL). — May 29, *Midland Mirror*

Barrie could lose 2,547 jobs — both in the public and private sectors — if Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak implements his job plan, says the Ontario Federation of Labour. — May 23, *Barrie Advance*

A recent report released by the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) projected that the local impact of Hudak's plan to eliminate 100,000 public sector jobs in the province will result in 1,349 job losses in Sault Ste. Marie. — May 26, *Sault Star*

Orillia stands to lose more than 480 jobs if Tim Hudak's Tories are elected to office in June, warns the Ontario Federation of Labour. — May 29, *Orillia Today*

The Ontario Federation of Labour has been ... estimating the impact on individual municipalities—7,116 job losses for London, 2,457 in Barrie, 137 in Hawkesbury etc.  
— June 5, *Macleans*

A city-by-city breakdown... has Greater Sudbury's share of the job cuts at 1,668. Sanger estimated the city will also lose 1,117 — May 23, *The Sudbury Star*

Toronto would lose nearly 63,000 jobs and the city's unemployment rate would spike to 9.6 per cent if Tim Hudak's promise to slash 100,000 jobs from the provincial civil service happened, according to research from a union economist. — May 26, *Huffington Post*

Windsor would lose 3,964 jobs and unemployment would rise 2.4 percentage points under Tim Hudak's plan to cut 100,000 public-sector jobs, the Ontario Federation of Labour said Thursday. — May 22, *The Windsor Star*



# THE REGIONAL MEETINGS

**Regional meetings organized the OFL and affiliates, the CLC, and labour councils:**

- Durham, February 27
- Toronto, March 6
- Sudbury, March 18
- London, March 20
- Ottawa, March 24
- Kingston, March 25
- Niagara, March 27
- Thunder Bay, April 1
- Peterborough, April 3
- North Bay, April 5
- Guelph & Kitchener-Waterloo, April 7
- Peel, April 8
- Hamilton, April 10
- Sarnia, April 16
- Windsor, May 13

**At each meeting there has been representation from 30 different unions, with local leaders attending meetings from:**

ATU	IUEC	PSAC – CEIU/CULE/UNDE/USGE/UTE
BG&PWU	IUOE	SEIU
BUILDING TRADES	INTERNATIONAL UNION OF PAINTERS & ALLIED TRADE	SHEET METAL WORKERS & ROOFERS
CARPENTERS	IRONWORKERS	SPRINKLER FITTERS
CLC	LIUNA	TEAMSTERS
COPE	LUSU	THE SOCIETY
CUPE	MILLWRIGHTS	TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY WORKERS
CUPW	OECTA	UA
ETFO	ONA	UFCW
IAFF	OPFFA	UNIFOR
IAMAW	OPSEU	UNITE HERE
IATSE	PEEL ELEMENTARY OCCASIONAL TEACHERS	USW
IBB		UT
IBEW		WORKERS UNITED
IFPTE		
ILA		





**MESSAGE TO UNION MEMBERS**

**Even if you are sick of politics...**

## HUDAK'S BAD MATH

IF TIM HUDAK CAN'T EVEN ADD UP HIS OWN NUMBERS CORRECTLY, WHY WOULD WE TRUST HIM WITH ONTARIO'S ECONOMY — AND OUR FUTURE?

The centerpiece of Tim Hudak's election campaign – his "Million Jobs Plan" – just doesn't add up. And it's not just us saying this anyone:

■ A growing chorus of economists says Tim Hudak misread his own economic data and vastly inflated the number of jobs his "Million Jobs Plan" would create. ■

— Globe and Mail, May 27

■ This million job claim is quite bogus ... utter nonsense. ■

— Tom Caron and Peter Dorey, Postmedia, May 27

■ Errors demolished the underlying economic rationale the party had put forward for its smattering government lower tax plan. ■

— Paul Bourke in Maclean's, May 27

■ With the Million Jobs Plan shot full of holes, Hudak has reverted to his angry 2011 persona. ■

— David Pogue, Ottawa Citizen, June 2

Hudak's TV ads that claim there are "almost a million people out of work in Ontario," for example, don't even add up. There are actually 850,000 people unemployed in Ontario. That's the true number employed, but it's still the true figure.

Hudak's bigger mistake, however, is assuming it's not in everyone's best interest that a person has a job if it's a low-pay permanent position. This callousness between now permanent part-time or "flexible" part-time employment reduces the number of new jobs available for Ontarians who are looking for work.

On Twitter, the majority were not only critical of the funding of Hudak's MPPs, but also one of his many problems and mistakes in his campaign. (Read Part 1.) Almost every one I heard of was from one of Hudak's supporters who openly acknowledged

**FACT SHEET FOR LOCAL UNION LEADERS**

He has changed his message, but Tim Hudak has NOT abandoned his attack on workers' rights!

Tim Hudak's Conservatives are still deeply committed to attacking unions. Hudak's U.S.-style policies are so extreme, members of his own party forced him to tone down his message. Now is the time for the most intensive campaign in our movement's history — to STOP TIM HUDAK!

**We can NOT trust Tim Hudak**

Tim Hudak has changed his message, but he still plans to nominate your union and every other union in Ontario.

- Tim Hudak claims that his budget is union friendly, but the numbers just aren't true! If elected, the big freeze will be nothing but pay cuts, benefit cutbacks and retrogression.
- Tim Hudak is reversing his agenda by using phrases like "creating a competitive labour market" — these are code words for lower wages.
- When Tim Hudak changed his message about pension reform, he said his agenda is "a bit bigger and a bit more ambitious" (that's a single labour market).
- Tim Hudak is deeply committed to attacking unions and their districts. He views unions as the major obstacle to his free-market agenda.
- Tim Hudak's budget has shifted dramatically from what he has said in the U.S. to "fairer taxes, get saddle up pensions and lower wages."

**How would Tim Hudak attack our unions?**

Factoid: Tim Hudak will attack our unions. The only question is how!

- Will Tim Hudak simply freeze his pension above an changing current labour laws? That's exactly what the Minister of Finance did for pensioners to oppose an earlier right-to-work law, and other pension laws strengthened in 2013?
- Would Tim Hudak adopt the tandem cuts? Workplace Unions are trained from a young age to accept the tandem cuts. In fact, such laws and workplace tribute labour movements, money unions are competing.
- Would Tim Hudak introduce a law requiring annual re-negotiations — to reduce cash-strapped unions? That's what he previously proposed in 2013.
- Would Hudak cut a two-month strategy? In the fall term, unions across Ontario and parts of Quebec are on strike. In the second term, after trying to handle Hudak's budget, introduce the full range of 12 U.S.-style workplace laws.

**ELECTION DAY IS THURSDAY JUNE 12TH**

# #STOP HUDAK

**THE ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR IS MOBILIZING** on the ground, over the airwaves and online.  
Join our massive social media campaign — TAKE THE PLEDGE to #StopHudak at [www.stophudak.ca/take\\_the\\_stophudak\\_pledge](http://www.stophudak.ca/take_the_stophudak_pledge)

**f stophudak  
t @stophudak  
Daily bulletin: [www.stophudak.ca](http://www.stophudak.ca)**

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**An important message to union members**

Conservative leader Tim Hudak has announced a plan to significantly weaker your union and every other union in Ontario.

**Weaker unions would mean:**

- Reduction in bargaining power in negotiations with your employer
- Even more increased pressure on the wages and benefits of both union and non-union workers
- Increased threats to workers' pensions
- Reduced workplace safety and union representation
- fewer good jobs for the next generation
- Weaker defense of public services, human rights and the environment.

**It is time to pay attention to our union rights**

To protect our union and ensure the living standards we have worked hard to maintain, we must know how to defend our rights. That's why we're launching a campaign to educate workers about the attacks on labour laws in being promoted by Tim Hudak that are funded by wealthy corporations.

**We need stronger unions and better protection for working people**

Hudak's big fix is that nothing that will happen to workers in these systems have immediate, clear long-term gains.

Even Conservative union members are having second thoughts about voting the Conservative party. They want to know that the principles and values of their union are protected and respected. If they do not, then they will leave.

**Fairness is a Canadian value**

Existing labour laws require that everybody pays their fair share for union representation. That's how unions are able to represent workers.

For more campaign information and materials, check with your union and/or visit: [www.OFL.ca](http://www.OFL.ca) • [www.labourround.ca](http://www.labourround.ca) • [www.fairnessworks.ca](http://www.fairnessworks.ca)

**Defeat Conservative anti-worker laws**

## 5 step guide for local union leaders

Protect our members • Protect our collective agreements • Protect our pensions • Protect our unions

**Introduction**

Both the Hudak and Harper Conservatives are launching aggressive attacks on workers' rights. This is the biggest challenge our unions have ever faced.

These attacks cannot be defeated by a handful of dedicated activists. Defending our members and our members must be the top priority of the labour movement and every union organization.

As the Conservatives ramp up their attack, every public campaign that we are waging with our allies has new meaning and importance. For example, labour's support for the campaign to raise the minimum wage demonstrates our commitment to all workers' rights and conditions.

The time for action is NOW! Time is short — we cannot afford to wait until the next provincial election is approaching.

This guide was prepared for us by local unions in Ontario, Canada for the benefit of the locals, districts and areas of union members. Together, we can defeat the Conservative attack and defend our unions for the present.

**Our immediate challenges:**

- Oppose Bill 113 — the Conservative's attack on workers' rights
- Devote adequate attention and resources to defending workers' rights
- Engage members one-on-one in a well-organized workplace campaign
- Affirm the value of union membership and warn members of the threat to their living standards and working conditions



## CAMPAIGNING FOR A BETTER CHOICE

# WORKING ELECTION PREPARATION CONFERENCES TOGETHER

## WILL THE NEXT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

### BATTLEGROUND ONTARIO

**LABOUR LAUNCHES PRE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN TO DEFEAT THE ANTI-WORKER AGENDA**

Working people in Canada are facing some of the most difficult challenges in history but 2015 marks a pivotal year of opportunity as well. With a federal election guaranteed to take place no later than October 19, 2015, the CLC and OFL have teamed up with local labour councils to host a series of Election Preparation Conferences across Ontario.

Our plan is to bring together seasoned campaigners and new activists from a wide range of communities and workplaces to share the experience they have while learning the latest and best practices for effective campaigning – from outreach and training to social media. Our goal is to show union members how to mobilize their workplaces and communities to bring out the vote against the negative and powerful politics of greed.

#### **Why Labour needs to be active in the next election**

Harper has been on the attack against Canadian social programs, rights and values since his government was elected. Working people were targeted when the Conservatives have unfairly legislated unions back to work, and then tried to undermine unions' ability to organize through

legislation such as C-525 and C-377. The federal election is our chance to electorally shift power away from the Conservatives and advance the interests of working people by forming a more egalitarian, inclusive and activist government.

*The federal election is our chance to electorally shift power away from the Conservatives.*

#### **Will there be an early election?**

The unstable economy and the falling price per barrel of oil have put the Conservatives off-balance, and they are desperately hoping for improved economic news before they have to call an election. Decreased tax revenues and the expensive income-splitting announcement will certainly worsen the nation's finances, and have already forced the Conservatives to delay the release of the federal budget in order to try to avoid the bad news.

Recent polls show support for the parties is volatile, and Harper's numbers have been improving. The NDP and Liberals are focusing on the troubled economy to undermine Harper's public perception as a good fiscal manager.

The list of Canadians who want change is growing; the labour movement is joined by many groups including veterans, Aboriginal people, scientists, environmentalists and peace supporters, doctors and charity leaders, to name a few.

#### **It's time to elect a government for working people**

The Ontario Federation of Labour's goals are threefold: to have a new government elected that is supportive of working people and the labour movement, to increase our members' democratic participation in the electoral process, and to use the election to create better public understanding of the labour movement's important contribution to Canada.

The OFL will work with the CLC to put Ontario-specific election research in the hands of our affiliates and activists. This will include tracking of labour-related party announcements, issuing rapid media responses, and tracking public opinion polling.

Just as we did with the dramatically successful Workers' Rights and subsequent #StopHudak campaign, the OFL will create education materials for members, including leaflets, social media graphics, and email bulletins. Our focus will be



# WORKING ELECTION PREPARATION TOGETHER



## CLC & OFL TRAIN 2,000 ACTIVISTS TO STOP HARPER

Collapsing oil prices and the plummeting dollar have shaken Prime Minister Stephen Harper's budget projections and put his re-election hopes on uneven footing. This shifting economic landscape has forced the usually cautious Conservative leader to reveal his cards and, in doing so, he has given us an early glimpse into a re-election strategy that is based on fear and division.

The Harper Conservatives have consistently proven that they will trample the rights of all who stand in their path. Environmentalists who opposed the tar sands, fracking and oil pipelines got a taste of this when Public Safety Minister Vic Toews listed them as "eco-extremists." Union members have been reminded of this each time that Harper has stripped the right to strike from postal workers, airline industry workers, and shipping and rail workers. Now

***While there is no doubt that "Battleground Ontario" will make or break the Harper government, it will be union activists who tip the scales***

Harper is vilifying Canada's Muslim community in a self-serving attempt to shift the pre-election debate from the economy to security, and from criticism to nationalism.

Undeterred by this type of intimidation, the labour movement has begun rolling out a plan to defeat Harper in the 2015 federal election.

Inspired by the incredible success of the OFL's #StopHudak campaign in 2014, the OFL and CLC teamed up over the winter months to deliver intensive two-day training sessions that exposed Harper's low-wage agenda and trained over 2,000 labour activists from every corner of Ontario.

Participants were left with the skills and tools to convince their Conservative-leaning neighbours and co-workers not to trust Harper's hidden agenda. These activists will be poised to recruit tens of thousands of union members to campaign in key Ontario ridings to defeat Harper's Conservatives.

While there is no doubt that "Battleground Ontario" will make or break the Harper government, it will be union activists who tip the scales.

# CONFERENCES





## OFL Endorses Tom Mulcair's NDP

Canadians are in the midst of the longest federal election campaign in many decades, but Labour Day marked the mid-way point on the road to the October 19 election and it was also the moment that each party kicked their campaign into high gear. To mark the occasion, OFL led the weekend with a bold media announcement that it would be throwing its full and unequivocal support behind Thomas Mulcair's bid to become the first NDP Prime Minister in Canada's history.

OFL President Sid Ryan called on Ontario's 54 labour unions and over one million unionized workers to volunteer their time for NDP candidates in every riding across Ontario.

"Now is not the time to divide the strength of the labour movement by sending out confusing messages about who should be the next Prime Minister of Canada," said Ryan. "There is only one leader and one party that can clean up nine years of Conservative corruption and economic mismanagement and that is Thomas Mulcair and the federal NDP."

While Harper has been in office, income inequality has deepened, wages have stagnated and new job creation is slower than any period since World War II. The damage Harper has done to Canadian families, the environment and Can-

ada's international reputation is incalculable but the defining issue of Harper's last term was the introduction of the dangerous and undemocratic Bill C51.

*“There is one leader and one party that can clean up nine years of Conservative corruption and economic mismanagement and that is Thomas Mulcair and the federal NDP.”*

- OFL President Sid Ryan

"When Justin Trudeau was called upon to take a stand against Harper's attack on the fundamental rights of Canadians, his principles failed him and his party cast their votes with the Harper Conservatives. Trudeau proved that he doesn't have what it takes to lead Canada," said Ryan, "Only Thomas Mulcair had the courage and the conviction to oppose Bill C51 and defend the rights and values of Canadians. If ever there was a party platform that clearly speaks to the interests of working people and their families and provides a balanced plan for shared

prosperity, it is the one that Thomas Mulcair has presented to Canadians."

Among the many popular commitments the NDP have promised are:

- Creating full-time, middle-class jobs;
- Creating one million childcare spaces capped at \$15 a day;
- Expanding the Canada Pension Plan so no one retires into poverty;
- Expanding Canada's medicare system to cover prescription drugs;
- Reversing health transfer cuts;
- Cutting emissions and tackling climate change;
- Repealing Bill C51; and
- Launching a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women.

"The OFL helped to drive Ontario Conservative Leader Tim Hudak out of politics in 2014 and we are convinced that a labour movement united behind Thomas Mulcair can deliver the same fate to Stephen Harper," said Ryan. "There is no doubt that voters in 'Battleground Ontario' will make or break the Harper government, but I predict that it will be union activists who tip the scales and help Thomas Mulcair make history by forming Canada's first NDP government."



