



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ontario Federation of Labour

Executive Board Meeting, June 19, 2012



Donate to the OFL's Jack Layton Memorial Statue

JACK'S GOT YOUR BACK

A statue of Jack Layton on the back seat of a tandem bicycle will adorn the Toronto waterfront and invite visitors to "take a ride with Jack."



Send donations to the "OFL Jack Layton Memorial Fund" c/o Ontario Federation of Labour, 15 Gervais Drive, 2nd floor, Toronto, ON M3C 1Y8



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

President's Report, Ontario Federation of Labour, Executive Board Meeting, June 19, 2012

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WE ARE ONTARIO.ca
make it fair for everyone



PART 1: FEATURE ARTICLES

Massive “We Are Ontario” Rally Opposes Budget Cuts

Over 15,000 Ontarians amassed at Queen’s Park on April 21 to add their voices to the Day of Action Against Cuts. Under the banner “We Are Ontario,” nearly 90 labour unions and community groups joined the OFL in protesting McGuinty’s deep cuts to jobs and services – the largest since Mike Harris’ first term of office.

One hundred buses rolled in from across the province, including two buses that trekked for 10 hours to Toronto from Timmins, Ontario. The rally began at Queen’s Park and marched through one of Toronto’s most affluent shopping districts to expose the gross inequity in the impact of the cuts on Ontario’s 99 percent.

The Day of Action provided an unmistakable expression of the widespread public opposition to budget cuts that would hit the most vulnerable people the hardest and would mean job loss and service cuts that affect every Ontario family. People from all walks of life protested cuts and underfunding that would hurt health care, education, social assistance, child care, and nearly every other sector.

With the support of many affiliates, the OFL rotated radio ads through major markets in Ontario demanding fair taxation and launched a website to promote the day of action against the budget cuts. The campaign successfully generated wall-to-wall

media coverage of its message tipped the balance of public opinion, maximizing pressure for change.

On April 21, we came together to say “no” to a budget that asked Ontarians to pay for an economic crisis they didn’t create. We came together to demand a job creation strategy and an economic recovery that included everyone. We came together to demand that corporations pay their fair share after years of paying less. And most of all, we came together to remind the McGuinty government that WE are Ontario.

The mobilization galvanized public outrage and give voice to a new alliance of community groups and labour unions that will be a significant political force in challenging federal and provincial cuts in the weeks and months ahead.

Now we must take this fight to every community in Ontario.

Check out the campaign website:

www.WeAreOntario.ca

Promote the campaign to your friends:

www.Facebook.com/WeAreOntario

Watch the video of the rally & listen to the radio ads:

www.YouTube.com/WeAreOntario

For more photos check out the back cover or visit:

www.Flickr.com/WeAreOntario



Labour-Community Common Front Organizes Against Cuts

Since late last summer, the OFL has been outreaching with community groups throughout the province to coordinate a collective fight-back against damaging government cuts. On April 20, labour and community activists from across the province packed Toronto's Church of the Holy Trinity for an evening strategy session in advance of the April 21 Day of Action Against Cuts.

From the incredibly productive meeting, a true Common Front is being forged and “We Are Ontario” is its central campaign. Bringing together province-wide groups with community branches, the Common Front is less a coalition than a vehicle for coordinating action. An interim steering committee has been struck and a mandate has been given to transition to a representative structure that will reflect the province’s diversity and regionality.

The first meeting of the official steering committee will be on July 4 and its first task will be to propose coordinated regional actions in early fall. The Common Front will also host a leadership assembly

in Toronto in November to share experiences and train activists in regions throughout the province.

The nearly 100 community groups that have endorsed the Common Front to date are evidence of a growing appetite for collective action and work got underway this month with Common Front partners mobilizing against federal and provincial budget cuts.

Plans are underway to develop the WeAreOntario.ca website into an organizing hub for the many labour and community groups that have formed the Common Front.

The emphasis of this new movement will be on developing deep roots in every region of the province so that labour unions and community groups can coordinate actions to push back against economic inequality and cut backs that will hurt Ontario families.

COMMON FRONT





Hundreds of thousands rally against tuition fees and undemocratic laws in Montréal.



OFL Officers bring solidarity to striking Québec students from the province with the highest fees.

OFL Calls for Ontario Version of Québec Student Strike

On May 22, all three OFL Officers travelled to Montréal, Québec to join a city-wide protest of over 300,000 people to support the 150,000 college and university students striking against tuition fee hikes.

For over three months, 150,000 striking students have been joined by thousands of citizens of all ages and backgrounds in overwhelmingly peaceful protests against Québec Premier Jean Charest's plan to boost tuition fees by 75 percent over five years. Charest has attempted to silence their dissent by introducing the most draconian law since the *War Measures Act* to strip every Québécois (not just student protesters) of their rights to free expression, association and peaceful assembly.

The OFL issued a call to Ontario students – who pay the highest fees in the country – to mobilize their own campuses to strike and take to the streets of Ontario to stop punishingly high fees.

"Québec's low-fee model of higher education should be the standard for Canada, not the other way around," said Ryan. "Canada is out of step with nearly 20 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries that charge little or no fees for higher education and Ontario has set the Canadian record for the highest fees."

In Ontario, a four-year degree for an average student living at home costs \$55,000 and with fees climbing at twice the rate of inflation, that cost is expected to leap to \$102,000 in the next 18 years. Graduates begin their careers with an average debt of \$37,000. However, with more than 70 percent of new jobs requiring a post-secondary education, financial barriers for higher learning are unconscionable.

Ryan published opinion articles in the *Toronto Sun* and the *National Post* calling for the abolition of tuition fees, citing a Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives study showing that if \$170 per household were redirected from corporate tax cuts, university could be free for every student.

In May, the Charest government cancelled the school year and locked-out students. Through social media networks, spontaneous "Casseroles Protests" have sprung up almost nightly in communities throughout Québec, with participants banging pots and pans in parades that wind through neighbourhoods in open defiance of Bill 78's ban on unsanctioned rallies. As a result of this solidarity, the government has been unable to enforce its own law and the demonstrations have become an expression of collective solidarity.

