



The only crime equal to willful inhumanity is the crime of indifference, sadness and forgetfulness.

*Dennis Edney
Defence Lawyer for Omar Khadr*



Over the past two years, the OFL has proven that the strength of the labour movement doesn't come simply from unionized members, but from the relationships unions form with community allies and the diversity reflected in our movement. Wednesday's OFL video highlights this work.

The OFL has put community building and equity at the heart of organizing. Watch Part 3 of the OFL Convention Video to see features on the "Ontario Common Front" and "Fighting for Equity."

The full convention video clocked in at 20 minutes and provided a powerful account of Ontario's reinvigorated labour movement. Stay tuned to Facebook and YouTube for daily releases of the full video ... in 5 parts.



**13TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION
NOVEMBER 23-27, 2015
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

WEDNESDAY REPORT

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OMAR KHADR'S LAWYER DELIVERS POWERFUL KEYNOTE ADDRESS ON THE RULE OF LAW IN THE AGE OF FEAR

"Under the cloud of fear produced by repeated exaggerations of the threat of terrorism, we have now turned our domestic spy agency into something that looks disturbingly like a secret police force," Dennis Edney announced to a rapt audience.

Edney spent 12 years trying to secure Omar Khadr's release, first from Guantanamo Bay, then from a maximum security prison here in Canada. His legal victories (alongside co-counsel Nate Whitting) include: Omar's repatriation back to Canada, three successful Supreme Court of Canada judgments regarding the violation of Omar's legal rights, and more recently securing Omar's release on bail while his Military Commission convictions are appealed in the United States. Mr. Edney and Mr. Whitting have defended Omar on a largely pro bono basis, reaching into their own pockets to represent Omar.

Khadr, who was 15 when he was captured in Afghanistan, shipped to Cuba and repeatedly tortured before being put on trial for allegedly killing an American soldier in 2002.

Freedom has been sweet for Khadr, Edney says, describing the now 29-year old as a "wonderful attribute to the Canadian Mosaic."

But there is still much work to be done, inside and outside the courtroom, to repair the harm done to the young man. Edney's speech to

OFL delegates on Wednesday afternoon was called, "The Rule of Law in an Age of Fear."

Edney criticized the Canadian government, led by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper, for being the only Western government that never criticized Guantanamo Bay. "Harper talked about due process, but there's not such a beast in Guantanamo Bay called due process. There were government observers at Omar's trial and they were aware that torture evidence was permitted, that Omar Khadr had no witnesses allowed to attend and give evidence on his behalf. So when former PM Harper stood up and consistently said the same dogma that Omar Khadr was a terrorist who committed a heinous crime, he knew he was lying."

Edney applauded the OFL and President Sid Ryan for consistently demonstrating labour's support for Khadr and for being a strong voice against racism, Islamophobia and repression.

At the end of the address, OFL delegates and affiliates donated \$53,500 for Khadr's legal defence fund.



MEHRA SAYS ONTARIANS IN AN ECONOMIC BACKSLIDE

Natalie Mehra presented alarming research she produced for the Ontario Common Front, called, "Backslide: Labour Force Restructuring, Austerity and Widening inequality in Ontario."

"Ontario is dead last in funding for social programs and, by nearly every measure, it is trailing every other province in income equality and poverty reduction," Mehra informed delegates. "While it is hard to start a family anywhere in Canada, young families in Ontario are struggling with the largest student debt loads, the most expensive child care, the worst access to affordable housing and highest costs for health care."

"The good news is that this report demonstrates that better choices are possible. The challenge is to convince Ontario to make them."



TOM MULCAIR TAKES CUES FROM COMMON FRONT RESEARCH

NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair's convention address springboarded from the Common Front research paper on inequality. "A fair and equal society with robust public services is part of the Canadian identity and we can never let them take that away," Mulcair told delegates. "During the Federal election, OFL members had the back of the NDP. Know now that you won't fight alone."

RESOLUTIONS CORNER

The following resolutions were adopted by Convention:

#86 - Promoting Investment in Renewable Energy (Covers 87), ER #3 - Protect Steel Industry Pensions and Benefits, Composite Constitution Resolution covering Constitutional Resolutions #51, #52*, #53 and #54, Constitutional Resolutions #55 - Executive Committee Duties and #56 - Ontario Common Front.

ACTION PLAN DISCUSSION PUNCTUATED BY RALLY FOR \$15 AND FAIRNESS

Much of Wednesday's convention floor debate was focused on the most optimistic and forward-looking document in the delegate kit: the 2015 OFL Action Plan. This sweeping roadmap for the "Ontario We Want" contained a whopping 60 recommendations in its humble 15 pages.

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

At the centre of the plan was a pledge to mobilize a province-wide campaign for labour law reform. Delegates put their words into action with a lunchtime rally that brought over 1,000 delegates to Queen's Park to demand "\$15 and Fairness." OSSTF President Paul Elliott called it "a great plan and a bold statement." Enthusiasm for the plan exhausted the debate time allotted, so the conclusion of debate will take place on Friday.



CONVENTION APPROVES CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Perhaps the most controversial decision made at the convention to date was the convention approval of Composite Constitutional Resolution covering Constitutional Resolutions 51, 52*, 53 and 54. The resolution to create an OFL Executive Committee that is directly responsible for the administration and activities of the Federation is a decision that was two years in the making.

A similar resolution was defeated by the membership in 2013, but the matter was brought back to the floor for consideration by a host of affiliates and locals.

This time, the resolution received a narrow 2/3 majority, after a lengthy standing count of the floor. Among other duties, the new Executive Committee was given authority to monitor and oversee budgetary matters on an ongoing basis.