OFL President Sid Ryan uses the Toronto Labour Day Parade to publicly demonstrate OFL support for Tom Mulcair and Canada's NDP.

INSET: OFL launches social media support for Canada's NDP. See the next page for more about the boots-on-the-ground campaign to support strong NDP challengers in key Tory ridings across Ontario.

Imagine a national prescription drug plan. Imagine change.

There is a **BETTER CHOICE**.  
vote **NDP**

October 19, 2015 #TimeForChange

SHARE

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

A photograph of an older couple, a man and a woman, smiling and laughing together. The woman has dark hair and is wearing a light blue top. The man has grey hair and is wearing a pink shirt. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a modern building with large windows.

This time, let's vote FOR rights, not AGAINST them!

There is a **BETTER CHOICE**.  
vote **NDP**

October 19, 2015 #TimeForChange

SHARE

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

A close-up photograph of a young woman with blonde hair. She is wearing a red cloth gag over her mouth. The cloth has the number '651' printed on it. The background is dark and out of focus.

Feeling the squeeze of precarious work?

There is a **BETTER CHOICE**.  
vote **NDP**

October 19, 2015 #TimeForChange

SHARE

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

A graphic illustration. It features a green silhouette of a person climbing a dark, textured wall. The person is reaching upwards with one hand and pushing off with their legs. The background is dark with some light highlights.

PHOTO AND GRAPHICS: JOEL DUFF

# HARPER'S ECONOMIC RECORD IS THE WORST IN CANADA'S POST-WAR HISTORY

With Canada slipping into another recession, Unifor released comprehensive new review of the economic record of Stephen Harper's Conservative government that paints a damning portrait of nearly a decade of economic failure.

"Rhetoric and Reality: Evaluating Canada's Economic Record Under the Harper Government," authored by Unifor Economists Jim Stanford and Jordan Brennan, tracks the performance of nine federal governments from 1946 through 2014.

"Canada's economy has never performed worse, since the end of World War II, than under the present Conservative government. The Harper government ranks last among the nine post-war governments, and by a wide margin – falling well behind the second worst government, which was the Mulroney government of 1984-93."

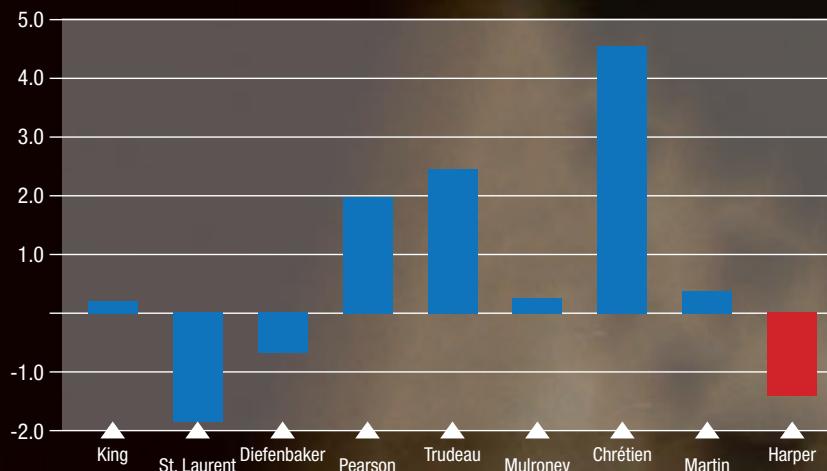
The report also shows that the poor economic results of the Stephen Harper Conservative government cannot be blamed on the 2008-09 recession – Canada experienced a total of 10 recessions since 1946, with some Prime Ministers contending with more than one during their tenures. The recovery from the 2008-09 downturn has been the weakest of any recovery since 1946.

Stanford and Brennan compare annual data from Statistics Canada and other publicly available sources regarding 16 key conventionally used indicators of economic progress and well-being. These indicators include:

- **Work:** Job-creation, employment rate, unemployment rate, labour force participation, youth employment, and job quality;
- **Production:** Real GDP growth (absolute and per capita), business investment, exports, and productivity growth; and
- **Distribution and Debt:** Real personal incomes, inequality, federal public services, personal debt, and government debt.

For 13 of the 16 indicators, the Stephen Harper Conservative government ranks last or second last among all postwar Prime Ministers. And its average ranking across all 16 indicators is by far the worst.

CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT RATE (% POINTS)



Even internationally, Canada ranks much more poorly than previously claimed. Canada's economy falls in the lower half of all OECD countries under the Harper government, according to population-adjusted indicators of job-creation and GDP growth.

"Given the negative growth data recorded so far for 2015, Canada's standing among industrial countries will slip further this year.

"Prime Minister Harper's claim that Canada's economy is 'the envy of the entire world' is sharply at odds with the international data."

To read the report: [http://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/documents/document/909-harper\\_economic\\_critique\\_eng\\_0.pdf](http://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/documents/document/909-harper_economic_critique_eng_0.pdf)

**Canada's economy has never performed worse ... than under the present Conservative government.**  
- Unifor Report



# OFL'S LABOUR DAY OP-ED



## OPINION COLUMNISTS

Monday, September 7, 2015

# Harper leaves future generations behind

SID RYAN

Every generation of parents, from Canada's First Peoples through each wave of immigration since, have trusted that hard work would deliver a brighter future and improved fortunes for their children and their grandchildren.

However, despite record levels of education, today's youth will become first generation in history to expect a lower standard of living than their parents.

For most of the last century, high school students could expect to graduate into well-paid jobs in manufacturing or other sectors that allowed them to buy a home, support a family and join the middle class.

Their counterparts today are graduating from college or university with unprecedented levels of student debt only to wind up wallowing in low-paying service jobs that offer no security, limited benefits and little room for advancement.

Over nearly a decade in office, the Harper Conservatives have engineered a dramatic reversal of fortune across Canada that is driving down wages and threatening to leave future generations behind.

For the first time since the 1950s, employment rates have dropped and new job creation has hit the skids.

Even in Canada's economic epicenter, barely 50 percent of workers can take comfort in full-time, permanent jobs.

For the country's labour unions, this alarming workforce transformation is triggering a profound re-imagining of the labour movement. We are confronting the harsh reality that declining union density and an increasingly precarious workforce are dragging down wages and benefits faster than union standards can pull them up.

Unions can no longer respond through self-preservation at the expense of other workers. A truly universal labour movement requires a bottom-up approach to worker action that is driven by a movement of all working people, the unemployed, the precariously employed, the retired and the many diverse communities who are being marginalized within today's economy.

**Those who are fed up with corruption in Ottawa, blanket support for corporate Canada and an inexcusable indifference to inequality are seeing the NDP as the better choice.**

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

For Canada's voters, the façade of the Conservative economic restructuring has crumbled away. A falling Canadian dollar, plummeting oil prices and the recent back-slide into a second recession give the lie to the Conservative claim to be sound fiscal managers.

However, for many Canadians, it is the deepening income inequality, wage stagnation and cuts to social programs that are causing voters to look for a more balanced road to shared prosperity.

When Albertans went to the polls last spring in Canada's Conservative heartland, the result was the punishing defeat of a 40-year-old Conservative Dynasty and an unprecedented mandate for the Alberta New Democratic Party.

Alberta NDP Leader Rachel Notley campaigned on a bold commitment to corporate tax fairness, the environment and a \$15 minimum wage – the same hallmarks of Thomas Mulcair's platform for Canada's NDP.

What was mistaken at first as simply an Alberta election upset, is looking more and more like a federal forecast. Those who are fed up with corruption in Ottawa, blanket support for corporate Canada and an inexcusable indifference to inequality are seeing the NDP as the better choice.

Around barbecues and campfires across the country, Canadians may be inclined to spend this Labour Day weekend lamenting the end of summer but there is also cause to look optimistically towards the future. The federal election on October 19 will provide an opportunity for voters to chart a new course for Canada. In the weeks and months that follow, we must work together to make the Canadian economy work for everyone.



**Sid Ryan** is president of the Ontario Federation of Labour

## CHALLENGING AUSTERITY



### OFL CALLS FOR ANTI-POVERTY BUDGET

As the Wynne Government prepares to release its next budget, arguably its first as a majority government, voters are expecting to finally get a formal introduction to the Premier's plan for Ontario. Having styled herself as the "social justice premier" during her leadership bid, the public and the pundits will be primed to judge whether she is living up to her own hype.

Finance Minister Charles Sousa's recent claim that the government is on track to beat the \$12.5-billion deficit projection by a cool \$1.6-billion is seen by many to be a dose of cold water on those who would seek to fan the flames of austerity. However, after years of public sector funding freezes that have resulted in deep real-dollar cuts to hospitals, schools and social services, Ontarians are expecting more than just belt loosening; they want to see concrete investment in their collective future.

This is the message that the OFL brought to the table during the February pre-budget consultation. In a submission entitled, "Towards a Poverty-Free Ontario," the OFL proposed a suite of recommendations that would make the elimination of poverty and income inequality the province's top priorities.

"For Ontario workers and their families, fairness means access to a good public education including daycare; affordable housing; quality health care; and pensions that allow older Ontarians to live with dignity," said OFL President Sid Ryan in his submission. "Fairness also means hard work is rewarded with respectable wages, and all citizens and businesses contribute their share to our tax system. Finally, fairness means no Ontarian –

especially children – need live with the indignity and hopelessness of poverty."

The OFL contended that poverty transcends the acutely felt impacts on individual families and affects entire communities. In other words, it is in the collective public interest to eradicate poverty.

For example, the social determinants of health – of which poverty is a leading factor – create negative outcomes and add enormous stress to our public health system. We also know that poverty contributes to a range of social challenges – from family breakdowns to drug abuse to criminal justice issues – that also impact our collective quality of life and the public treasury. On the other side, poverty constrains educational achievement, reduces opportunities for employment (reduced access to transit or clothes required for work) and reduces the potential for economic growth and additional tax revenue.

In short, the OFL argued that poverty is more than just unfair, unjust, inequitable, it is incompatible with efforts to build a prosperous society.

#### OFL Budget Recommendations

- Appoint community and labour to advise the Ontario Poverty Reduction Strategy;
- Reduce poverty for Indigenous peoples;
- Introduce \$100/month healthy food supplement for social assistance recipients;
- Affordable, universal and public early learning and child care;
- Abolish community college tuition fees and eliminate interest on student loans;
- Raise minimum wage to \$15/hour, lift employment standards and make it easier to join a union;
- Build and maintain new affordable cooperative housing;
- Transition homeless people off the streets; and
- Ensure that the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is universal and mandatory.

The OFL argued that government revenue could increase by \$6-billion a year simply by:

- Increasing corporate taxes from 11% to 14%;
- Cracking down on tax cheaters; and
- Removing the exemptions from the Employer Health Tax.

# 370,000

**Ontario children live in poverty,**

**including almost 4 in 10 children of single mothers**



# CANADIANS RALLY TO SAVE CANADA POST

Thousands of postal workers and supporters rallied in Ottawa on January 26, to oppose a plan announced by Canada Post and the Harper government to end door-to-door mail delivery and hike postage rates.

"The Conservatives are wrong to think that people are going to accept these cuts," Gayle Bossenberry of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) said to a cheering crowd at the Prime Minister's office. "Stephen Harper, axe this plan and consult with the public!"

Canada Post took most Canadians by surprise with its December 11 announcement that it would replace all door-to-door delivery with community mailboxes and further outraged the public when its President Deepak Chopra suggested that seniors wanted the exercise. Since December, municipalities, small business owners, seniors' groups and disability advocates have been taking up the issue across the country. So far, Vancouver, Victoria and Medicine Hat are officially opposing the cuts. Other municipalities are expected to follow.



Ottawa rally one of a series of actions that swept the country in defence of postal services.

***Canada is the only country in the G7 that is cutting the urban delivery of daily mail***

- Sid Ryan

Speakers at the Ottawa demonstration included seniors, disability activists and politicians as well as representatives from local, regional and national labour organizations. They were joined by more than 2,000 postal workers and members of the public from Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal,

Québec and Southern Ontario.

"Canada is the only country in the G7 that is cutting the urban delivery of daily mail," OFL President Sid Ryan told the crowd. "Like so many of Canada's public services, the post office knits our country together and when Conservatives attack Canada Post, they are attacking the fabric of our society."

While the rally in Ottawa was the largest, it was not the only sign of popular opposition to the Canada Post plan, which is backed by the Conservative government. Rallies, town halls, forums, petitions and other activities are happening in concert across the country. Many people and businesses are hanging signs in their windows and on their mailboxes that say "Save Canada Post."

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) is urging people to contact their Members of Parliament. A sample letter can be found at [www.SaveCanadaPost.ca](http://www.SaveCanadaPost.ca).

# ONTARIO HEALTH COALITION PROTESTS HOSPITAL CUTS AT QUEEN'S PARK

The OFL joined the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC), affiliates and thousands of community supporters at a mass rally at Queen's Park on November 21, 2014 to protest cuts to Ontario hospitals.

Since winning a majority last summer, Premier Wynne has been forging ahead with the most aggressive plan ever to strip local community hospitals of services through cuts and privatization. The OHC issued a province-wide call to mobilize against the cuts, arguing without exaggeration that community hospitals as we know them are being totally dismantled.

Despite the deepest hospital cuts of all peer jurisdictions in Canada and internationally, the Ontario government has implemented a plan to systematically closing down outpatient services: physiotherapy, labs, pain clinics, fertility clinics



and so on. Their next step is to bring in private clinics and to cut as many surgeries and diagnostic tests from local public hospitals as possible.

The OHC arranged for hundreds of people to be bussed to the rally from across the province to join thousands more from the GTA. Armed with

a larger-than-life puppet of Premier Kathleen Wynne, the protesters descended on Queen's Park to demand a rollback of corporate tax cuts and greater investment in hospitals and community care.

OHC Executive Director Natalie Mehra called for Ontarians from every walk of life — local businesses, seniors, care workers, health professionals, students; all of us who care about equal access to health care based on need not wealth — to fight to save our community hospitals.

"Our communities have struggled and fundraised and volunteered and built our local hospitals for more than a century," Mehra said. "And we must never let them be dismembered and hived off for private profit."



The campaign for retirement security is ramping up in Ontario this year with the pre-Christmas tabling of the much-anticipated Bill 56, *Ontario Retirement Pension Plan Act, 2014*, by Associate Finance Minister Mitzie Hunter. Hot on the heals of the bill's first reading, the Ontario Government released a comprehensive Consultation Paper for the proposed Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) and, in January, announced the first of the eight public consultations slated to travel across the province.

The OFL and CLC have been working in lock-step to carefully craft labour's response to the proposed made-in-Ontario pension plan and to press the government for vital improvements that would ensure the plan is fully compatible with the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). As expected, the ORPP is meeting with stiff opposition from corporations and bankers.

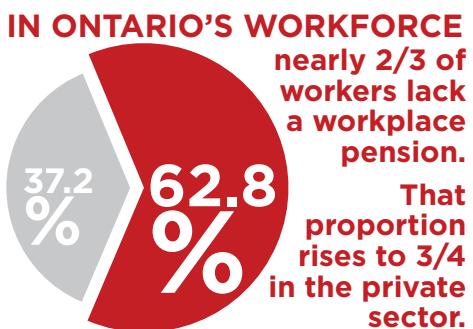
OFL President Sid Ryan heralded the tabling of the Bill and the launch of the public consultation process as an incredible opportunity to bring retirement security to every worker.

"The proposed ORPP marks the beginning of public deliberations on retirement security that Ontarians have been demanding for over twenty years," said Ryan. "It also exemplifies the utter failure of the Harper government to defend the future of Canadians."

Despite public demand, provincial support and sustained lobbying from Canada's labour movement, the Harper government has repeatedly rejected the call for an expanded CPP. The result is a desperate situation where the 70 percent of Ca-

nadians without a workplace pension can expect to languish on sub-poverty CPP benefits when they should be enjoying their golden years. The average Ontario retiree receives a meager \$6,800 a year from the CPP.

The OFL and CLC signaled their support for the ORPP initiative by presenting the labour movement's pension priorities in an op-ed that ran in the Kingston Whig Standard the Peterborough



Examiner on the morning that the consultations rolled into town. Ryan travelled to Kingston for the very first consultation where he attended the round-table consultation beside NDP MPP Jennifer French, to call on the government to ensure that the ORPP guarantees pension protection for every Ontario worker.