In Ontario, students are meeting with their Québec counterparts and have formed an Ontario Student Solidarity Network to take their fight to reduce tuition fees to campuses across the province.

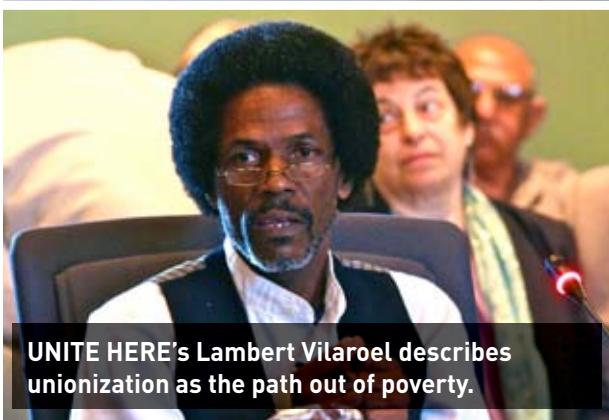


RED SQUARED

The red square is the pervasive symbol of the Québec student movement, whether pinned to clothing or used as a graphic on signs, leaflets or websites. It was first used during the 2005 student strike, and it cleverly plays on the idea of debt ("carrément dans la rouge" means "squarely in debt") and militancy (red is associated with radical activism).



Sisters Nancy Hutchison and Pam Frache call for laws that level the playing field for workers.



UNITE HERE's Lambert Vilaroel describes unionization as the path out of poverty.



USW security guard Tahir Mufti explains the need for successor rights in the contract sector.



UFCW's Jodie Pratt, Kevin Shimmin and Amy Tran call for protection from intimidation.

Labour Law Reform Bill Goes to Committee Hearings

For the first time in nearly 20 years, the Ontario Legislature is considering legislation to reform outdated labour laws.

On June 7, the docket of the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills was packed with labour deputants speaking in support of Bill 77, *Fairness for Employees Act*. The fact that the bill even reached committee hearings was no small feat. Proposed by NDP Labour Critic Taras Natyshak (Essex), Bill 77 passed second reading on May 3 after the OFL and affiliates flooded Premier Dalton McGuinty and local Members of Parliament with letters in support of the bill and calling on politicians of all stripes to engage in this important debate.

Bill 77 proposes measures to make it easier for workers to join unions and establish successor rights in the contract services sector. Natyshak has also served Bill 79, *Equal Rights for Employees in Ontario Act*, which is slated to come back for Second Reading sometime in the fall.

Taken together, these two bills would provide invaluable protection to some of Ontario's most vulnerable workers and they mark the first time that this type of labour law reform will be debated in the legislature since Tory Premier Mike Harris gutted workers' rights in the province.

OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison was among several labour leaders to present to the Committee, but there is little question that the most compelling deputations were delivered by vulnerable workers themselves. Telling tearful stories of lost benefits, poverty wages and intimidation in the workplace, these workers helped the all-party committee understand the impact the bill's protections would have on the lives of working people.

As a result of our collective efforts, we have created a genuine opportunity to extend some fairness to workers who are desperate for a collective voice in their workplaces. However, much work lies ahead to get both bills past third reading and into law.



PART 2: GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

OFL Campaign for Tax Fairness Helps NDP Win Budget Amendments

The timing of the OFL-led “We Are Ontario” campaign couldn’t have been better. The April 21 Day of Action landed mere days before the final budget vote and weeks of campaigning helped to buoy the NDP budget demands and shape the public debate around tax fairness.

The OFL worked with affiliates to develop a common campaign strategy and messaging in advance of the release of the Drummond Commission Report and the Ontario Budget. Affiliates across sectors responded to McGuinty’s “austerity agenda” by focusing on the unfair impact of cuts on the most vulnerable while the most affluent celebrated tax cuts and loopholes.

When finally tabled in March, the McGuinty’s first minority budget unveiled the most severe round

of cuts to be implemented since Mike Harris’ first term. The cuts to jobs and services promised to hurt every family in Ontario while banks and corporations would be allowed to continue to make billions from corporate tax cuts and loopholes. Real dollar cuts to Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and the postponement of Child Benefit increases threatened to hurt the most vulnerable Ontarians but cuts to health care, child care and public education would impact every struggling family.

The budget also followed Stephen Harper’s attack on labour rights by threatening to cut jobs, freeze wages, and impose contracts on public sector workers when the collective bargaining process takes more than 12 months.

The OFL responded to Andrea Horwath's invitation for public feedback on the Ontario Budget by conducting a public opinion poll demonstrating that 68 percent of the public would like to see corporations pay their fair share to help reduce the provincial deficit and 74 percent supported an additional ten percent tax on individual income above two hundred and fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000). The poll spurred a series of media surveys echoing the OFL's results and helped shift the bargaining climate for the NDP.

The OFL carried its principled rejection of McGuinty's budget into the Ontario NDP Convention in April and won considerable support from the floor. Reinforced by membership outrage against the Liberal budget, Horwath and her team were able to dig in behind several key demands and successfully wrestle back funding increases for child care and the ODSP while also extracting a new two percent surtax on Ontarians earning over \$500,000/year.

The gains made through the budget negotiations are a testament to what can be accomplished when the OFL and the NDP work together. However, the budget battle wasn't over.

After surviving an initial vote in the legislature, the government tabled Bill 55, *Strong Action for Ontario Act (Budget Measures)*, 2012. Among the many provisions in the Bill is Schedule 28 that privatizes Service Ontario. While the sale of these frontline services would be bad enough, the Schedule dramatically overrides existing regulations and grants the power to privatize any government service, including health care, water, hydro, etc.

The omnibus bill creates a new Minister (dubbed the Privatization "Czar") and allows cabinet to circumvent the legislature to sell government services to for-profit and non-profit companies.