The labour movement secured an early victory against the corporate lobby when Finance Minister Sousa confirmed that Pooled Registered Pension Plans (PRPPs), which amount to glorified savings plans, would not be deemed comparable to the ORPP. However, the business community has made it clear that they are going to fight the

ORPP at every step of the way and, if they can't stop it, they will push a series of exclusions that would prevent all but a fraction of the three million eligible workers from accessing the program.

At the Kingston and Peterborough consultations on January 22, the local Chambers of Commerce stacked the hall to throw sand on the plan. One employer in Kingston threatened to "lay off some employees and cut donations to charities like the United Way" if the ORPP is adopted. Other interventions from the business community were similarly hostile.

Ryan called out these employers for standing in the way of progress. "It is no surprise that the business lobby and banks don't support the ORPP," Ryan told the packed consultation hall. "The business community has never supported progressive social programs. From universal health care, to childcare, to ending child labour, you have opposed it all. This government must act in the public interest, not corporate self-interest."

The small but vocal opposition from business must inspire the labour movement to redouble our own campaign and mobilize support around our core pension priorities. After all, the Ontario government has one shot to get pensions right and the labour movement is committed to helping them do just that.

The OFL will be releasing a comprehensive written submission on the ORPP in early February. Check the OFL website for updates.

For information about upcoming consultation dates, visit: [www.ontario.ca/ORPP](http://www.ontario.ca/ORPP)

# ONTARIO PENSION SHOULD MIRROR CPP

By Hassan Yussuff & Sid Ryan, Guest Columnists

The 17,500 Target workers laid off last week face some tough choices. Many worked part-time, meaning their access to Employment Insurance is limited, and if they do qualify, benefits will be low. Just to make ends meet, some will have no choice but to tap into the group Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) and Deferred Profit Sharing Plan (DPSP) - plans Target said were there for their retirement.

Trade-offs like this are the norm for many Ontario workers today. It's almost impossible to think about retirement - let alone save for retirement - when you don't have a job, are worried about losing your job, or work two or more part-time jobs just to get by. For most low-income workers, a dignified retirement seems entirely out of reach. Even those Ontarians who earn middle or even high incomes worry about living a much lower quality of life in retirement.

Employers, large and small, have been either unable or unwilling to step up and provide the secure, adequate workplace pension plans their employees need. That's left three out of every five Ontario workers - three out of four in the private sector - with no pension plan at work.

This is why the labour movement stands behind the Ontario government's plan for an Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. A large-scale publicly-administered pension plan that employers and employees pay into equally is the best way to tackle the retirement security crisis.

Of course we agree with the Premier Kathleen Wynne - and other provincial premiers across the country - that expanding the Canada Pension Plan would make the most sense for all Canadian workers. But the federal government is refusing to take that step. And without that national plan, the Ontario Retirement Pen-

sion Plan makes a lot of sense.

Now we just need to see the Ontario government get it right. For starters, this plan must mirror the CPP so that when we do win an expanded CPP, it can be folded seamlessly into the CPP. However, the current proposal for the ORPP would exclude millions of Ontario workers, making that transition a source of confusion and uncertainty for workers and employers.

Even without an expanded CPP, the ORPP's exclusion of millions of Ontario's workers is un-

***Expanding the Canada Pension Plan would make the most sense for all Canadian workers. But the federal government is refusing to take that step. And without that national plan, the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan makes a lot of sense.***

- Hassan Yussuff & Sid Ryan

fair and a recipe for red-tape. It excludes, for example, many workers who are in low-paid precarious work, but who do have pensions. Think of those employed in light manufacturing, or the workers - mostly women - who work in nursing homes and community social services. Some of those workplaces do have pension plans, but average pension benefits typically add up to less than \$250 a month. That pension is better than no pension, but it's not enough

to live on, and those workers need the top-up offered by an inclusive ORPP.

As Premier Wynne and her government kick off public hearings on the plan this week, let's hope they truly listen to what all workers stand to lose, and have to say. Let's hope she and her government stand up to employers trying to get out of paying their share, and to banks and insurance companies worried about losing out on fees and some of their profits. Let's hope that, for the sake of all Ontario's workers, Premier Wynne and her government seize this opportunity to set a powerful example for all of Canada by designing a robust, inclusive and comprehensive plan that truly confronts Ontario's retirement crisis.



Hassan Yussuff is the national president of the Canadian Labour Congress, the voice of 3.3 million working Canadians. Sid Ryan is the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour, representing one million Ontario workers.



## Ontario Budget sells false choices

When the Wynne government released the 2015 Ontario Budget on April 23, it triggered a lightning storm of public outcry with the announcement of the sale of Ontario's power grid, Hydro One. However, behind the headlines was a story of a much deeper betrayal of voters and the public interest.

When Kathleen Wynne won the Liberal Leadership and campaigned to be Premier, she sold herself to Ontarians as the "Social Justice Premier" in an attempt to distinguish herself from the discredited and disgraced former Premier, Dalton McGuinty. Yet, like her predecessor, she has chosen the path of cuts and privatization over tax fairness and economic stimulation.

The result will be a damaging and irreversible legacy that entrenches the economic divide, erodes public services and leaves a poorer province for future generations.

"Premier Wynne's budget sells more than just Ontario's public assets, it sells false choices," OFL President Sid Ryan told Queen's Park reporters. "She is telling Ontarians to choose between public transit and public hydro; municipal infrastructure versus hospital closures; good jobs or a balanced budget. It is a sort of budgetary 'Hunger Games' that pits public priorities against vital public services instead of address-



*It is a sort of budgetary 'Hunger Games' that pits public priorities against vital public services instead of addressing the most obvious choice: asking corporations and high-income earners to pay their fair share.*

- OFL President Sid Ryan

ing the most obvious choice: asking corporations and high-income earners to pay their fair share."

In its pre-budget submission, the OFL called on the Wynne government to use public investment and tax reform to ensure that prosperity is shared, to get more Ontarians working and to build a fairer society.

The OFL called attention to the 370,000 Ontario children who live in poverty; the one million workers who earn at or near the minimum wage; the one in five Ontarians who receive help from a food bank or charity; and the nearly half of all residents in the Greater Toronto Area and Hamilton who are working in precarious, part-time and insecure employment. All of this stands in stark contrast to Canada's highest paid CEOs, who today make 171 times the average Canadian income at a time when Ontario's corporate tax rate is the lowest in North America.

Simply restoring corporate tax rates to 14 percent, cracking down on tax cheaters and removing exemptions in the Employer Health Tax could inject an estimated six billion into infrastructure, jobs and anti-poverty initiatives each year. However, the 2015 budget continues to impose an impossible freeze on public funding for vital services, like schools and hospitals, rather than addressing inequities in the tax system that are at the root of the crisis.

"This budget has identified many important problems but it arrives at all the wrong solutions," said Ryan. "Ontario needs long term, stable and reliable revenue to protect valuable public services and to lift people out of poverty."



## Hydro One sale betrays future generations

The 2015 Ontario Budget revealed the Wynne Government's plan to sell up to 60 percent of its current 100 percent ownership of Hydro One Inc. to investors through an Initial Public Offering (IPO), commencing with an initial 15 percent sell-off in 2015-16.

This privatization of Ontario's publicly-owned electricity transmission and distribution utility will significantly reduce Ontario's annual revenues, drive the cost of electricity upward and impair the ability of the government to promote energy conservation and environmental sustainability.

The sale of Hydro One Inc. has met stiff opposition from both the Ontario PC Party and the Ontario NDP, as well as vehement public outrage from every corner of the province. A public opinion poll of 1,000 Ontario residents conducted by StratCom Communications found that 63 percent of respondents oppose the Liberal government's plan to sell shares in the provincial electricity transmission system. Fewer than 20 percent of Ontarians support the move.

"Selling off revenue-generating assets means future generations of Ontarians will be footing the bill for yet another government's short-sighted-

ness," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn. "History tells us that privatization will leave Ontarians in the dark."

This short-sighted cash grab will only net the government a meager \$4 billion through the one-time sale of Hydro One – but it will gut \$340 million in revenue from our provincial coffers from

On May 28, a rally of thousands merged at the CUPE Ontario Convention and marched up to the Ontario Legislature to bring public opposition directly to the doorstep of the Premier. On the same day, NDP Leader Andrea Horwath introduced a private member's bill to force the Ontario government to hold a public referendum before putting electricity assets up for sale.

"We know that hydro prices will increase with the sell off," Horwath told protesters at Queen's Park. "The premier claims that she's been upfront and honest with the people of this province but no matter what she says, she did not run on the sell-off of Hydro One. If she wants a mandate to sell this vital public asset, she has to take that decision right to the people of Ontario."

As the NDP continues the fight inside the legislature, labour and community activists continue to organize online and on the streets.

Get involved in the campaign at [www.KeepHydroPublic.ca](http://www.KeepHydroPublic.ca) and join the discussion on Twitter at #KeepHydroPublic.



PHOTO: JOEL DUFF

### #KEEPHYDROPUBLIC

every budget going forward. Once it's sold, that income will be lost forever.

The OFL and several affiliates have banded together through a coalition to stop the sale of Hydro One, under the banner and hashtag #KeepHydroPublic. The campaign has been gaining momentum ever since.

## GROWING THE ONTARIO COMMON FRONT



# COMMON FRONT JOINS THE CALL FOR A PEOPLE'S AGENDA

A cornerstone of the OFL's recent Action Plan is the Ontario Common Front, which has been a vital partner in labour's mobilization against austerity. First launched in 2012, on the eve of a rally of 15,000 against then Premier Dalton McGuinty's final budget, the Common Front connects 90 labour and community groups in collective action.

The London Common Front will be hosting a regional assembly on February 22. On February 27, the OFL and Ontario Common Front will be hosting a conversation with the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities and other government representatives about addressing youth unemployment and underemployment in Ontario. These are just two of many events, being sponsored by the Common Front and its allies that are aimed at exploring alternatives to an austerity economic framework under the heading of a "People's Agenda."

For the Common Front, the People's Agenda is a political laboratory and a process where spaces are created for sharing information, experiences and ideas. In the Common Front report circulated at the August 2013 general assembly, "Social Movements and the Defeat of Neoliberalism," five criteria were put forward to guide the development of a People's Agenda:

1. Engage people from a variety of backgrounds and experiences to create a broader and more inclusive tent;
2. Use messages that resonate with a wide audience, such "the 99% vs. the 1%";
3. Connect issues and short-term goals with the need for broader social change, while uniting across issues to confront underlying threats, such as neoliberalism, austerity and anti-democratic governments;
4. Use creativity to engage new audiences by

capturing their imagination and connecting on a deeper emotional level; and

5. Engaging individuals and communities through active listening in order to generate discussion and progressive proposals for creating a new future for us all.

Organizing remains at the heart of the Common Front. Regional Common Front initiatives continue to pop up across the province and, as the collective work of this new movement becomes increasingly decentralized, each community coalition is encouraged to identify local priorities and actions, while working to support province-wide mobilizations. Through these new networks, labour and community activists will be able to coordinate the campaign against Hudak and mobilize for social change.

For more information and to share local organizing efforts, visit: [www.WeAreOntario.ca](http://www.WeAreOntario.ca).

## ★ Ontario Common Front ★ South Asian Community Activism



Saturday, May 31

email: PHazel@ofl.ca



## THE FUTURE WAS OURS AT THE 2014 PEOPLES' SOCIAL FORUM

After years of planning, dreaming, meeting and organizing, labour activists from across Ontario came out in full force for the Peoples' Social Forum Unity March to Parliament Hill on August 21. The energizing rally at Lebreton, where Sid Ryan, Jerry Dias and others brought greetings to those who had travelled to Ottawa from across the province set the stage for our inspiring convergence with thousands more activists from Quebec and the Indigenous community. Inspirational messages from Hassan Yussuff, Harsha Walia, the Algonquin Grandmothers, and Gabriel Nadeau Dubois at Parliament Hill launched this historical gathering of people from coast to coast.

In the days following that Opening March, over 500 workshops, 20 movement assemblies, and the final convergence assembly on August 24 provided a rare opportunity for those in attendance to experience an educational

journey like no other. With 17 themes framing the workshops and assemblies, such as climate, public services, democracy and community, we all managed to find each other through the interconnectedness of our struggles, campaigns and movements. As overwhelming as the program may have seemed at first, it was actually invigorating and manageable because of the "open space" and horizontal structure which framed it. The walking tours, art exhibits, entertainment, and countless spaces for welcoming, meeting and healing ensured that we all came together and stayed together with open hearts and open minds.

The Ontario Common Front held a workshop on grassroots organizing between social justice organizations and the labour movement. The OFL and the FTQ cosponsored a workshop on the Worker's Rights campaign and the coming federal election, as well as a well-attended

workshop on issues faced by young workers.

Building the new alliances that are critical for the survival and growth of the labour movement was effortless at this grassroots event, where the absence of barriers (some of which we don't even realize exist) is palatable. The level of respect and consciousness exhibited by all participants at the Forum allowed the meaningful conversations and focused strategizing that the typical meetings, conferences and conventions we all attend aim to allow for to spontaneously occur non-stop for four days.

The time crunch all union activists constantly struggle to overcome was temporarily alleviated at the PSF, resulting in a feeling of rejuvenation. For a few days, a better world is created as thousands of progressive citizens come together in true solidarity to chart a long-term vision to build a future based on social, economic and environmental justice.



Peoples' Social Forum



## COMMON FRONT BUILDS MOVEMENT AGAINST POVERTY

Nearly 400 activists converged on the University of Toronto education building for an intensive two-day assembly addressing concrete solutions to poverty in Ontario. The incredible turnout built on the momentum of previous Common Front assemblies and demonstrated a growing appetite to build a broad-based coalition for social justice in Ontario. The Assembly also gave voice to a widespread frustration with the lack of government action to address the poverty crisis in Ontario.

After a string of failed policies, broken promises and false expectations raised by successive governments, the poverty crisis in Ontario has come to a head. However, the Assembly was also convened based on the generally accepted understanding that while excellent organizing work is being done by social justice and anti-poverty groups across

*I'd rather be at the table, than be on the menu.*

- Chicago McDonald's worker  
Jessica Davis

the province, a better effort must be made to align efforts, share strategies and coordinate our demands.

Powerful panels launched discussions on each day of the Assembly under two distinct themes. The opening panel focused on the lessons learned from recent social movements, including Idle No More, the Fight for \$15 cam-

paign and the Québec student strike.

"Fast food workers are coming together to demand fair wages and union representation. I know I speak for all of us when I say, I'd rather be at the table, than be on the menu," said Chicago McDonald's worker Jessica Davis.

The second panel brought together anti-poverty and disability activists with scholars on race and economic inequality to examine the differential impact of poverty across society.

However, for many, the highlight of the Assembly lay in the 16 participant-led discussions addressing various dimensions of poverty and the 8 regional action discussions that gave rise to collective campaign planning.

Stay tuned to the [WeAreOntario.ca](http://WeAreOntario.ca) website for a full action plan. This interactive website also allows activists to post their own events, reports and actions.



OFL President Sid Ryan and Common Front Co-Chair Carol Baker opened the Assembly with a call to action. Baker welcomed activists to the Assembly on behalf of the 90 labour and community organizations that comprise the Ontario Common Front.

Ryan framed the event around the forces of austerity that seek to weaken social movements and the social safety net by isolating communities and dividing their interests. "To build the movement we need - we can't just be concerned about the struggles of others, we need to see them as our own," said Ryan. "Access to money and resources cannot define who directs the movement that we are building together. All of us must be equals or none of us will succeed."



Toronto organizer for #IdleNoMore, Crystal Sinclair, shared powerful stories about surviving residential schools and the Indian Act. She called on activists to break down the barriers between them to model the change they seek.

"Even with all the challenges faced by our community and collective society, I don't speak from a place of despair but from a place of optimism and determination," said Sinclair.



Former Québec student leader, Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, gave a hard-hitting address that reflected on the achievements and lessons of the province-wide student strike. "The good news is that collective action works. We fought back and we won," said Nadeau-Dubois, "but after we toppled the government we realized that we had no plan for the future. We left an incredible vacuum of leadership in the election."