The OFL has been working with the Ontario Health Coalition, the Council of Canadians, the Social Planning Network of Ontario, affiliates and the NDP to pull this section of the budget bill. Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda presented the OFL's Bill 55 submission to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs on June 6.

The full submission can be found at www.OFL.ca



OFL's Irwin Nanda and Pam Frache call for Schedule 28 to be dropped from the Budget Bill.

McGuinty Tries to Snatch Majority in KW By-Election

In the October 2011 election, Ontario voters stripped the McGuinty Liberals of their majority government and gave a mandate to the NDP to bring balance to the house. However, after struggling through the spring Budget process, Premier McGuinty appeared unwilling to accept the position of compromise that voters had demanded.

In a surprise move in mid-May, the Premier announced the appointment of sitting Tory MPP Elizabeth Witmer to the cushy chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). Normally reserved for a governing party favourite, McGuinty lured a key opposition parliamentarian by upping the position's salary from \$130,000 a year to \$188,000.

Knocking the opposition down by one seat during the crucial budget deliberation process empowered the Liberal Speaker Dave Levac to break any tie votes in a house divided 53-53. With a virtual majority in the interim, McGuinty's real sights are set on the impending by-election in Witmer's old riding of Kitchener-Centre. The riding has been held by the Tories since it was created in 1999 and if the Liberal-Tory toggle in the two adjacent ridings is any indication, this by-election gamble is far from a sure thing for McGuinty. The political climate is ripe for a strong NDP candidate to snatch the seat from the warring Tory and Liberal parties. Labour activist support for the NDP will be crucial in tipping the scales in this election and keeping McGuinty in check.



Labour and community activists demonstrated in front of Ancaster MP David Sweet's office. Similar actions targeted many other Tory offices.

Harper's Omnibus Budget Attacks 70 Federal Laws

In what has been declared the most undemocratic and untransparent government in Canadian history, Harper's first majority budget span 425 pages and revises 70 federal laws. Bill C-38 is a far-reaching omnibus bill that affects nearly every aspect of Canada's public affairs. Its size and scope make parliamentary scrutiny and accountability impossible.

Through the Budget, the Conservatives seek to overhaul environmental protection rules, claw back Old Age Security, cut over 20,000 federal public services jobs, restrict Employment Insurance eligibility, slash Temporary Foreign Worker wages, limit immigration, end the *Fair Wages Act*, eliminate a CSIS watchdog and scrutinize the political activities of environmental charities.

The NDP opposition urged Prime Minister Stephen Harper to break up Bill C-38 into several smaller pieces of legislation, but the government refused. In response, all three opposition parties have lined up over 1,000 amendments to the budget bill in an effort to filibuster the bill on the floor of the House of Commons.

Actions have taken place throughout the province to challenge a number of the provisions in the Budget Bill and OFL officers and staff have participated in many. Labour and community groups have called for 13 Conservative MPs to make themselves "heroes of democracy" by breaking Harper's majority support for the bill.

E.I. Changes Target Vulnerable Workers

Buried in Harper's omnibus budget are E.I. changes targeting some of the most vulnerable workers—including migrant and unemployed workers—to create downward pressure on the wages of all workers.

Last year, the federal government announced the closure of more than 80 percent of E.I. processing centres and the elimination of hundreds of associated jobs. As a result, there is now a backlog of over 80,000 claims. Now Harper is imposing stricter job search requirements for unemployed workers with penalties for those who do not accept available work, irrespective of the worker's skills or residence. Unemployed Canadian workers may also be required to accept jobs posted through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), which have been approved to pay 15 percent less than the average wage for a given occupation. There is no doubt that forcing workers without jobs into these occupations is intended to give employers an incentive to lay-off workers in decently paid jobs and hire (or re-hire) employees at lower wages, either through the TFWP or through E.I. claimant harassment.

In the meantime, the Mowat Centre continues to peddle its vision for a repayable Jobseekers Loan Scheme, administered through the tax system, in which workers may borrow money to tie them over during periods of un-employment and under-employment. Repayment of this user-funded program would intensify the hardship of those already marginalized in the economy.



OFL Vice-Presidents join NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo in fighting for LGBTQ rights in Ontario.

New Anti-Bullying Law Protects LGBTQ Youth

The Ontario government's anti-bullying legislation is on its way to becoming law, making it clear that sexual assault, gender-based violence, homophobia and transphobia will not be tolerated in the province's public schools. While the law comes too late to save the lives of 15-year-old Jamie Hubley and 11-year-old Mitchell Wilson, it is hoped to help prevent similar suicides among LGBTQ youth.

The *Accepting Schools Act*, known as Bill 13, passed third and final reading on Tuesday, June 5. It was the first bill to pass since the Liberals won a minority in last October's provincial election. Moved by Liberal MPP Laurel Broten (Etobicoke-Lakeshore), the Bill received the full support of the NDP but was opposed by all 36 Progressive Conservative MPPs.

Expected to receive Royal Assent later in June, the Bill will amend the province's *Education Act* and apply to every school, whether public or Catholic. The intent of the bill is not just to discipline schoolyard bullies, but to spot and correct bad behaviour before it escalates. The Bill, which also requires schools to recognize the student clubs, commonly named "Gay Straight Alliances," was strongly supported by all three teachers' unions: ETFO, OSSTF and OECTA.

"Providing safe, inclusive environments and eliminating bullying wherever we can is paramount," said OECTA president Kevin O'Dwyer. "The reality is, this isn't about the adults – it is about the students – and we need to empower the students who are a key part of this equation."

The OFL joined the teachers' unions and community partners in supporting the MyGSA coalition to champion the Bill in response to a survey of high school students published by the EGALE Human Rights Trust in 2009 that showed that three-quarters of LGBTQ students feel unsafe in at least one place at school. The study also found that almost 90 percent of transgender students feel unsafe. This report provided a frightening back story to the alarming rates of depression and suicide within the LGBTQ community.