## SOUTH ASIAN AWARDS

The Ontario Common Front and the Ontario Federation of Labour hosted the South Asian Community Activism Awards 2014 on May 31 at the Sagan Banquet Hall in Mississauga. This year's recipients for their outstanding contribution to the community were Naveen

Mehta of the UFCW and Baldev Mutta of the Punjabi Community Health Services in Peel Region. The event was hosted by OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda. Speakers included CLC President Hassan Yussuff and OFL President Sid Ryan.

The OFL and the Ontario Common Front would like to thank all of our guests, performers, and volunteers. Table sponsorships, community groups, and affiliates helped to make this event a tremendous success.



Naveen Mehta and Irwin Nanda



Gogi Bhandal (CLC) and Irwin Nanda with Baldev Mutta



Performers



Hassan Yussuff

## PEOPLES' SOCIAL FORUM OTTAWA | AUGUST 21-24, 2014

A general assembly was held in Ottawa in January for the People's Social Forum, with representation from First Nations, people of colour, Quebec, student movements, unions, environmental groups and others. Organized labour was well represented at this assembly and the OFL's Antoni Shelton strongly articulated that labour rights must be central to the process.

The Ontario Common Front will host a workshop that will showcase the People's Agenda. Affiliates are encouraged to organize buses for your participants in the Peoples' Social Forum. Accommodations are available. See: [www.peoplessocialforum.org/](http://www.peoplessocialforum.org/)



Carol Baker, Ontario Common Front



PHOTOS: REENA DEON

## COMMON FRONT RECOGNIZES SOUTH ASIAN ACTIVISTS

In a packed reception hall in North Mississauga on May 23, the OFL and the Ontario Common Front hosted an amazing evening event to recognize South Asian Heritage Month with a celebration of community activism. Over 500 participants representing the diversity of the GTA population gathered to honour four award recipients whose contributions to social justice and human rights have strengthened labour and community movements.

Since being formed in early 2012, the Ontario Common Front has brought together over 90 labour and community groups to challenge austerity and build a diverse coalition that is committed to lifting every Ontarian together.

The awards dinner was hosted by OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda, the OFL's first Executive Officer of South Asian descent.

"The alliances formed between labour groups and community organizations have been the Common Front's defining feature," said Nanda. "There is incredible activism taking place in communities and neighbourhoods across the province, but we need to do a better job of connecting our struggles, recognizing leadership and inspiring action."

The award recipients honoured at the event were Workers' Action Centre Coordinator Deena Ladd and long-time union organizer, Bhupinder Sanghera, of Workers United Canada. Both women have made formidable contributions and have helped to strengthen the connections between workers and the communities they come from.

The event was made possible through generous donations that demonstrated a deep community commitment to social justice and all proceeds were pledged towards supporting the ongoing work of the Ontario Common Front in building a community-based movement across the province.



Workers' Action Centre activists accepted the award on Deena Ladd's behalf. For 23 years, Ladd has fought to improve wages and working conditions for vulnerable workers plagued by low-wages, violations of rights, precarious and part-time work.

## FIGHT FOR \$15 AND FAIRNESS CAMPAIGN

# LABOUR. LAW. REFORM.

A JOB SHOULD BE A

PATHWAY OUT OF  
POVERTY

Share!   #FairLabour



## REFORMING LABOUR LAWS

### THERE'S A LOT ON THE LINE

Ontario's labour laws are set for review this year and there is a lot on the line.

It has been 20 years since labour laws were re-opened in Ontario and that was under a Mike Harris government, when many of the gains made during the province's first-ever NDP government were rolled back.

Today there is new hope. The Wynne government has bent to pressure from the labour movement, sustained media attention to the growing trend towards precarious work and the ensuing public outcry. This year, the Ontario government has appointed two Special Advisors to review Ontario's *Labour Relations Act* and *Employment Standards Act* and, in May, the province officially launched the "Changing Workplaces Review" with the release of a discussion paper and public consultation dates that span from mid-June to early September (see below for the full list).

There can be little doubt that this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change Ontario's outmoded labour laws to lift employment standards for every worker and provide easier ac-

cess to unionization and the protections it affords.

The OFL has responded by bringing together a big table of affiliates, progressive economists, labour-side lawyers and community allies to analyze the existing gaps in labour law and the impact on the people who are falling through them. All of this in an effort to develop a clear vision that is shared across the labour movement and to put forward a comprehensive set of policy proposals that can restore the balance to labour relations in Ontario and ensure that having a job will always be a pathway out of poverty.

History has shown that when workers act collectively in their workplace they can improve their wages and working conditions. Such collective action has resulted in critical improvements in health and safety standards for workers and for decent wages and benefits.

The OFL is proposing a series of improvements to the *Labour Relations Act* that would eliminate the barriers to unionization, prevent employer intimidation and harassment during an organizing drive, help secure collective agreements and re-

solve disputes and maintain union protection in the workplace.

- Key among the OFL's recommendations are:
- Card-based union certification;
- Early disclosure of employee lists;
- Reinstatement following an organizing drive;
- Neutral and off-site voting, including telephone and electronic voting;
- Interest arbitration for a first contract;
- Successor rights for the contract services sector; and
- Ending protracted strikes through binding arbitration and anti-scab rules.

The OFL's initial presentation to the "Changing Workplaces Review" is timed with the release of this edition of the President's Report and a full submission will follow in the weeks ahead.

For copies of the OFL backgrounder on labour law, contact Sylvia Stewart at 416-443-7677 or [SStewart@ofl.ca](mailto:SStewart@ofl.ca)

For updates and information, visit: [www.ofl.ca/index.php/campaigns/LabourLawReform](http://www.ofl.ca/index.php/campaigns/LabourLawReform)

### SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETINGS

Jun. 16	<b>Toronto</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Marriott Downtown Eaton Centre Hotel (525 Bay St.)
Jun. 18	<b>Ottawa</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Courtyard Ottawa Downtown (350 Dalhousie St.)
Jun. 24	<b>Mississauga</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Courtyard Toronto by Marriott (7015 Century Ave.)

Jun. 25	<b>Guelph</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. OMAFRA (1 Stone Rd. W.)
Jul. 7	<b>Windsor</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Holiday Inn (1855 Huron Church Rd.)
Jul. 8	<b>London</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Station Park All Suite Hotel (242 Pall Mall St.)

Jul. 23	<b>Sudbury</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Venue TBD
Sep. 10	<b>Hamilton</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Venue TBD
Sep. 16	<b>Thunder Bay</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Venue TBD
Sep. 18	<b>Toronto</b>	9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. Venue TBD

# LAWS MUST STOP SCABS

By far, the majority of collective agreements are negotiated without labour disruptions. However, the actions of some employers result in strikes by unionized workers in order to achieve a fair contract. The use of replacement workers, or "scabs," undermines the collective bargaining process and unfairly weakens unions' ability to bring about a negotiated resolution.

The use of scabs and replacement workers prolongs labour disputes and escalates tensions.

Removing the ability of employers to use scabs or replacement workers to grind down striking workers results in smoother labour relations and shorter disputes with less risk to everyone involved.

Québec and British Columbia have anti-scab laws today and the results are clear. The year after B.C. changed its Labour Code, the province realized a 50 percent drop in the amount of work-time lost to strikes. The number of work days lost each year in Québec due to labour disputes is about half of the national average.

Ontario banned the use of replacement workers in 1992 but the Mike Harris government lifted the ban a few years later. Despite the rhetoric used by the opponents of the law, the short period it was in place was characterized by few work stoppages, moderate union demands and picket line peace.

Banning scabs and replacement workers from Ontario workplaces would prevent disruptive, long and bitter labour disputes, like the one underway at Crown Holdings in Toronto, where USW Local 9176 members have been forced to strike for over 21 months to resist a 42 percent cut to wages for new employees.

The Supreme Court has upheld the constitutionally-enshrined right to strike so it is not acceptable for the Ontario government to sit idly by while employers undermine that right through scabbing that protracts the strike and leaves workers to wither on the line.



# PROFILE CHERYLE

Cheryle Dollimore has worked for Crown Holdings for 28 years, making cans for leading food and beverage companies. A single mom whose father and grandfather worked at the plant before her (her family has contributed over 100 years of service to the plant). Cheryle was a skilful and valued employee who worked hard for decent wages and benefits that allowed her to provide for her family.

That changed in 2013 when her profitable employer demanded that all new hires earn up to 42 percent less for doing the same work. She and her fellow workers made the difficult decision to strike because they thought it was important to protect reasonable wages for the next generation of workers.

They also believed they would be back at work within a few weeks, and certainly before the big production period in the spring. The only previous strike in the facility's history had lasted only six weeks in 1995.

Crown had other ideas. Soon after the strike began, Crown started busing replacement workers (scabs) across the picket line and resumed production. Instead of bargaining a fair deal with its long-time employees, Crown made increasingly worse offers and insisted that it would keep all the scabs and allow only about 25 percent of the strikers to return to work even if an agree-

ment was reached. Everyone else would be fired without cause or left in limbo.

With no fair deal to vote on, Cheryle is still on strike nearly two years later and still watching replacement workers cross the picket line every day. Talking about how the strike has affected her, Cheryle says, "It's been difficult and upsetting to have to watch the buses of

replacement workers cross our line day in and day out. Financially, it's been tough. I'm in my fifties and any retirement savings I had are null and void. I have nothing left for retirement. It's not just tough on me and the people on the line; it impacts our families.

When you're on strike this long, everyone worries about you: your parents, your brothers and sisters, your kids. It affects everybody."

***But big money has more power than the little guy. And we don't have strong enough labour laws in this province to protect us.***

- Cheryle Dollimore, USW 9176 Member

After so long on the line, Cheryle just wants to return to work so that she can retire with her pension—she just needed a couple more years. "I hope the government intervenes so this can't happen again. Companies shouldn't be allowed to keep us out like this," she says, "but big money has more power than the little guy. We don't have strong enough labour laws in this province to protect us. People think we do, but we don't."

# SUCCESSOR RIGHTS MEAN JOB SECURITY

Current 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 and 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 years of the Mike Harris 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.

Loopholes in the current legislation absolve sub-contracted companies of honouring union certification when a contract changes hands,

even if the very same employees were called back to work for the new company. This penalizes companies who pay fair and reasonable wages and forces workers who want a union into a perpetual organizing drive ... simply to regain the wages and benefits they lost.

Extending successor rights to the contract services sector will remove the current bias in favour of non-union employers and provide job security for some of the most vulnerable workers.



PHOTO: UNITE HERE LOCAL 75

## RAYMOND

Raymond Chung has worked for two and a half years in the cafeteria of 89 Chestnut Street, a hotel-turned-student residence run by the University of Toronto (U of T). The husband and father of two young children works hard setting up meals for university students, clearing tables and washing dishes.

Because Raymond works directly for the University, his job is relatively secure. He makes \$17.94 an hour, has modest benefits and if he keeps at it, when his children are old enough, they will be able to attend the university for free. This is a significant attraction to the job.

Raymond's union, UNITE HERE Local 75, is in the middle of bargaining a new contract. While his salary has been frozen for a couple of years, he is hoping for an increase to keep up with the rising cost of living.

"Kitchen jobs like this aren't perfect but we're doing better than other food service workers on campus who work for sub-contractors," said Raymond. "When you have job security, your union can work to improve things little by little."



PHOTO: JOEL DUFF

## VALERIE

Valerie Gaynor has worked full-time as a cook in a cafeteria on the same campus of the University of Toronto for almost 15 years. However, she makes only \$14.55 an hour. When the day is done, the 56-year-old mother is required to take her uniform home and wash it herself. Neither she nor her family members get a break on tuition fees at the university.

Why the difference in pay, benefits and job security? Valerie is actually employed by Aramark, a food service provider contracted by the University of Toronto, not for the university itself. When a new company won the contract to run the cafeteria, Valerie and her co-workers had to fight to keep their jobs.

"If a new contractor comes in at U of T, they don't have to keep us. It's very stressful because it means we have to fight just to protect our jobs every time the university's food service contract is up," says Valerie. "We'll never significantly improve our standards as long as we're struggling just to hold on to what we've got – it's like we're running to stand still."

## THE DIFFERENCE THAT SUCCESSOR RIGHTS CAN MAKE

With the *Ontario Labour Relations Act* under review for the first time in 20 years, precarious workers like Valerie are hopeful that existing successorship provisions will be extended to include contract workers.

Many of them are in contracted positions that are typically underpaid with few benefits and little job security. When a new sub-contractor is

hired, all workers can be fired and they have to fight to get their jobs back — leaving essentially no possibility of improving their situations.

"There are other people on campus who work directly for the university, and they're doing the exact same work as us, serving the same students. But we're way behind because we work for a sub-contractor and we don't have suc-

sorship protection," says Valerie. "It's time for us all to be treated fairly, with equal protection under the law."

There are hundreds of thousands of contract employees like Valerie, working in hospitality, airports, laundry and food service and many other industries. Successorship protection will keep them from falling through the cracks.



PHOTO: WORKERS' ACTION CENTRE

## CHANGES TO EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS CAN RAISE THE FLOOR FOR EVERY WORKER

The changing economy and unfair government policies have resulted in a growing power imbalance between management and organized workers, while leaving millions of more workers labouring without the power of a union to represent them. Non-unionized workers, must rely on inadequate and poorly enforced employment standards to protect their interests.

Currently in Ontario, 41 percent of work is part-time, contract or own-account self-employed. The number of part-time jobs has risen much faster than that of full-time jobs and, since the last recession, many full-time, better-paid jobs have been permanently lost. Precarious and low-wage work is increasingly the new normal and yet the *Employment Standards Act (ESA)* has not kept up with the changing nature of work, leaving workers unprotected and struggling to get by in bad jobs. Ontario is developing a low-wage economy but the "Changing Workplaces Review" provides an opportunity to reverse the tide.

The government's "Changing Workplace Review" gives us the opportunity to open up labour laws, identify the gaps and develop a new legislative architecture that can support decency in Ontario workplaces.

The OFL is committed to elevating the standards of every worker, whether unionized or not. Throughout their history, labour unions have fought to improve the livelihoods of their members at the bargaining table, while seeking to

generalize those gains through legislation. By extending union gains to the general workforce, unions hope to see all workers prosper.



The OFL is supporting the *ESA* submission of the Workers' Action Centre. Key among the OFL's recommendations are:

- Raise the minimum wage to \$15 per hour in 2015;
- Ensure that temp agency workers receive the same wages, benefits and working conditions as workers doing the same work;
- Make client companies jointly responsible with temp agencies for all rights under the *ESA*;
- Establish a reverse onus on employee status so that a worker is presumed to be an

employee unless the employer demonstrates otherwise;

- Enshrine an 8-hour day and a 40-hour workweek, such that overtime is paid on work above 40 hours and employees have the right to refuse work beyond 40 hours;
- Enable all employees to accrue a minimum of one hour of paid sick leave for every 35 hours worked;
- Increase paid vacation entitlement to three weeks per year.
- Require two weeks' advance posting of work schedules and impose penalties for last minute shift changes;
- Remove all exemptions and special rules that erode the minimum standards; and
- Establish a Migrant Workers' Bill of Rights and legislative changes to protect the labour and human rights of every worker.

Shady employment practices such as flexible staffing, low wages and abandonment of basic minimum standards are not permanent features of our economy. Rather, they are symptoms of labour regulations that have failed to keep pace with changing workplaces.

The OFL will be tabling comprehensive recommendations to improve the *Employment Standards Act* that will raise the floor for every worker and help to ensure that prosperity is shared across our economy and society.

## ONTARIO COURT AFFIRMS UNION REPRESENTATION IN RICHTREE DISPUTE

Thanks to a recent Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) ruling, the renovated Richtree Eaton Centre location will remain a union shop.

Forty unionized restaurant workers took a big step towards justice last month after the Board issued a decision confirming that their union, UNITE HERE Local 75, continues to have bargaining rights at their workplace. Local 75 is continuing to fight for the reinstatement of the original workers.

In January 2013, all of the workers at the original Richtree Restaurant in Toronto's Eaton Centre were dismissed with two days' notice and told the facility would be closing permanently. Yet on September 9 of that same year, Richtree opened a renovated restaurant in the Eaton Centre, mere metres away from its original location, hired an entirely new staff and has been

operating without a union ever since.

In his decision, OLRB Chair Bernard Fishbein concluded, "I am not persuaded that in the

street, convenience or entrance address that presently has no real existence other than on a piece of paper."

Richtree had argued that employees' bargaining rights did not continue at the new location. The union had argued that the agreement remained valid within the Eaton Centre and that letting the unionized employees go constituted an unfair labour practice under Section 96 of the *Labour Relations Act*.

This incredible victory for UNITE HERE Local 75 comes hot on the heels of an automatic certification win at various Novotel locations. In November, the OFL took its convention rally directly to the mall entrance of the Richtree restaurant

and held an impromptu occupation. The union successfully sustained pressure on the restaurant through a series of actions designed to target customers and embarrass management.



PHOTO: JOHN MACLENNAN

UNITE HERE Local 75 brings call for solidarity to the OFL convention rally in November. The crowd took the Eaton Centre by surprise.

## TOYOTA CAMPAIGN LED BY WORKERS FROM THE START BY JERRY DIAS

The origins of the Toyota campaign differed from most other large scale organizing efforts.

It's a great story. The first cards were actually bulletins from Toyota's human resources department about the latest cut to benefits, on which industrious Toyota team members, as workers at Toyota are known, had photocopied a CAW membership card on the back.

There could be no clearer signal to us that Toyota team members were not happy, than to have them use the company's own bulletins to make union membership cards.

Looking back, it's easy to see why. The company was taking its cues from the Detroit Three, which were taking a hard line in its contract talks. Despite being very profitable and in much stronger financial shape, Toyota was using the turmoil in the auto industry as an excuse to make cuts at its own plants.

The team members soon realized a union was needed.



With team members calling regularly asking for help, and the homemade cards coming in, a couple of meetings were held at the CAW union hall in Woodstock to gauge interest, followed by leafleting outside the plants.

The response was overwhelming, and convinced us that an organizing drive at Toyota

could work. For many of us, it was a turning point.

Three things then kicked the campaign into high gear last September: Unifor was founded, giving the union unprecedented publicity and an updated image; I went to Kitchener to meet team members and offered them the new union's wholehearted support; and Unifor Local 88 signed a deal at CAMI that made contracts permanent — which is one of a few priority issues for Toyota workers.

We are now entering a new phase as we sign up new members to address the surprisingly long employee list filed by the company with the labour board, and so have temporarily withdrawn our certification application.

We are close, very close, and will soon be negotiating a historic first contract at Toyota.

**Jerry Dias is National President of Unifor, Canada's largest union in the private sector with more than 305,000 members, including more than 39,000 in the auto industry.**



## GOOD ENOUGH TO WORK, GOOD ENOUGH TO STAY NDP MPP PRESENTS OFL MIGRANT WORKERS' BILL OF RIGHTS AGAINST BACKDROP OF MASS DEPORTATIONS

In the cruellest of manoeuvres, an estimated 70,000 temporary foreign workers whose contracts expired on April 1, 2015, faced the largest mass deportation order in Canadian history. Unfortunately, it was no joke.

Many low-skilled workers who came to Canada under the Temporary Foreign Workers Program and Live-In Caregiver Program are required to leave the country as a result of a clampdown imposed by the Harper government on April 1, 2011. Dubbed the "4 & 4" rule, the rigid policy limits migrant worker contracts to four years and bars them from returning to Canada for the following four years. As a result, tens of thousands of migrant workers will either voluntarily leave Canada, be given deportation orders, or will be forced to go "underground" and live without legal documents.

With the mass deportation order looming overhead, NDP MPP for Oshawa Jennifer French, dedicated her March 17 remarks on the proposed Bill 49, the *Ontario Immigration Act* to demand justice for migrant workers. The bill, which purports to regulate the recruitment, selection and

admission of immigrants and foreign nationals, has been criticized for failing to outline the rights of migrant workers or provide a process for their conversion to permanent residents.

***This bill will do nothing to address the fact that migrant workers are immensely more vulnerable to exploitation***

- NDP MPP Jennifer French  
(Oshawa)

In her address to the government, French said: "This bill doesn't do anything to close the existing loopholes when it comes to temporary and migrant workers. This means that this bill will do nothing to address the fact that migrant workers are immensely more vulnerable to exploitation

and will do nothing to address the crisis of precarious employment that exists in general in our province."

French proceeded to present key recommendations from the OFL's draft Migrant Workers' Bill of Rights. She followed up in subsequent sessions with hard-hitting questions to the Minister of Labour demanding an immediate intervention on behalf of all workers facing expulsion, and with MPP Teresa Armstrong, co-wrote an open letter to Minister Chan.

Watch the video of MPP French's remarks: <http://bit.ly/french-migrantworkers>

Download the 2013 OFL report, "Labour Without Borders: Towards a Migrant Workers' Bill of Rights": <http://bit.ly/MigrantWorkersRights>

Sign the petition against the deportations: <http://bit.ly/NoDeportations>

Video and open letter: <http://www.jenniferfrench.ca/does-this-government-have-a-plan-to-protect-vulnerable-workers>

## KILL A WORKER, GO TO JAIL

# JAIL TIME HANGS IN THE BALANCE IN NEW METRON TRIAL

Five years after the terrible 2009 Christmas Eve tragedy, in which five workers plunged 13 stories from a West Toronto high rise, the OFL continues to fight for justice. Immediately following the incident, OFL President Sid Ryan launched the "Kill a Worker, Go to Jail" campaign that resulted in the 2012 criminal conviction of Metron Construction, the first of its kind in Ontario's history. The company was fined \$750,000 by the criminal court but Metron owner Joel Swartz escaped criminal prosecution by pleading guilty to a \$90,000 fine for health and safety violations. However, the courts have continued to pursue charges against other players in the disaster.

In 2014, the Ministry of Labour convicted a third party contractor, Swing 'N Scaff, who built and supplied the faulty swing stage, levelling a \$350,000 fine against the company and \$50,000 against the owner. This year, a separate criminal trial got underway against the Metron

Project Manager Vadim Kazenelson, which gave the workers and their families a second chance at justice.

OFL Health and Safety Director Vern Edwards attended most of the five week trial and reported that the testimony of Metron owner Joel Swartz attempted to lay full blame for the fatalities at the doorstep of Kazenelson. Now that all of the evidence has been presented to the court, a verdict is expected later in April.

The OFL remains hopeful that a prison term could finally be awarded to an Ontario employer for a workplace fatality.

Whatever the verdict in this case, it has already set a new precedent in workplace justice, putting a chill on employers and,

hopefully, causing them to think twice about putting profit ahead of worker safety.

The court has scheduled June 26 to announce a verdict in the Kazenelson case. If he is convicted, he could face sentencing in late summer.

*The OFL remains hopeful that a prison term could finally be awarded to an Ontario employer for a workplace fatality*



# HYDRAULIC SCAFFOLD COLLAPSE KILLS TWO TORONTO BRICKLAYERS

It was a scene of twisted steel and carnage. Two bricklayers were killed after a hydraulic scaffold collapsed while they worked on a condo project in the west end of Toronto, leaving construction workers at the site in a state of shock.

The incident was eerily reminiscent of the Etobicoke swing stage collapse in 2009 that left four dead and one with life-altering injuries. It was this tragedy that gave rise to the OFL's "Kill a Worker, Go to Jail" campaign.

In late morning on March 27, a hydraulic scaffold – sometimes called a mastclimber – catastrophically malfunctioned and plunged to the ground along with unharnessed workers. One man fell five stories to his death and a second was rushed to the hospital before he succumbed to life-threatening injuries.

As dramatic as the incident was, it is by no means a rare occurrence. An average of 80 workers lose their lives each year in traumatic on the job incidents, another 200 die from occupational disease and over 200,000 are injured at work. Between 2008 and 2013, there was a 36 percent increase in workplace fatalities.

While it is too early to speculate as to the cause of the disaster, the OFL called on Toronto Police to join Minister of Labour investigators at the scene in order to determine whether criminal negligence could have contributed to the tragedy.

"All too often the police leave the scene as soon as the Ministry investigators arrive. We are seeking to change that," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "If employer negligence results in a worker's death, it is a crime, not an accident. We want to see negligent bosses behind bars."



In honour of the fallen workers, Brothers Luigi Cudini and Shane Jennings, the Toronto and York Region Labour Council will be holding its 2015 Day of Mourning Ceremony at the site of the tragedy.

**Noon on Tuesday, April 28, 2015  
Bloor Street on the East Side of High Park Ave.**



## ONTARIO ADOPTS NEW WORKING FROM HEIGHTS TRAINING STANDARDS

This Toronto tragedy came just days before the Ontario government imposed strict new industry guidelines for all workers who use high platforms, a common and risky line of work amid the province's condo tower boom.

As of April 1, 2015, employers must ensure that certain workers complete a working at heights training program that has been approved by the Chief Prevention Officer and delivered by an approved training provider before they can work at heights.

The training requirement is for workers on construction projects who use any of the following methods of fall protection:

- Travel restraint systems
- Fall restricting systems
- Fall arrest systems
- Safety nets
- Work belts or safety belts

Construction workers will have two years to meet the province's new fall protection training requirements.

"It is time to put a stop to shady employers who are handing out safety certificates to workers who have never been properly trained," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "New training requirements and government oversight will only be effective if resources are put into to investigation and enforcement."





## OPP TO GIVE WORKPLACE FATALITY A SECOND LOOK

An OFL request to the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) detachment in Almaguin Highlands, north of Orillia, has the potential to give new life to a two-year-old workplace fatality file.

On May 12, a Parry Sound court fined GRC Contracting \$90,000 for *Occupational Health and Safety Act* violations that led directly to the 2013 death of 29-year-old Justin Wilson, who fell through a roof while wearing a body harness that was not attached to a fall arrest system. In

its ruling, the court found that "three days prior to the incident, GRC had been warned by the constructor about ensuring fall arrest was worn by workers."

In light of this evidence, OFL President Sid Ryan wrote to OPP Staff Sergeant Stacey Whaley to ask the force to take a second look at the case through the lens of Bill C-45 amendments to the *Criminal Code* that allow employers to be held criminally liable for negligence causing

workplace deaths. Two weeks later, Whaley responded to say that a new detective had been assigned to the file.

"We are very pleased that the OPP have agreed to give this case a second look, but we need a radical shift in perspective from police and crown attorneys across the province," said Ryan. "After all, when criminal negligence results in a worker's death, it is a crime, not an accident, and those responsible should be put behind bars."

## WSIB COVERS UP 1,150 WORKPLACE DEATHS

On April 28, the *Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job*, the OFL blew the whistle on a shameful ploy on the part of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) to cover up 1,150 fatalities, a third of all the lives lost over a nine-year period.

Just days before workers and family members gathered to recognize the lives lost at work, the WSIB released a revised set of death and injury statistics, dating back 10 years, that under-report workplace fatalities by an average of 128 each year. Prior to 2013, the WSIB provided death and injury statistics in a consistent manner through a "Monthly Monitor" report. Those reports demonstrated that between 2004 and 2012, a total of 3,375 workers had died due to occupational disease or traumatic on-the-job accidents. However, the WSIB changed their data reporting practices in 2013 and issued new statistics this year claiming that only 2,225 workers had died over the same nine-year period.

"Every one of the 1,150 fallen workers who have been scrubbed from the WSIB spreadsheets is a real person with a real spouse, real children, real friends and real colleagues," said Ryan. "No amount of statistical gerrymandering can conceal an alarming trend in workers being killed while trying to provide for their families."

The WSIB brushed off the change as noth-

ing more than "data maturity and [changing] definitions", but failed to justify how and why 1,150 fallen workers, who had been counted in every previous WSIB report, had suddenly disappeared. The OFL is continuing to work with the Ministry of Labour to get answers from the WSIB. Read the full story at: [www.OFL.ca/index.php/WSIBdata](http://www.OFL.ca/index.php/WSIBdata)



# TORONTO STAR

A19

COMMENTARY

Tuesday, April 28, 2015

## Seeking justice for fallen workers

SID RYAN

It was a scene of twisted steel and carnage. Two bricklayers were killed on March 27 when a massive hydraulic scaffold — sometimes called a mastclimber — plunged five stories at a condo development in Toronto's west end. In another fatal accident just days ago, a worker fell five metres from a construction site in Toronto's financial district. These chilling tragedies dominate local headlines for the day and leave construction workers and their families in a state of shock. But there is never a parade in their honour, no flags are lowered and there is often little political hand-wringing in the legislature.

These incidents are eerily reminiscent of an Etobicoke swing stage collapse on Dec. 24, 2009, that killed four workers and left a fifth with life-altering injuries. Only one worker on the platform survived the ordeal unscathed — he was the only one connected to a lifeline.

Sadly, tragedies like these occur with alarming regularity and, too often, they are marked by private sorrow rather than public outrage.

An average of 80 workers die horribly each year in traumatic on-the-job accidents, another 200 die a slow, agonizing death from occupational diseases and over 200,000 more are maimed at work. Between 2008 and 2013, there was an alarming 36 percent increase in workplace fatalities.

Every April 28, workers across the country pay tribute to their fallen co-workers at solemn ceremonies to commemorate the "Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job." This day was officially recognized in Canada almost 30 years ago, yet today workers' deaths continue to go largely unrecognized — except by the surviving family, friends and colleagues.

It isn't enough to mourn for the dead; we must also fight for the living.



It has been 11 years since labour unions won historic changes to the Criminal Code that made it possible to convict employers for criminal negligence causing workplace tragedies and, to date, not one has served a prison sentence. The law was changed in the wake of the Westray Mine disaster of 1992 that claimed the lives of 26 miners in Nova Scotia, and it came into effect in 2004.

### On the "Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job," it isn't enough to remember the dead; we must also protect the living.

While many companies receive government fines for fatal health and safety violations, all too often local police and crown attorneys are not trained to view these accidents as potential crime scenes. To add insult to injury, an audit of Ontario Workplace Safety and Insurance Board payouts last year revealed that the employer-subsidized agency is rebating millions of dollars in premiums every year to companies that have been found guilty of fatal safety violations.

The labour movement is seeking to find justice for these fallen workers.

After the Christmas Eve tragedy in 2009, the Ontario Federation of Labour launched a "Kill a Worker, Go to Jail" campaign to demand police investigations into fatal workplace incidents and prison sentences for employers found guilty of criminal negligence causing injury or death. Three years later, Metron Construction was finally convicted of criminal negligence causing the Etobicoke deaths. It was Ontario's first conviction un-

der the Westray provisions in the Criminal Code. The company was awarded the highest fine in Canadian history for a workplace death, but the company's owner escaped personal prosecution. Today, workers are left clinging to the hope that the on-site project manager might yet be sentenced to actual jail time.

It is too soon to speculate as to the cause or preventability of the recent deaths that rocked Toronto's construction industry. However, these deaths — and the others that will be remembered on April 28 — are grim reminders that every worker who is killed on the job deserves the full attention of the law. Their families deserve to know the police have done more than rule out foul play, that they have investigated employer negligence as a possible cause.

After all, when criminal negligence results in a worker's death, it is a crime, not an accident.

Victims and their families waited 20 years to see an Ontario company fined in a criminal court for killing workers; they cannot wait another 20 years to see the bosses who make the tragic decisions go to jail.

Ontario's justice system must send a clear message to CEOs and managers that they cannot simply chalk workers' lives up to the cost of doing business. Otherwise, more Ontario workers will continue to die each year in preventable workplace tragedies.



**Sid Ryan** is president of the Ontario Federation of Labour

## FIGHTING FOR INJURED WORKERS



Thunder Bay injured worker activist Steve Mantis describes Ontario's shameful abandonment of injured workers to a life of isolation and poverty.

THREE PHOTOS: LAURIE HARDWICK

## INJURED WORKERS MARK 100 YEARS OF MEREDITH

To mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Ontario's first Royal Commission on workers' compensation, the Ontario Federation of Labour co-sponsored an impressive conference with a variety of labour and injured worker activists. "No 'Half Measures'" was an international conference held in October in tribute to the memorable statement that Chief Justice Sir William Meredith penned into his historic report:

"...Half measures which mitigate but do not remove injustice are, in my judgment, to be avoided. It would be the gravest mistake if questions were to be determined not by a consideration of what is just to the working-man, but of what is the least he can be put off with..."