"Toby's Law" Marks Break-Through for Human Rights

On the opening day of the OFL's Out@Work Conference, delegates were joined by NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park) who announced the second reading passing of Bill 33, *Toby's Act (Right to be Free from Discrimination and Harassment Because of Gender Identity or Gender Expression)*. In her fourth attempt to secure Human Rights Code protections for 'gender identity' and 'gender expression,' DiNovo's bill finally passed third reading on June 13 and is expected to become law before the Toronto Pride week.

Many have attributed the success of the bill to the fact that this time around it was co-sponsored by Liberal MPP Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa-Centre) and Progressive Conservative MPP Christine Elliott (Whitby-Oshawa). While legislation (Bill C-279) is currently before the Parliament to enact similar changes to the *Canadian Human Rights Act*, as well as the Criminal Code section on hate crimes, the Ontario legislation will afford vital protections to trans people with respect to public services, housing, employment and access to government facilities.

"Legislative change is an important step, but it is only one of many steps to achieving true social and economic equality for the LGBTQ community," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "With laws that reflect our inclusive values, the responsibility lies with each of us to create positive space and challenge homophobia and transphobia, and other forms of discrimination such as racism, sexism, ableism, and classism."

Ontario College of Trades Impacts Services and Other Sectors

The Ontario College of Trades (OCOT) is well underway, with two consultations that are important to Trades and Apprentices—membership and membership fees—having been completed on June 3, 2012. Ratio Reviews are currently underway for each trade. The ratio of journeypersons to apprentices is important in maintaining the quality of apprenticeship training and to ensure that apprentices are not used simply as cheap labour to displace qualified journeypersons.

The OCOT is in the process of developing a comprehensive set of regulations to integrate “existing” regulations, as well as the two pieces of legislation that govern trades and apprenticeship training.

While the College offers important avenues to improve authentic apprenticeship training and the self-governance of authentic trades, there are still concerns that certain types of occupations have been included under the rubric of “trades” that do not offer the full range of training and skills development normally associated with authentic, whole trades. Many of these kinds of trades affect workers in the services sector who themselves may not realize they will be subject to the rules, regulations and legislation governing the College of Trades.

The scope of trades included in each division of the College can be found online at: www.collegeoftrades.ca/about/legislation-and-regulations

OFL affiliates with members who engage in the Service occupations and other divisions listed on the site are strongly advised to contact the OFL’s Apprenticeship Committee to ensure they are apprised of OCOT implications for their members.

More information about the Ontario College of Trades can be found at: www.collegeoftrades.ca

Funding Cut for Canadian Apprenticeship Forum

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) is a pan-Canadian body that brings together government, employer and labour representatives of trades across Canada. This year the federal government de-funded the organization, along with other sector councils. In order to maintain a pan-Canadian body, a proposal has been developed to fundraise \$850,000 by April 2013 to maintain the organization, but with a more streamlined governing body that would include representation from the construction and industrial sectors.

At the June CAF conference, a fundraising initiative was launched asking “Stakeholders” such as labour, employers and provincial governments to review this fundraising initiative and determine whether there is an appetite to continue. The fundraising initiative will be assessed in November 2012.

Consultation on Personal Support Worker Standards

The OFL recently submitted a brief to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care on educational standards for Personal Support Workers (PSW). Like many affiliates in the health care sector, the OFL has taken the position that PSWs play an important role in the continuum of care and their role should be recognized to encourage present and future PSWs to continue working in this sector. The OFL called on the Ministry to adopt one educational standard for PSWs, regulated through the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), to replace the current system in which different standards are applied by the MTCU, Ontario Community Support Association and private colleges.

The OFL continues to work on this initiative along with representatives from CUPE, ONA and SEIU as well as other stakeholders.

Stay tuned to the OFL website for a copy of the submission.



Memorial monument in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia is dedicated to the 26 miners who lost their lives 20 years ago in the Westray mining disaster.

PART 3: HEALTH & SAFETY & WORKERS' COMPENSATION

20th Anniversary of the Westray Mine Disaster

This year marked the 20th anniversary of the Nova Scotia Westray mine disaster in which an underground methane explosion claimed the lives of 26 workers prompted years of relentless lobbying by the United Steelworkers that finally resulted in Bill C-45 changes to the criminal code that allowed for the prosecution of negligent employers.

OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison, herself the survivor of a work-related illness, appeared with retired Steelworker Health and Safety Director Andy King on the CBC's "Sunday Edition" to discuss the legacy of the Westray disaster. Hutchison flew out to Nova Scotia the following week to attend the Westray Memorial.

"In the eight years since Bill C-45 was passed it was unused in Ontario, yet more than 500 workers have been killed on the job and more than two million are injured," said Hutchison. "Mothers, fathers, children, friends and neighbours have endured the worst tragedies imaginable as the relentless drive

for profits has been allowed to take precedence over the health and safety of workers. We cannot permit one more company to ignore its obligation to put people ahead of profits."

The OFL's "Kill a Worker, Go to Jail" campaign calls for the vigorous use of C-45.

2012 WSIB Death & Injury Stats

136 fatalities were reported to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) in the first four months of 2012.

30 traumatic on-the-job deaths were reported, but only 27 have been allowed.

93 occupational disease related deaths were reported and 50 were allowed.

77,955 total injury claims were made, but only 56,734 were allowed.

April 28 Day of Mourning

Thousands of workers, friends and families of those killed and injured on the job gathered at ceremonies across Ontario on April 28 to commemorate the labour movement's most solemn occasion, the annual Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job. This year, remembrances also served as a call for justice and the vigorous pursuit of *Criminal Code* convictions of corporate executives, directors and managers whose reckless or negligent actions compromise the safety of workers.

OFL executive officers joined ceremonies in various communities to remember the 11 workers (including 10 migrant workers) who were killed near Hampstead, Ontario this year, three workers killed in February's horrific train accident and too many other lost lives.

Injured Workers' Day

On June 1, OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison and Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda joined nearly 100 injured workers and advocates who braved the driving rain to bring the call for justice to Queen's Park.

Since 1996, the amount employers pay into WSIB has dropped from \$3.20 per \$100 of payroll to \$2.26. Ontario's Liberal government recently released a KPMG report aimed at further slashing this important program. Since that report's release, the WSIB has increased the denial of new claims by nearly 50 percent, decreased the average benefit at the final review by nearly 30 percent, cut the number of injured workers who receive a permanent impairment assessment by about 30 percent and laid off more than 300 WSIB staff.

"The Liberal government has pulled out all the stops to examine what it purports to be underfunding of the Workers' Compensation system but refuses to address the underfunding of injured workers," said Hutchison. "It is shameful that so many injured workers are being driven into poverty and hardship because there is no government protection for them."



OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison attends Oakville Day of Mourning ceremony.

NDP MPP Peter Tabuns (Toronto-Danforth) joined the protest at the legislature to call for justice for injured workers and demand a real cost-of-living increase to workers' compensation benefits.

Toronto, Mayor Rob Ford recognized the day by officially proclaiming June 1, 2012 as "Injured Workers' Day." Similar events were held outside WSIB offices in London, St. Catharines, Thunder Bay and Windsor.

Plea Bargain Expected for Metron Construction Boss

Metron Construction boss Joel Swartz is expected to plead bargain a settlement to his Criminal Code and Ministry of Labour charges for the December 24, 2010 scaffolding deaths of four workers and the injury of a fifth. Facing four counts of Criminal Negligence Causing Death and one count of Criminal Negligence Causing Bodily Harm, the charges against the owner and the company were separated earlier this year from the charges facing the supervisor.

The case against the supervisor is currently in pre-trial hearings until the end of June with trial expected in November. The company and owner are expected to bargain a plea shortly after this report goes to print. Any remaining Ministry of Labour charges are expected to be resolved later in the summer.



Labour and injured worker advocates provide input into the WSIB Funding Review with Professor Harry Arthurs.

Arthurs Report Exposes Unfairness of the WSIB System

Four months after receiving Professor Harry Arthurs' final report on the Workplace Safety & Insurance Board (WSIB) finances, the Ministry of Labour finally released it to the public in late May. The reason for the delay is not hard to imagine. At a time when WSIB senior management has launched an unprecedented attack on injured workers in the name of fighting the Board's unfunded liability, the "Funding Fairness" report is a rare attempt at genuine evenhandedness. Arthurs' investigation uncovered vital facts about the nature and scope of the injustices facing injured workers, even if some of the recommendations are more modest than were hoped. However, with the report in hand, the challenge facing injured worker activists is to press the McGuinty government and newly appointed WSIB Chair Elizabeth Witmer to take action to resolve the unfairnesses Arthurs has exposed. Read the full report at: www.wsibfundingreview.ca/finalreport.php

For decades, the Board's unfunded liability has been a cudgel in the hands of employers and right-wing politicians. Playing on negative views towards government debt and deficits, it has been argued that injured workers must accept less until the WSIB's finances are fixed. However, when benefits have been cut, the resulting "savings" have gone to premium holidays for employers rather than eliminating the unfunded liability.

The Arthurs Report cut through the alarmism by distinguishing between a debt and deficit and making the point that future liabilities can be funded by future revenues. While recommending that the Board strive for full funding within 20 years, Arthurs strongly argued against squeezing injured workers to meet that goal. Despite pegging the current unfunded liability at \$14.5 billion, he maintained that administrative investments and compensation enhancements for injured workers should not be sacrificed.

Arthurs' most important recommendation is that the government should reinstate annual inflation adjustments equal to 100 percent of the change in the consumer price index and help workers affected by past cuts. Under the formula in place since 1995, these workers have not received any inflation adjustments except when inflation exceeds the Bank of Canada's two percent target rate.

The impact of frozen benefits cannot be over stated. For workers injured before the year 2000, benefit cheques have experienced a real dollar cut of 20 percent. While Arthurs, does not recommend the full redress for this shortfall, he does propose full inflation indexing for all injured workers going forward and catch-up funding to reduce the current losses by 40 to 45 percent for affected workers.

This recommendation follows years of activism by the labour and injured worker movements, but the battle is far from won. Despite the modesty of the recommendations, the Ministry of Labour media release that accompanied the Arthurs Report offered a meagre 0.5 percent adjustment for 2013 and 2014.

Another important conclusion of the Report is that the WSIB's experience rating programs must either be redesigned to eliminate employer abuses or be terminated. Arthurs found that the years of inaction in the face of reports of deplorable employer abuses amounts to "moral crisis" for the WSIB.

The Board's experience rating programs calculate premium rebates and surcharges based on reported accident frequency and benefit costs. Although presented as promoting healthy workplaces and return to work for injured workers, they also encourage employers to suppress claims and obstruct the payment of benefits.

Arthurs recommended that unless and until experience rating can be significantly redesigned, with worker involvement, to guarantee healthy workplaces and return to work, the program should be scrapped. In the interim, however, he calls on the Board to take decisive action to stop employer abuse by the end of 2012.

Although the Report's recommendations do not reflect all of the demands that the OFL and injured worker activists made during the consultation process, the findings represent a vital step forward. With the knowledge gained through the review process and the findings contained in the final report, the labour movement have strong tools to lobby politicians and bureaucrats to take action to deliver justice to injured workers.

The OFL, affiliates and partners in the injured worker community will continue to keep pressing for change. But activist support has never been more crucial.

Stay tuned to the OFL website for a full analysis of the Arthurs Report.

WSIB Policy Consultation Process

In the Fall of 2011, the KPMG Value for Money Audit recommendations on adjudication were issued. This included a proposal to review some key long-standing policies such as aggravation of pre-existing disabilities, recurrences, permanent impairment and work disruptions. The worker community pushed back very hard and ultimately proposed that an arm's length third party be appointed to handle consultation on these policies. WSIB accepted Labour's proposal and recently announced that Jim Thomas, former NDP Deputy Minister of Labour, will carry out this role.