In honour of this centennial, a "People's Commission" was conducted by injured workers and activists to document the injustices that continue to mire injured workers after 100 years of dismal government inaction. Headed up by Dr. Robert Storey, Director of Labour Studies at McMaster University, the commission unveiled the results of more than 100 interviews with injured workers.

Stories about increased surveillance of injured workers, shrinking legal aid funding and a more adversarial Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) were among the many presented to the nearly 200 registrants of the Conference.

*“Half measures which mitigate but do not remove injustice are, in my judgment, to be avoided.”*

- Sir W.R. Meredith

The Conference opened with an historical tour that put participants in Meredith's footsteps for a guided tour of workers' compensation history. OFL President Sid Ryan delivered an introductory address and Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchinson acted as a panelist to present labour's response to the crisis facing injured workers in Ontario. The packed agenda featured domestic and international panels that provided a roadmap for justice and inspiration for action.



Marion Endicott from Injured Workers' Consultants Community Legal Clinic guides compensation tour.



Injured worker activist, Karl Crevar, calls for people to come before profit in compensation reform.

## INJURED WORKERS' RALLY OPENS COMPENSATION CONFERENCE



PHOTO: JOEL DUFF

Chanting “No more cap in hand!”, hundreds of injured workers, advocates and family members gathered at the Queen’s Park legislature to demand justice, fairness and dignity for injured workers, their families and their survivors.

On Monday, June 1, the Ontario Network of Injured Workers’ Groups (ONIWG) and the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) marked the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual Injured Workers’ Day with a rally at Queen’s Park, followed by a march to the Ministry of Labour. The rally was followed by a joint ONIWG/OFL compensation conference that celebrated 100 years of Workers Compensation.

Hundreds of injured workers, labour allies and family members assembled on the steps of the legislature to demand better compensation for those who survive workplace accidents.

“Our workers’ compensation system is in a state of crisis,” ONIWG President Eugene Lefrancois declared to the crowd. “Just like we’re seeing with social programs and public services struggling with cuts across the board, a regime of extreme austerity reigns at the WSIB and this has meant a full-fledged assault on people who have been injured or made ill at work.”

Emotional speeches from injured workers and advocates alike underscored the desperate plight of injured workers living on Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) benefits that have shrunk by 6.8 percent due to lack of protection against the climbing cost of living. They called on the Wynne government to take immediate action to alleviate the grinding poverty forced on working people who, through no fault of their own, have suffered serious workplace injuries and health impairments.

“Cuts to benefits and changes to policy have thrust injured workers and their families into poverty and hardship,” said OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison. “It is time for Ontario’s compensation system to serve the very people it is designed to protect.”

When the march reached the Ministry of Labour, Minister Kevin Flynn addressed the crowd to recommit his promise to fully index WSIB compensation for all injured workers.

- Measures to protect injured workers from employer intimidation or retribution in an effort to suppress injury or illness claims; and
- Increased maximum corporate penalties from \$100,000 to \$500,000 for convictions under the Workplace Safety & Insurance Act.

Minister Flynn also affirmed the effective lobby efforts of ONIWG and the OFL by announcing that his office had heeded the advice of injured workers and rejected an employer-backed appeal to remove fixed benefits for WSIB recipients receiving 100 percent Loss of Earnings, in order to effectively keep injured workers on probation for the rest of their working lives.

While Flynn’s announcements were welcomed by the crowd, the activists present were inspired to keep the pressure on the government, and the WSIB, to deliver just, fair and adequate benefits to every injured worker.

After the rally, 120 injured workers and advocates packed the Toronto Steelworker Hall for the two-day compensation conference. Participants developed a plan for an intensive lobby campaign targeting retroactive cost of living increases and the elimination of the controversial practices of experience rating and deeming.

After the WSIB shamefully denied funding to cover conference costs, generous monetary and in-kind donations of the OFL and affiliates enabled participation from across the province.



PHOTO: JOEL DUFF

**Labour Minister Kevin Flynn announced that cost of living increases are only “a few months away.”**

Making it clear that this change was only “a few months away,” he went on to announce other changes that had been put before the legislature to address concerns that had been raised by ONIWG and the OFL. Among them were:

- A change to the calculation of survivor benefits to prevent spousal benefits from being dramatically reduced (see article on page 17);



PHOTO: JOEL DUFF

## WSIB CEO LOSES \$400K BONUS

Under significant pressure from the OFL and the Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG), the Ontario Government stripped Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) President and Chief Executive Officer David Marshall of his \$400,000 contract bonus when he was reappointed this January. The Board decision to cut Marshall's contract from five to two years, freeze his pay and cancel his bonus came after a sustained campaign by ONIWG and the OFL to expose Marshall's five year track record of scandals and explicit attacks on injured workers.

In November, the OFL released a bombshell report uncovering millions of dollars in WSIB rebates being awarded each year to companies that had been found guilty of offences that resulted in workers being killed in on-the-job accidents. The report was the lead story in the Toronto Star

**The WSIB should scrap its experience rating system in all its forms.**

- **Joel Schwartz, Industrial Accident Victims' Group of Ontario**

and sent shock waves throughout the media that put the WSIB communications department into a tailspin.

"The WSIB is re-victimizing workers and their families by handing offending corporations millions of dollars in premium rebates," said Sid Ryan, OFL President at the media conference. "These CEOs shouldn't be receiving rebates – they should be going to jail."

The OFL report, *Rewarding Offenders: Report on How Ontario's Workplace Safety System Rewards Employers Despite Workplace Deaths and Injuries*, documented a shocking pattern of WSIB payments and served up an indictment of the WSIB's much maligned "experience rating" system. Authored by labour lawyer Joel Schwartz, the report demonstrated that over the three year period between 2011 and 2013, 135 employers who had been convicted of offences under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) were granted rebates on their premiums by the WSIB. Astonishingly, 78 of the 135 (almost 58 percent) received nearly \$15 million in rebates in the very same year they had committed their offences.

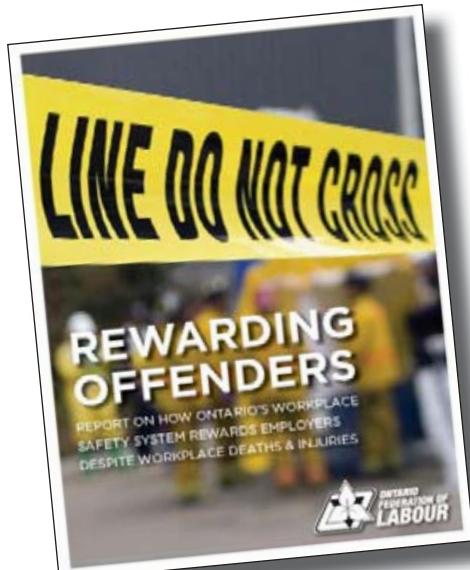
In one case, a 57-year old electrician employed by Goldcorp Canada Ltd. was killed in a

workplace accident in 2011. The company was fined \$350,000 after pleading guilty to not implementing proper safety procedures, but the next year it received a \$2.7 million WSIB premium rebate, an astounding amount seven times higher than the fine for killing the worker.

In full damage control mode, the WSIB quickly countered that a handful of the rebates had been reversed since the OFL accessed the Board's files through a Freedom of Information request, but it could offer no defence or explanation about the scores of other rebates that had been granted.

These scandalous rebates were made through the WSIB's controversial "experience rating" programs, which are intended to provide a financial incentive to employers for improving worker's health and safety. Instead, the program provides incentives for companies to suppress claims. The OFL used the evidence exposed in the report to bolster demands for the WSIB to "scrap its experience rating system in all its forms" and reinvest the resulting savings into workplace health and safety, as well as compensation for injured workers and their families.

Several weeks later, the OFL joined ONIWG for an annual Christmas protest at the Ministry of Labour to demand justice for injured workers. The OFL thrust the WSIB back into the spotlight with the release of new data demonstrating that under Marshall's watch at the WSIB, workplace fatalities had spiked by 36 percent and reached a five-year high.



# OFL & ONIWG RELEASE WHISTLEBLOWER REPORT EXPOSING WSIB INTERFERENCE IN MEDICAL CARE

On November 5, 2015, the OFL and the Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG) today released a damning report exposing interference on the part of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) in the medical care of injured workers.

"These doctors are blowing the whistle on the WSIB's punitive practice of 'deeming' injured workers eligible to resume work when the medical professionals who treat them have clearly

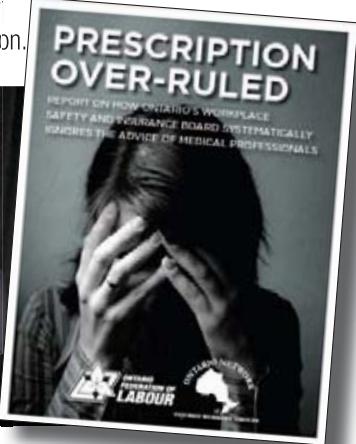
stated the opposite," said OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison. We hope this report will force a formal investigation into the WSIB's treatment of medical advice and lead to systemic change."

The report, called "Prescription Over-Ruled: Report on How Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board Systematically Ignores the Advice of Medical Professionals," was produced with the assistance of a group of doctors who raised the alarm about the WSIB's management

of medical care and medical evidence as it relates to WSIB benefits recipients.

"From what we see it seems that the WSIB has become a service whose prime objective is simply not to serve." Sudbury-based Rehabilitation Psychologist, Dr. Keith Klassen.

"The WSIB systemically re-victimizes the very injured workers it is mandated to compensate and protect," said Hutchison.



Dr. Ed Bassis, NDP MPP France Gélinas, Dr. Keith Klassen, NDP MPP Wayne Gates, OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison, Dr. Giorgio Ilacqua, NDP MPP Cindy Forster and NDP MPP Jennifer French.

## FOUR YEARS OF LOBBYING DELIVERS MAJOR VICTORY FOR VICTIMS OF OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

Four years ago, the widows of miners in Sudbury became the victims of targeted claw-backs of WSIB survivor benefits. Since then, the Steelworkers and Firefighters have been backed by the OFL and NDP in pushing the government to close a loophole that denies loss of earnings and survivor benefits to the victims of occupational disease and their families. A four-year campaign for justice that spanned four Labour Ministers finally delivered a major victory for victims when the Ontario government included provisions to close this loophole in their omnibus legislation, Bill 109, *Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act*, 2015.

After United Steelworkers Local 6500 members raised concerns about this legal technicality to claw-back WSIB benefits from widows, the OFL weighed in by lobbying the Premier directly. Since then, four Labour Ministers have acknowledged the problem, but no action was taken until May 7, 2015, when Oshawa MPP Jennifer

French tabled Bill 98, her first Private Member's Bill, the *Protecting Victims of Occupational Disease Act*.

who die every year from exposure to harmful chemicals at work.

French said the loophole literally added insult to injury. "It is appalling that hundreds of families lose a loved one to occupational diseases every year, and this loophole has allowed these families to become victims once again," she said. "Widows were losing their pensions while they were still grieving."

French's Bill 98 will be debated in the fall. She is hoping that the legislature will pass her bill in its entirety since the government has so far ignored the need to reinstate loss of earnings ben-

efits for workers who are diagnosed with occupational diseases after retirement.

"The situation is unconscionable and that's why the NDP and the labour movement have worked so hard to put a stop to it. I'm glad that my Private Member's Bill has been the kick in the pants the government needed to finally take action."



NDP MPP Jennifer French, with J.P. Mrochek (USW) and Paul Atkinson (Firefighters), announces her Private Member's Bill.

Three short weeks later, the government tabled legislation that would incorporate the portion of French's Bill that pertains to survivor payments.

For survivors it can mean the difference between receiving \$2,000 and \$700 a month. While miners and firefighters are among the most frequent victims, the issue could affect surviving spouses of any of the hundreds of workers

# TORIES ATTACK INJURED WORKERS' SUPPORT

Ontario Conservative Labour Critic Randy Hillier rose in the House on March 25, 2015, to open up a new attack on injured workers across the province. In his inflammatory remarks during the morning Question Period, Hillier called on the government to scrap funding for the OFL's Occupational Disability Response Team (ODRT), a program he characterized as nothing more than "slush fund" for labour.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The ODRT is a model of injured worker advocacy that has a proud 25-year history. Since its inception in 1990, the OFL WCB Training Project, now ODRT, receives \$800,000 annually from the Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB). It provides province-wide training for workers and employers on their rights and obligations under the compensation system, with advanced levels of training on how to navigate the complicated WSIB claims and appeals process. Over two and a half decades, the ODRT has trained over 20,000 injured worker advocates.

This program, which Hillier says offers "zero value for money," is responsible for easing adversarial relations between injured workers, employers and the WSIB by helping to find early resolu-

tions to claims and assisting injured workers in returning to work.

ODRT trained advocates help the Board to gather the evidence required to expedite the claims adjudication process, which in turn reduces the cost and volume of appeals. While the financial savings to the province's compensation system are significant, the ODRT's impact on the lives of injured workers and their families is beyond measure.

What makes Hillier's attack on the ODRT so disgraceful is the fraudulence of his claims. In his address before the Legislature, Hillier alleged that: "This grant to the OFL has been audited and explicitly recommended by KPMG to be shut down as it has absolutely no value for money for the taxpayers of Ontario."

However, the WSIB is funded by employers, not taxpayers, and the actual KPMG report contained only one reference to the OFL or the ODRT, which stated: "As a whole, projects such as the OFL-ODRT improve the well-being of injured workers, and their working conditions, by being a leading provider of workplace insurance and disability prevention training and advisory services."

Hillier went on to claim that the program had

"zero oversight and no transparency." In reality, the ODRT is audited annually, provides quarterly reports to the WSIB, and is required each year to provide a funding proposal to the WSIB.

He even went so far as to claim that WSIB funds were used to pay for staff retreats at a fancy Muskoka resort when, in fact, they subsidized an intensive training course for students at a hotel that is rated with just 2.5 stars out of five.

The outlandish allegations that Hillier has made about the ODRT were so wildly divorced from reality that they laid bare his willingness to use injured workers as political cannon fodder for his partisan agenda.

"Hillier's flailing against the ODRT is simply a lingering vendetta against the OFL for mounting the campaign that demolished the Progressive Conservative ambitions in the Ontario election and chased Tim Hudak into political oblivion," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "This newest Tory attack on injured workers is a helpful reminder of the anti-worker agenda Hillier's party had in store for Ontario."

## What Randy Hillier says:

**"This grant to the OFL has been audited and explicitly recommended by KPMG to be shut down as it has absolutely no value for money for the taxpayers of Ontario."**

## Reality:

**The KPMG report actually says: "As a whole, projects such as the OFL-ODRT improve the well-being of injured workers, and their working conditions, by being a leading provider of workplace insurance and disability prevention training and advisory services."**

The report makes no other reference to the OFL or the ODRT.

## CHAMPIONING EQUITY & HUMAN RIGHTS



# PROTESTS PROVE THE MORE YOU KNOW C-51, THE MORE YOU REJECT IT

In what many have criticized as a cynical and desperate election ploy, the Harper government is forcing Canadians to choose between safety and privacy.

The trouble is that it is a false choice. Canadians must protect both.

The now notorious Bill C-51 – Canada's new *Anti-Terrorism Act* – was introduced at the end of January 2015 and set out to extend Canada's anti-terror laws in such a sweeping fashion that it could affect the democratic rights of every Canadian. This one bill would amend the *Security of Canada Information Sharing Act*, *Secure Air Travel Act*, *Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act*, *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* and the *Criminal Code* all in one fell swoop. The mega-bill grants sweeping new powers to Canada's spy agency, allows Canadians to be arrested on mere suspicion of future criminal activity, allows the Minister of Public Safety to add Canadians to a "no-fly list" with illusory rights of judicial review, creates a new speech-related criminal offence of "promoting" or "advocating" terrorism and, perhaps most alarmingly, gives Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) the unprecedented new powers to intervene in peaceful advocacy, protest and dissent that may be deemed "unlawful."

The timing of the bill is no coincidence. With an October 19, 2015 deadline for a federal election looming overhead, the Harper Conservatives

are feeling particularly vulnerable over plummeting oil prices, a lagging Canadian dollar and a limping economy. And why wouldn't they? After all, they had banked our economic future on tapping the tar sands to cement Canada as a "global energy superpower" for decades to come. So, with his reputation as a sound economic manager in tatters, Harper has made a desperate move to change the political channel.