Thomas will develop a green paper for discussion in June and hold a technical session in July, based on the approach taken by Harry Arthurs. Public hearings on the four policies, as well as the Second Injury Enhancement Fund, are slated for September and a final report is promised for November 2012.

The OFL will work with Labour and injured worker advocates to influence the consultation process and the outcomes of the review.

OFL Submits Brief on Supervisor Awareness Training

The OFL submitted a brief on supervisor awareness training in early June to the Ministry of Labour. As part of the government's compliance with the recommendations of the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety, the Ministry of Labour is producing awareness materials with an eye to preventing injuries and fatalities. The second phase of the project is underway and the OFL submission responded to concerns that the Ministry's definition of "supervisor" can include many unionized workers, such as group leaders, charge nurses in hospitals, department heads in the education sector, and many others.

The OFL submission is available online at www.OFL.ca



Workers of Colour are among the 100 activists who attended the OFL's Equity Retreat in Niagara Falls. Inspired and empowered, participants challenged the impact of cuts on vulnerable workers.

PART 4: EQUITY & HUMAN RIGHTS

OFL Hosts First-Ever Equity Retreat in Niagara Falls

From March 30 to April 1, the OFL hosted its first-ever Equity Retreat at the Embassy Suites Niagara Falls. The event was an incredible success and drew over 100 participants from the OFL's various equity-seeking constituencies, including: Aboriginal Persons, LGBTQ, Persons with Disabilities, Women Workers, Workers of Colour, Workers Under 30 and a number of allies.

The format of the Retreat allowed each committee to meet separately to discuss unique issues and initiatives but it also brought all of the committees together to share common struggles and strategies. The result was an energizing weekend that left participants feeling inspired to name and challenge oppression in government policy, in society and in their own unions.

"We need to break out of our silos and uncover the ways that discrimination and oppression can impact workers across equity groups and constituencies. We can't afford to ignore the lessons learned by certain groups and accomplishments made by others," said OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda. "More importantly, we need to make sure that we are representing the diversity within each

equity-seeking group and fighting to build a united response that challenges prejudice, discrimination and oppression in all of its forms – inside and outside the labour movement."

The OFL's equity committees have resolved to hold a follow-up Equity Conference from November 9 to 11, 2012 at the same location in Niagara Falls. The theme of the conference will be "We Are Ontario: Putting Equity Ahead of Austerity" and will seek to draw broader participation from affiliates and community allies to meet an ambitious attendance target of 300. Stay tuned to the OFL website for updates and registration information.

Advocating for Human Rights

OFL human rights statements during this reporting period are available at www.OFL.ca:

- April 11: Pink Shirt Day
- April 28: Day of Mourning for Workers Killed or Injured on the Job
- May 17: International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia
- June 1–7: Sexual Assault Awareness Week



OFL President Sid Ryan celebrates South Asian Heritage with labour and community activists.



OFL V-P Stephen Seaborn and ETFO member Pam Dogra emcee the Out@Work opening night.

OFL Celebrates South Asian Heritage Month

The OFL helped recognize May as South Asian Heritage Month by co-hosting a labour celebration at Brampton's Sagan Banquet Hall on May 8. The event drew over 300 participants to celebrate South Asian cultures and honour labour and community activism. Among the event sponsors were the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), the Brampton-Mississauga and District Labour Council (BMDLC), the Asian Canadian Labour Alliance (ACLA), the Latin American Trade Unionists Coalition (LATUC), the Coalition for Black Trade Unionists (CBTU)–Ontario Chapter, and a number of affiliates.

Emceed by OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda, the event included an amazing dinner, cultural performances and dancing, but it also included passionate speeches about the barriers that have faced South Asian Canadians since their first arrival in the late 19th Century. Keynote speakers included CLC Executive Vice-President Marie Clarke Walker, NDP MPP Jagmeet Singh and OFL President Sid Ryan.

Among the activists recognized during the evening were the youth campaigners who helped NDP candidate Jagmeet Singh win the riding of Bramalee-Gore-Malton, Brampton-Mississauga and District Labour Council President Motilall Sarjoo and CLC Regional Staff Representatives, Gogi Bhandal and Medhi Kouhestaninejad.

Out@Work Conference Eyes Health, Safety, Jobs & Justice

From May 10 to 12, a diverse group of 100 union and community LGBTQ activists and allies attended the OFL's Out@Work Conference. Participants shared strategies on how to support, empower and mobilize LGBTQ members in their workplaces.

The conference opened with a public forum called "Outing Our Rights" to mark the International Day Against Homophobia & Transphobia. A performance by award-winning poet, musician and trans activist Nicki Ward was followed by a round table on applying international human rights covenants to protect LGBTQ people.

In his opening address, OFL President Sid Ryan called on LGBTQ activists to challenge government austerity programs: "Devastating cuts to jobs and government services are going to hit vulnerable communities the hardest. Human rights and social justice cannot be sacrificed for corporate greed."

OFL Secretary-Treasurer Nancy Hutchison led the conference proceedings by calling for short and long-term strategies for challenging legislators, employers, communities and individuals to become allies in the struggle for social justice.

The conference wrapped up with participants joining a rally at Queen's Park in support of Bill 13, the *Accepting Schools Act*.



PART 5: BUILDING ONTARIO'S LABOUR MOVEMENT

Affiliation Campaign

In May, the OFL began its new affiliation drive with the release of a glossy kit that showcases the work of Ontario's labour movement. The new materials were produced in time to make their debut at the May CUPE Ontario Convention in Windsor, where more than 70 unaffiliated CUPE locals were invited to join the OFL.

OFL officers and staff will be visiting labour council meetings and union conventions, whenever possible, over the upcoming months to promote the work of the Federation and strengthen our collective voice.