**We will not allow Stephen Harper to demonize the Muslim community**

**We will not allow an act of racism to divide our nation**

**- OFL President Sid Ryan**

That's where Bill C-51 comes in. The murder of two Canadian soldiers and assault on the Parliament buildings in October 2014, as well as the attack on the Charlie Hebdo office in Paris, are often cited by members of the government as justification for more police powers, but when considered against Harper's campaign against the niqab and religious Muslim face coverings, it is apparent that his agenda is much more cynical. Under the guise of national security, Bill C-51 seeks to exploit Canadian fears over threats of

terrorism on home soil and taps into deep-seated racism in the hope that voters will forget about the Harper government's shortcomings on the economy.

"If we allow ourselves to be ruled based on fear and hatred, we will undermine the values that are the cornerstone of our democracy," said OFL President Sid Ryan told the crowd gathered at Toronto's Nathan Phillips Square. "We will not allow Stephen Harper to demonize the Muslim community and transform the rest of us into a nation of suspects and self-censors. We will not allow an act of racism to divide our nation."

While early polling suggested that the public supported new anti-terror legislation, details of the bill have given all but the most fervent Conservatives pause for thought. Widespread public protest against the bill appears to be shifting the ground underneath Harper's feet. Nearly 100,000 protested in 70 cities across the country on March 14 and the sustained public attention to the bill has proven that the more people know about the bill, the more they disagree with it. Recent polling shows that among citizens aware of the controversial anti-terrorism bill, 50 percent now disapprove of it, while just 38 percent approve. This lesson is fuelling a growing movement to educate more of the population about the impact of the bill ... and it spells disaster for Harper's re-election campaign.

## 2<sup>ND</sup> AFRICAN CANADIAN SUMMIT TACKLES ISSUE OF CARDING AND LAUNCHES #BlackVotesMatterCDN

The 2<sup>nd</sup> African Canadian Summit turned into a day of action-oriented dialogue between government leaders, key public institutions and community stakeholders.

The OFL teamed up with the African Canadian Legal Clinic (ACLC), Midaynta Community Services, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), and the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to address the root causes of youth violence and the ongoing disparities affecting Black communities with the goal of developing a concrete plan of action.

The event was the first time the new Chief of Police of the Toronto Police Service, Mark Saunders, addressed the Black community in his capacity as Chief and the controversial practice of carding quickly dominated the discussion. The practice, which was official police policy until it was put on hold in January of this year, involves stopping people on the street to collect information about them, even when they are not suspected of committing a crime. As the city's first Black Chief of Police, the participants and media in attendance were eager for answers about the fate of the practice. However, while Saunders admitted there is "room for improvement," he made it clear that terminating the program is not in the cards.

Toronto Mayor John Tory addressed the Summit after the Chief and, to the frustration of those in attendance, reiterated the Chief's support for carding – a position that the Mayor reversed just 5 weeks later.

The rich discussion and debate continued throughout the day with a variety of other speakers, including Minister of Children and Youth Services Tracy MacCharles, NDP MPP for Bramalee-Gore-Malton Jagmeet Singh, Hamilton first Black City Councillor Matthew Green and other politicians and representatives of key public institutions and the business community. OFL President Sid Ryan and CLC President Hassan Yussuff added a labour perspective to the discussions.

An immediate action flowing from the Summit was the creation of #BlackVotesMatterCDN campaign to mobilize the Black community as a significant electoral force in the upcoming federal election.

A full report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> African Canadian Summit proceedings and recommendations for future action will be posted on the OFL website in the near future.



PHOTOS: JOEL DUFF

Margaret Parsons, Executive Director of the African Canadian Legal Clinic gave voice to community anger of the targeted use of carding against Black youth in Toronto.



NDP MPP Jagmeet Singh shared his personal experiences with carding in the city of Toronto and spoke about the need to respect the rights of young people of colour.



City of Toronto Police Chief Mark Saunders defended the controversial practice of carding to an audience that felt the practice was evidence of systemic racism and discrimination.

## AJAX POLICE SHOOTING CLAIMS ANOTHER LIFE

Only months after the tragic shooting of Toronto teen Sammy Yatim ricocheted across headlines, Ajax resident Michael MacIsaac was fatally shot on December 2, 2013. The tragedy unfolded on a quiet, residential street in the sleepy bedroom community when MacIsaac, suffering from delirium following an epileptic seizure triggered by a fever, ran out of his house naked and unarmed.

The OFL was approached by the victim's family to provide media support and assistance in breaking their month-long silence following MacIsaac's death and to organize a candlelight vigil to call for justice. OFL President Sid Ryan joined the MacIsaac family in calling for sweeping changes to police protocols.

"How many times will we have to see the same tragedy unfold before there is a complete overhaul of the police response to crisis incidents?" asked OFL President Sid Ryan. "The police mandate is to protect and serve, and that protection



must be extended to everyone, including those in emotional crisis."

The OFL helped to connect the MacIsaac family with the families of other victims of police shootings, as well as community allies and legal support. The vigil drew hundreds and helped to

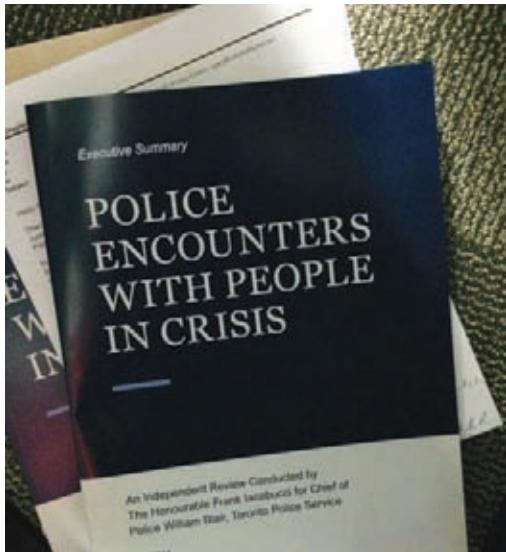
bring attention to the tragedy and strengthen the call for justice.

"I wish I could have been there on December second to say 'Can't you see my son is in distress? Please don't hurt him anymore.' But just like on the playground when he was eight, Michael was bullied one last time," said Yvonne MacIsaac, Michael's mother, to the sombre gathering on the street where Michael was shot.

The OFL has been outspoken on the need for the province to take action to prevent further unnecessary deaths.

"It is time for Ontario's Attorney General to impose mandatory guidelines for police training and use of de-escalation tactics so that this tragedy is never repeated," said Ryan. "Until that happens, any community could be the next Ajax and any family could experience the MacIsaac's grief. It is a matter of when, not if."

## OFL AND URBAN ALLIANCE ON RACE RELATIONS SEEK JUSTICE FOR SAMMY YATIM



OFL and Urban Alliance on Race Relations seek Justice for Sammy Yatim

It has been a year since troubled teenager Sammy Yatim was senselessly gunned down by a member of the Toronto Police Service. The OFL came together with other victims' families and human rights groups to demand change,

and led demonstrations in the streets calling for justice.

In July former Supreme Court Justice Frank Iacobucci released his review on how the police service can improve its response to, what he called, "people in crisis." Our Executive Vice-President, Irwin Nanda, joined with Gary

Pieters of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations to encourage the police to quickly adopt the report's many positive recommendations, and called on the Ontario government to make those improvements apply province-wide.

We received a tremendous amount of media attention, including a report on CBC TV.

# OFL AND FEDERATION PRESIDENTS DEMAND ACTION ON MISSING AND MURDERED ABORIGINAL WOMEN

## SID RYAN JOINS COUNTERPARTS AT COUNCIL OF THE FEDERATION MEETING IN CHARLOTTETOWN

Canadians are shocked by the alarming death of Tina Fontaine in Winnipeg, another First Nations girl whose name has been added to the growing list of murdered and missing Aboriginal women. Tina Fontaine's body was recovered from the Red River on August 17, after the teen had run away from her home on the Sagkeeng First Nation and had been reported missing.

OFL President Sid Ryan joined other labour federation presidents in a statement demanding government action and an inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

"What is happening in this country to First Nations women and girls is intolerable," said Sid Ryan. "The federal government needs to take action."

The RCMP revealed in May that 1,181 Aboriginal women had either been killed or reported missing between 1980 and 2012. In Manitoba the case is especially alarming, where half of the province's female murder victims over the same time period were Aboriginal, according to the RCMP.

In a statement released in Prince Edward Island on August 27, the federation presidents said, "This is a national emergency and we

need action from the federal and provincial governments, right away."

The provincial and territorial labour federation presidents were meeting in Charlottetown alongside the Council of the Federation meeting of premiers.

Sid Ryan also met with Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne to raise the issue of the inquiry, as well as the need to press the federal government for the expansion of the Canada Pension Plan, a renewed Health Accord, the end of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and improved access to Employment Insurance benefits for workers.

## OFL ABORIGINAL GATHERING ATTRACTS 100 INUIT, MÉTIS, FIRST NATIONS & ALLIES



The OFL and its affiliates have a long history of activism and lobbying with the Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit peoples. The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) held its 3rd Aboriginal Educational Gathering from November 28 to 30, 2014. The Gathering reached out to labour and community activists from the First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, as well as supporters.

Nearly 100 delegates from as far away as Winnipeg, Manitoba met to develop a collective plan for action-oriented change, while finding peace and solace in traditional medicines and spiritual teachings.

Participants attended facilitated sessions on "Self Identification," "Traditional Medicines" and "Political Action." All of the OFL Officers attended the event and President Sid Ryan welcomed delegates with remarks addressing the OFL's action and commitment to working alongside the Aboriginal community to advocate on issues like the Stolen Sisters, Line 9, boiled water alerts and ongoing land and resource disputes.

A special thanks to the OFL's placement student from York University, Angela Perna, for creating the "Self-Identification" teaching session and, above all, the OFL Aboriginal Circle for coordinating such an amazingly successful event.

Featured here: OFL Vice-President Representing Aboriginal Peoples Joanne Webb and Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda.

# OFL EQUITY COMMITTEES COME TOGETHER TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

The OFL hosted an Equity Committee Educational in Toronto from February 28 to March 1. The successful event drew over 50 participants from the OFL's various equity-seeking constituencies, including: Aboriginal Persons, Human Rights, LGBTQ, Persons with Disabilities, Workers of Colour, Young Workers and a number of allies. The format of the Educational allowed each committee to meet separately to discuss issues and initiatives but it also brought all of the committees together to share common struggles and strategies.

OFL President Sid Ryan opened the meeting by calling on all of the equity committees to play an active role in shaping the OFL plan of action to defeat the federal Conservatives and their anti-equality, anti-worker, anti-union agenda.

Jason Merai, the newly appointed Executive Director of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR) spoke to participants on the long standing alliance between the OFL and the UARR in challenging racism in all its forms.

"Workers from equity seeking groups are demanding broader participation and inclusion not just within society, but within our unions too," said OFL Vice-President Irwin Nanda. "We are discovering the overlap between our experiences and we are finding ways to support each other's communities in breaking down the systemic obstacles that are the enemy of progress."

Workshops tackling complicated issues related to privilege, youth engagement and the intersectionality of equity issues propelled a discussion into concrete strategies for challenging oppression, hidden prejudice and institutional barriers.

"The labour movement must take inspiration from the diverse youth movements that are challenging injustice across the country. In taking up these causes, we will demonstrate the importance of labour to the next generation," said OFL Young Worker Vice-President Denise Martins. "It is no wonder that young workers are often at the forefront of the struggle for a just economy and good jobs for all, after all, they have the most to lose and the most to gain in Ontario's economic future."

*We are finding ways to support each other's communities in breaking down the systemic obstacles that are the enemy of progress.*





As the city of Toronto gears up to play host to WorldPride 2014, the Canadian labour movement looks forward to an unprecedented platform to demonstrate its solidarity with the LGBTQ community and its commitment to fighting for equity and human rights for everyone.

A 10-day festival, set to run from June 20 to 29, WorldPride has the potential to be the largest event Toronto has ever hosted. So far the program calls for an opening ceremony with a parade of nations and an international human

rights conference. There will also be an AIDS candlelight vigil along with three parades including a Trans March, a Dyke March and Pride Parade.

Taking place June 25 to 27, 2014 in the heart of downtown Toronto, a WorldPride Human Rights Conference 2014 (WPHRC14) will be an important feature of the WorldPride celebrations. It will be a gathering of activists, artists, educators, journalists, policymakers, students and many allies from around the world. The

conference provides a unique opportunity for a global dialogue about LGBTQ human rights, ranging from performances to presentations, politics to policies and activists to academics.

Labour activists will be proudly engaged in every aspect of WorldPride celebrations.

For information on WorldPride Toronto, visit: [www.worldpridetoronto.com](http://www.worldpridetoronto.com) and for details on the WorldPride Human Rights Conference, visit: <http://thereadingsalon.ca/wphrc14>

## FOURTH ANNUAL MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup> PROJECT OFL POSTERS & PINS CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2014

For over 100 years, March 8 has been recognized around the world as International Women's Day (IWD) and has been marked as a day to celebrate women, reaffirm women's rights and strive for full equality. As part of its celebration of IWD, the OFL Women's Committee has produced a beautiful poster and commemorative pin that can be ordered by unions and community groups.

The OFL's 2014 March 8<sup>th</sup> Project carries an empowering theme that simultaneously symbolizes the strength of women's collective past and their hopes and aspirations for the future.

Both the poster and pin were designed by acclaimed artist Giovannina Colalillo and celebrate sisters in our movement and the sisterhood and solidarity we share in moving forward towards a just and equitable society - "RISING."

"In every workplace and in every community, women are bonding together to put equity on the agenda and to ensure that the ad-

vances of women elevate every one of our sisters," said Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison. "We aren't going backwards! This poster is bold and unequivocal. There is no doubt that women workers will be proudly rising for years to come."

Unions or community groups that ordered more than 500 pins before the February 3 deadline will have their logo added to this year's poster. Those who missed the deadline can still order posters and pins, by submitting the form on the OFL website: [www.ofl.ca/index.php/iwd2014/](http://www.ofl.ca/index.php/iwd2014/).

The pins are sold at cost, plus a \$0.25 contribution that will be donated to a provincial women's organization.

Stay tuned for more information on International Women's Day events being organized in cities and towns across Ontario.





The OFL's #Out4Equality Conference drew over 80 LGBTQ activists, union leaders and allies from November 20 to 22 in Toronto. They came together at the Ryerson University Student Centre to empower, support and mobilize LGBTQ members in our workplaces and communities across Ontario.

The conference began with participants joining hundreds of community members for the an-

nual Trans Day of Remembrance Vigil at the 519 Church Street Community Centre in Toronto. This annual event marked and commemorated trans members of our communities who have been murdered for being who they are. This event served as a memorial, a protest and an opportunity for reflection.

OFL President Sid Ryan opened the #Out4Equality Conference, outlining the leadership

role unions have played in advancing equality rights. Brother Ryan's remarks were followed by an interactive panel discussion with union leaders about the impact that austerity cuts have on equality.

A powerful keynote address was delivered by Sister Junic Wambia, a lesbian from Uganda, who related her experiences in the struggle to survive as an LGBTQ person in her country. She shared stories of secret meetings, emergency hotlines, hidden safe houses, buddy systems for travel, a constant fear of arrest, public stonings, police beatings, pseudonyms, torture by inmates, and worse. She urged us to continue to write letters, to pressure governments to push for change, and if possible, to support organizations including Sexual Minorities Uganda and the Rainbow Railroad.

OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda wrapped up the conference with the commitment to bring the conference recommendations forward as a plan for action.

The OFL's Solidarity and Pride Committee would like to extend a thanks to Brother Pablo Godoy, OFL VP Workers of Colour; UFCW for his truly amazing spoken word summary.

## FIFTH ANNUAL MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup> PROJECT OFL POSTERS & PINS TO CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2015

For over 100 years, March 8 has been recognized around the world as International Women's Day (IWD) and has been marked as a day to celebrate women, reaffirm women's rights and strive for full equality. As part of its celebration of IWD, the OFL has produced a beautiful poster and pewter pin that can be ordered by unions and community groups.

The OFL's 2015 March 8<sup>th</sup> Project materials were designed by acclaimed artist Giovannina Colalillo and carry an empowering theme that celebrates sisterhood and solidarity within the labour movement – **SISTERS Sharing Hope Vision Solidarity**.