NEW AFFILIATIONS

Nearly 100,000 new members joined the OFL from 2009-2011 and another 2,000 have joined so far in 2012. Since April alone we are proud to welcome:

CEP Locals 31 and 914.14 (ORABF), CUPW Local 104, and the Ironworkers District Council

OFL Launches New and Interactive Website

In mid-June, the OFL will be launching the first phase of its new website. The new site will integrate social media and will allow for pictures and videos to be featured directly on the site. The new "blog-style" structure will allow for more timely updating of content and enable visitors to share content to promote the work of the labour movement. Most importantly, the new site will more prominently feature the work of the Federation's committees on many important health and safety, equity and human rights issues.

An online campaign emailer feature will be launched with the second phase of the new website and will allow the Federation to customize online campaigns targeting employers and politicians at a moment's notice and engage members in political action. The second phase of the website will also include the posting of Federation publications and research in a much more intuitive and accessible format. The much cleaner and meaner OFL website will keep members up-to-date and involved in Ontario's labour movement.



The big pink CUPE 966 bus is visible at nearly every rally and picket line in Ontario. Inset: Pregnant 966 members fight for workers—and the communities they serve.

PART 6: AFFILIATE & LABOUR MOVEMENT SOLIDARITY

CUPE 966 Defends Vital Jobs and Community Services

The Region of Peel's hard line bargaining position has so far driving three units of CUPE Local 966 onto simultaneous strike over their unfair treatment as compared to other employees in the region.

On June 10, 80 TransHelp workers joined the 282 Public Works workers who had been striking since June 4 and over 500 Human Services Unit workers who had been on strike since May 3.

The striking units are locals made up predominantly of women and workers of colour, who provide a wide range of vital services, from overseeing the safety of water to support for persons with disabilities to essential community support for the most vulnerable and marginalized in our society. They work in family and youth homeless shelters, provide employment assistance and training, process social assistance cheques, operate child care centres, help victims of violence, place people in subsidized housing, provide immigrant settlement services, and much more.

The union rejected the region's offer of a 0, 0.5 and one percent increase over the next three years, after other employees in the region, including non-union and management were granted 2 percent annual increases along with performance bonuses that could boost management compensation by as much as 9.5 percent annually. The employer is also seeking to cap the sick days in these highly stressful workplaces to only six a year.

"While others are moving forward in the Region, the administration is asking our front line workers to go backwards," said CUPE 966 President Mary Jo Falle. "This is not conducive to a healthy and productive workforce and it is undermining vital services for vulnerable residents."

The OFL swung support in behind CUPE 966 by calling on all affiliates to join picket lines and attend several solidarity rallies for the local. The OFL Officers and staff have visited the picket lines to bring bright pink posters to show support for the local.



Twenty-five Canadian delegates attended the 41st CBTU International Convention in St. Louis. A strong Ontario Chapter is helping connect the challenges on both sides of the 49th Parallel.

"This strike is really about equity and fairness for a vulnerable workforce that serves a vulnerable population," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "These women fight for human rights in their community and across the province. Now is the time for the labour movement to help them fight for the dignity they deserve."

CBTU Builds Labour Solidarity Across Borders

The 41st International Convention of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), hosted from May 24 to 28, was a great success for the Ontario Canada Chapter. OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda joined over 25 Canadian delegates from Ontario and Québec who attended the May Convention in St. Louis, Missouri.

The Ontario Chapter of CBTU enhanced its profile by hosting a convention booth to raise funds through swag sales and raffle tickets. The Chapter also released a new promotional DVD that featured a narrated version of an online presentation about CBTU produced by TWU Representative Isabelle

Miller. A flash-based version of the presentation is also available online for use within Canadian locals to promote the work of the CBTU:

prezi.com/yf7v2owiaefx/the-cbtu-canada-version/

The upcoming US election was top of mind for Convention delegates who focused on the similarities between the right-wing attack on both sides of the border to undermine workers' rights and dismantle public services. Delegates shared experiences and strategies for challenging job loss, downsizing and privatization. Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) National President Denis Lemelin was a guest speaker at the Convention and explained his union's challenge to the Harper government's attempt to legislate away the right to strike. An historic resolution was also passed in support of same-sex marriage.

Region 1 Director and AFL-CIO New York Federation Secretary-Treasurer Terry Melvin was elected as the CBTU's International President and Janice Gairey (OFL) and Chris Wilson (PSAC) were elected as members at large on the International Executive Board.



OFL Officers and NDP MPP Jagmeet Singh join Sikh community celebration to call for justice.

PART 7: COMMUNITY AND INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

OFL Joins Sikh Community Celebrations

OFL President Sid Ryan called for social justice for the Sikh community before a rally of one hundred thousand at a Baisakhi Day (or Vaisakhi Day) Celebration in Etobicoke, Ontario on Sunday, May 6, 2012. All three OFL officers joined NDP MPP Jagmeet Singh (Bramalea-Gore-Malton) at the annual event, which included a parade from the Mississauga neighbourhood of Malton to a religious centre in Toronto's west-end.

As a featured speaker, Ryan used his remarks to take aim at the Harper government's changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program that would cut foreign worker wages by 15 percent and force E.I. recipients to accept lower wage jobs. He also called for Canadians to challenge politicians to oppose this legislation and defend all workers.

International May Day Conference on Workers' Rights

The OFL joined with 200 labour centrals from Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean as part of the 1900 international delegates who attended the International Workers' Day Celebrations in Havana, Cuba from April 27 to May 3, 2012.

OFL Executive Vice-President Irwin Nanda travelled to Cuba to represent the OFL at the march of over one million workers attending the May Day Rally at the Plaza de la Revolution. Nanda also attended meetings with trade union counterparts from Argentina, Chile, Norway, Cuba, Nicaragua and Colombia and met with a delegation from State Workers Union and the Central Union of Workers from Argentina to discuss labour movement struggles over the nationalization oil resources and plans for an upcoming Health Care Workers' Exchange Project and conference.



Occupy hosts May Day rally against inequality.



Solidarity for Six Nations draws thousands.