"In every workplace and in every community, women are bonding together to put equity on the agenda and to lift our sisters within our unions and in our communities," said Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison. "We aren't going backwards! This poster is bold and unequivocal. There is no doubt that women workers will be proudly showing sisterhood solidarity for years to come."

Unions or community groups that ordered more than 500 pins before the February 10 deadline will have their logo added to this year's poster. Those who missed the deadline can still order posters and pins, by submitting the form on the OFL website: [www.ofl.ca/index.php/iwd2015](http://www.ofl.ca/index.php/iwd2015)

The pins are sold at cost, plus a \$0.25 contribution that will be donated to the Equal Pay Coalition.

Stay tuned for more information on International Women's Day events being organized in cities and towns across Ontario.



# UNION SISTERS TAKE ON AUSTERITY

## REPORT-BACK FROM THE OFL'S 2<sup>ND</sup> WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

In May, the OFL brought together over 170 women leaders from the labour movement and community organizations for the second OFL Women's Leadership Summit. Women activists shared skills, strategies and experiences in working together to challenge inequality.

The Summit focused on the need to build stronger unions, ensure diversity within the leadership and strengthening partnerships with community allies in the struggle for a more just and equitable society. Drawn from every sector of the workforce, sisters working in government, manufacturing, building trades, administration, services, health care and education discussed the shifting demographics of the labour movement and its impact on labour leadership. Participants identified the key chal-

lenges faced by women within their unions and research showing that the greatest potential for the future growth in the labour movement lies within workplaces dominated by women – and women from equity-seeking groups in particular.

With a federal election just six months away, Summit participants devoted their attention to developing strategies for organizing to defeat the Harper Conservative government.

"Union sisters know that, as women, trade unionists and community activists, they are at a critical crossroads for the future of Canada," said OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison. "We must and we will Stop Harper!"

The Summit provided an important forum for

women activists to discuss the gendered impact of the austerity agenda and share strategies for challenging the cuts to jobs and services that are so vital to every community. In doing so, participants connected women's struggles with those of other marginalized groups and identified key priorities for defending equity against austerity.

While focused on the upcoming election, the sisters did not lose sight of the austerity agenda being touted by the Ontario Liberals, municipal governments and employers across this province.

Stay tuned to the OFL website for a full report of recommendations for action from the OFL 2<sup>nd</sup> Women's Summit.

***Union sisters know that, as women, trade unionists and community activists, they are at a critical crossroads for the future of Canada. We must and we will Stop Harper!***



PHOTO: UNIFOR FAMILY EDUCATION CENTRE



## OFL APPOINTED TO ROUNDTABLE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

After years of lobbying from labour and community groups, the Ontario government responded to the demand for concrete steps to end sexual violence and harassment by launching a comprehensive plan of action. Unveiled on March 7, "It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment," showcased a suite of recommendations that proposes legislative change, public awareness, new tools and special training to address sexual violence and harassment in the workplace, on campus, in housing and in the community.

The OFL welcomed the announcement but argued that the package would have to be properly funded and representative of the experiences of

women, LGBTQ community members and experts in workers' rights.

"We are pleased to see the government finally recognizing that we cannot approach significant societal issues like sexual violence and harassment in a piecemeal way," said OFL President Sid Ryan, "but any plan of this scope and magnitude cannot accomplish its goals unless women workers and labour experts on occupational health and safety are included amongst the stakeholders represented."

The government responded later in the month by convening a permanent new Roundtable on Violence Against Women, with representation from 22 key community organizations and ser-

vice agencies with experience and expertise in preventing and responding to sexual violence and harassment. Among those represented on this new body is the OFL, and OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison attended the inaugural meeting on behalf of the labour movement.

"For far too long, women and other vulnerable workers have been silenced and ignored by a system that perpetuates victimization and re-victimization at every level," said Sister Hutchison. "In the workplace, women and LGBTQ people face significant and differential barriers to safety, support, reporting, training, enforcement, and even benefits through the workers' compensation system."

## CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2015

All three OFL officers joined sisters across Canada in celebrating March 8 as International Women's Day (IWD) with a renewed call for gender justice, equity and an end to gender-based violence. This year's events were also held in solidarity with the World March of Women.



OFL Officer Irwin Nanda and union brothers serve IWD breakfast in Peel. OFL Officer Nancy Hutchison leads Toronto IWD rally with Executive Board Members Sharon DeSousa (PSAC), Katha Fortier (Unifor), Jenny Ahn (Unifor) and Yolanda McClean (CUPE). Toronto NDP MPs and candidates show their sisterhood & solidarity.



# LABOUR RESPONDS TO THE SYRIAN REFUGEE CRISIS

It was with horror and great disbelief as the world witnessed the image of the lifeless body of 3-year-old Alyn Kurdi, lying face down on a beach in Turkey. Perhaps the biggest tragedy is that it took the image of young Alyn to thrust the Syrian refugee crisis into the hearts and minds of all Canadians, and indeed the global conscience. After all, this crisis has been in full swing since 2011 and has claimed the lives of tens of thousands.

Labour is poised to resume its role as leaders in the humanitarian response. During the Indochinese refugee crisis in the late 1970's, it was citizen activists, religious groups, and trade unions mobilized their communities to sponsor refugees en masse. Similarly, during the late 70's early 80's, many trade union locals stepped up to sponsor thousands of Vietnamese refugees.

Collective action by grassroots activists pressured the governments of the day to ramp up



Sid Ryan delivered a keynote address for the Hope 4 Syria fundraiser in Brampton on Sept. 18, featured here with Shaila Kibria-Carter and other event organizers.

their response, to follow the lead of concerned citizenry, to do what all good families do – care for our less fortunate brothers and sisters.

The OFL is partnering with various community groups, including Lifeline Syria, to encourage a movement that replicates the actions of trade union locals and concerned citizens 35 years ago.

On Wednesday, September 9, OFL President Sid Ryan met with Naomi Albion of Lifeline Syria, to understand how organized labour can answer the call to action, and how our movement can once again show leadership by providing

support for those in dire need. The OFL will be encouraging affiliates to fundraise to become sponsors for refugee families.

"We had an extremely productive meeting," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "We discussed multiple collective action approaches that are required to bring comfort to displaced Syrian peoples. The OFL will apply political pressure on all levels of government to take action regarding this continuing crisis, and we are calling on the labour movement to rise to this challenge by sponsoring the settlement of Syrian refugees in Ontario, and indeed across our country."

FROM SUMMER 2015, VOLUME 5, ISSUE 3

CHAMPIONING EQUITY & HUMAN RIGHTS

## EQUAL PAY DAY GETS ACTION!

As a testament to the incredible work of the OFL and the Equal Pay Coalition, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne recognized April 20, 2015, as "Equal Pay Day" by announcing the creation of a new Steering Committee to develop a "Gender Wage Gap Strategy" for the province of Ontario.

The four-person committee will consult with diverse groups across the province this

year to examine the complex causes underlying the province's persistent gender wage gap. The committee will report back to government with recommendations in early 2016.

While the OFL applauded this commitment to examining wage inequality, it also called on the government to look for multi-faceted solutions.

"Women are over-represented in precarious jobs in every sector, so we need more than just

equal pay legislation to level the playing field," said OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchinson.

"Raising the minimum wage, improving employment standards and making it easier to join and keep a union are all important steps towards equal pay for women."

Learn more at: [www.equalpaycoalition.org](http://www.equalpaycoalition.org)



PHOTO: UFCW LOCAL 1000A

Lobour activists braved the rain at one of many actions marking April 20, 2015, as Equal Pay Day.



## MASS RALLY IN TORONTO ON JULY 5 TO DEMAND 'JOBS, JUSTICE AND THE CLIMATE'

In what some are calling an unprecedented alliance, labour unions joined forces with environmental activists and Indigenous communities across Canada on May 21, 2015, to announce plans for the July 5 "March for Jobs, Justice and the Climate."

The table was set by internationally acclaimed author and activist, Naomi Klein, whose award-winning book "This Changes Everything" issued a call to action for a new kind of climate movement – one that puts justice at the centre.

"The really inconvenient truth is that global warming is not about carbon—it's about capitalism," said Klein. "The convenient truth is that we can seize this existential crisis to transform our failed economic system and build something radically better."

The appetite for collective action was apparent in the broad and diverse coalition that emerged out of discussions on how to build a movement around a new set of values. The OFL joined key affiliates, environmental groups, civil society organizations and Indigenous activists to plan for a mass rally and march on July 5.



The march will call for a justice-based transition to a clean-energy economy in Canada, and is expected to attract thousands of people in Toronto on the eve of the Climate Summit of the Americas and Pan American Economic Summit. A justice-based transition ensures that those most impacted by the climate crisis – Indigenous, racialized, poor and working people – are the first to benefit from this new economy.

At a media kick-off event in the heart of To-

ronto's financial district, Naomi Klein forecasted that "the mobilization will demonstrate massive and growing public support for a new economy that creates thousands of climate-friendly jobs, tackles inequality, honours Indigenous rights and stops runaway climate change."

She was joined by Jerry Dias, president of Unifor, a union that represents 300,000 private sector workers, including thousands of energy workers in Alberta.

"We need a commitment to climate and it doesn't have to come at the expense of jobs. We know we can have both," Dias told reporters. "We call on the Canadian government to go to the Paris climate negotiations with credible climate goals to prevent more than a two degree celsius warming of the world. I call on corporate Canada to make employment-centered investments in sustainable energy and innovation to meet Canada's climate goals."

Get active and join the movement at [www.JobsJusticeClimate.ca](http://www.JobsJusticeClimate.ca)

## IN MEMORIAM

# JULIE DIANE DAVIS (1946-2014)



## *In Memoriam*

*As we come marching,  
marching, we bring the  
greater days.*

*The rising of the women  
means the rising of the  
race.*

*No more the drudge  
and idler—ten that toil  
where one reposes,  
But a sharing of life's  
glories:*

*Bread and Roses!  
Bread and Roses!*

On November 14, 2014, workers across Ontario were saddened to learn of the passing of our adored labour leader and trailblazer for women's rights, Sister Julie Davis. She was 68 years old.

Born in Brantford, Ontario, Julie Davis' commitment to improve the lives of working people began in the 1970s as a steward for OPEIU. Later, she steadfastly served the members of the Canadian Union of Public Employees from 1974-1986, as a Staff Representative, Health Care Sector Coordinator and finally as the Managing Director Regional Services and Organizing.

It is impossible to name all of Julie's many accomplishments. During the 1980s when the women's movement was making great gains and challenging gender discrimination and inequality, Julie was at the forefront of the struggle.

She inspired a generation of women labour activists when she broke through the barriers of the traditionally male-dominated labour movement in 1986 to become the first woman officer elected to the Ontario Federation of Labour. She

served as the OFL's Executive Vice-President from 1986 to 1988 and Secretary-Treasurer from 1988 to 1995.

"I look back on my years working with Julie at CUPE with fondness and admiration for her dedication, compassion and integrity," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "Today, as the President of the Ontario Federation of Labour, I see her influence everywhere, especially the strong commitment to diversity and representation of equity-seeking groups in our campaigns, and around the table of our own Executive Board."

Her commitment to social justice extended into politics, where she became active in the Ontario New Democratic Party. She was elected President of the Ontario NDP, and chaired the NDP's historic 1990 election campaign that swept the party to power under Leader Bob Rae. Afterward, Julie explained their victory in simple terms: "people were fed up and the NDP provided the alternative."

Julie's ties to labour, human rights, and the NDP remained strong throughout her life. She joined the board of Ed Broadbent's International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic De-

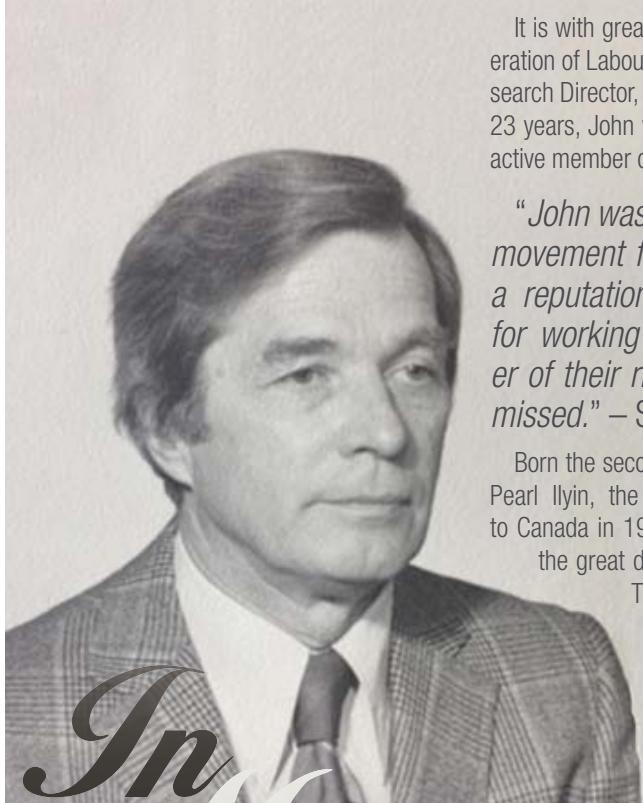
velopment, and served as the labour representative on the NDP's federal council during Jack Layton's leadership.

"Julie was adamant that social justice could be achieved only when trade unionists joined forces with other advocates and she was instrumental in organizing and sustaining countless coalitions. She also believed and supported grass-roots mobilization and encouraged many activists in and out of the labour movement in their work," wrote CUPE's Fred Hahn and Candace Rennick in tribute to her legacy.

In 1988, Julie was awarded with the YWCA's Women of Distinction Award and in 1995 she received an Honorary Fellowship (Politics and Public Administration) from Ryerson Polytechnic University.

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Labour, our officers and 54 unions representing 1 million workers in Ontario, the OFL extended heartfelt condolences to Julie's family, and all of the Sisters and Brothers in our movement whose lives she touched.

# JOHN ELEEN (1922-2015)



## In Memoriam GLORIA DAVID

Ontario's labour movement lost a proud trade unionist and an anti-racist activist last month with the passing of Gloria David. Hailing from OPSEU Local 532, Gloria invested decades of energy into building a strong local, both as Secretary and as President. She brought forward her passion and talents as a member of the OPSEU Provincial Women's Committee, executive member of the OPSEU Greater Toronto Area Council, and as a delegate to the Toronto and York Region Labour Council.

*"Gloria always rose above and beyond the call of duty. She was an invaluable and beloved working class fighter."* – OPSEU Local 532 President Julius Arscott

It is with great sadness that the Ontario Federation of Labour mourns the loss of former Research Director, John Eleen. Serving the OFL for 23 years, John was a proud trade unionist and active member of the NDP.

*"John was a stalwart of the labour movement for decades and earned a reputation as a fierce advocate for working people and a defender of their rights. He will be greatly missed."* – Sid Ryan, OFL President

Born the second child of the late William and Pearl Ilyin, the pioneering family immigrated to Canada in 1929 when John was seven and the great depression was still in progress.

They farmed in Glenella and later in Arden, MB. John joined the RCAF in 1941 and became an accomplished leading flight mechanic. After a varied career that included union orga-

nizer for the UE and senior research assistant in cancer research, he was recruited as Research Director for the Ontario Federation of Labour, a position he held for 23 years until retirement.

John was totally committed to labour activism. He was a fierce advocate for, and defender of, workers' rights – a passion that lasted a lifetime. He worked tirelessly for the NDP in every election until his health deteriorated. He was a prolific reader and writer whose archives include two books ("Poverty Amidst Plenty" and "Plant Shutdown"); many learned briefs to the government on topics such as pension reform, mandatory retirement, injunctions; op-ed articles in the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail; and an abundance of diverse articles in the labour, socialist and Ukrainian heritage print media. He continued to publish articles well into his 80s.

John died peacefully at home, in the arms of his loving wife Anne Thomson, just days after his 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday.



Always involved in the Filipino community, Gloria found a perfect balance between her union activism and community involvement in the Asian Canadian Labour Alliance (ACLA).

Gloria was active in her union local right up to her last days on the job. After fighting cancer for several months, Gloria succumbed to her illness on March 27, 2015.