Occupy Movement Re-Emerges for May Day Rally

In Toronto, more than 3,000 people helped to resurrect last year's Occupy movement with a mass rally on May Day, also known as International Workers' Day. Similar events and rallies were held in cities around the world as the Occupy movement joined forces with labour and community activists to bring attention to the issues facing working people and labour rights.

The OFL has supported the Occupy movement since it first emerged last fall and helped promote its May Day resurgence.

At the afternoon rally, various protests and marches gripped the city of Toronto and converged on City Hall at Nathan Phillips Square before snaking around the city to the site of a new camp. While the occupation was shut down quickly by police, the Occupy organizers have resolved to shift their focus to short-term, impromptu occupations, as opposed to the prolonged encampments in a number of municipalities last fall.

In other cities across Ontario, Occupy movements are building bridges with labour and community allies to bring attention to local issues of economic inequality and injustice.

Six Nations Walk for Peace, Respect and Friendship

On April 28, 2012, a thousand Canadians from across Southern Ontario participated in the Walk, Rally, and Potluck for Peace, Respect, and Friendship and joined with Indigenous land defenders and families who are tired of the inaction and disrespect shown by all levels of Canadian government, to demand that Six Nations land rights be respected.

OFL staff and Aboriginal Circle members helped to plan the event and attended the rally in Kanonhstaton, the "protected place"—a site of Haudenosaunee land reclamation and defense. Located on the boundary between the Six Nation reserve and the settler town of Caledonia, Kanonhstaton has brought Indigenous land rights to the forefront of national attention over and over again in the past six years, gaining prominence rarely seen in land occupations since the 1990 Oka standoff.

In the six years since the reclamation began, the Federal government, which is, according to Canadian laws, in charge of dealing with land claims, has done nothing to bring resolution to the issue.

In communities all along the Grand River, meetings to keep the dialogue going and to build on the momentum of the walk have been set to take place throughout the spring and summer.



Grassy Narrows rally calls for justice and health.



Community barbecue kicks off Hamilton Pride.

Toxic River Poisons Grassy Narrows

The people of Grassy Narrows have sustained themselves for thousands of years on their traditional territory – 2,500 square miles of forest, lakes and rivers north of Kenora, Ontario. Now plans for clear-cut logging, mining and the legacy of residential schools, hydro damming, relocation, and mercury poisoning threaten to uproot the way of life of the Asubpeeschoewagong Anishinabek.

The OFL and a host of community partners joined the Grassy Narrows mothers in challenging Premier Dalton McGuinty to attend a traditional fish fry at Queen's Park for a meal of local fish cooked on an open wood fire. However, days before the event, organizers were informed that the cook-out was banned. Instead the marchers created a "wild river" of blue fabric rippling to Queen's Park by unfurling a 15,000 square foot flowing blue quilt, accompanied by traditional drummers and colourful fish puppets.

The event raised awareness about the health impact of mercury poison fifty years after a Dryden mill began dumping 10 tones of the neurotoxin into Grassy Narrows' English-Wabigoon River.

"Every day mothers in Grassy Narrows must choose between hunger and feeding their families our traditional fish diet. We are asking that McGuinty step in our shoes for one meal, so he can understand why we say no to pollution and destructive industrial logging that brings even more mercury into our fish," said Judy Da Silva, a Grassy Narrows mother.

Indigenous Grassy Narrows mothers traveled 2,000 km to Toronto by foot, train, and bus to release a health study on their community by renowned Japanese mercury expert Dr. Harada this week. Some Grassy Narrows mothers report delayed language development, cerebral palsy, seizures, and other illnesses in their children –symptoms linked to fetal mercury poisoning.

Shamefully, the Premier was a no-show at the June 6 event and has yet to accept provincial responsibility for the safety of the community. The community is also seeking compensation for those affected, restoration of the English-Wabigoon river system and an end to the destructive industrial logging on Grassy Narrows territory.

For more information go to: FreeGrassy.org

Labour is Out and Proud!

All summer long, the OFL will be supporting LGBTQ Pride events in communities across the province, but for the first time ever, the OFL will also be hosting a float in the largest Pride Parade in downtown Toronto. Under the banner, "We Are Ontario: OUT and PROUD!", LGBTQ trade union activists and allies will bring a labour's message of solidarity against austerity to the annual celebrations. Officers will be attending a variety of events and is calling on affiliates and community partners to get involved in local Pride celebrations.

A list of community Pride events are posted on the home page of the OFL website at www.OFL.ca



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

PART 8: UPCOMING EVENTS

June 21: Strategic Session on Pay Equity

On June 21, the Equal Pay Coalition will be holding a strategic session on pay equity to develop strategies for moving forward. The planning meeting will take place at 474 Bathurst Street, Suite 300 in Toronto. For more information, contact OFL Director of Women's Rights Carrol Anne Sceviour at csceviour@ofl.ca

November 9-11: OFL Equity Conference

From November 9 to 11, 2012, the OFL will be hosting a follow-up to its very first and highly successful Equity Retreat. The theme of the November conference will be "We Are Ontario: Putting Equity Ahead of Austerity" and the event will be opened up to members who belong to the OFL's many equity-seeking constituencies. Community groups will also be invited to add their voices and experiences to the event. The conference will take place in the Embassy Suites Niagara Falls and registration details will be posted to the OFL website by late summer.

December: OFL Women's Leadership Summit

OFL Women's Committee is in the early planning stages of a Women's Leadership Summit to be held mid-December. Details will be posted online and in the September President's Report.

Annual Dates to Remember

June 21:	National Aboriginal Day
June 27:	National Multicultural Day
July:	LGBTQ Pride Month
Sep 3:	Labour Day
Sep 21:	International Day of Peace
Oct 4:	Sisters In Spirit Vigils
Oct 10:	World Mental Health Day
Oct 17:	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty



Never too young for activism! Madison leads the April 21 Day of Action with her Grandpa.
Inset: Peel parents and kids defend child care.

PART 9: PHOTO CREDITS

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

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