



THE ONTARIO

**WE**

**WANT**  
ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR  
CONVENTION 2015

13<sup>TH</sup> BIENNIAL CONVENTION  
TORONTO • NOVEMBER 23-27, 2015

CONVENTION REPORT

**HUMAN**

**RIGHTS**



ONTARIO  
FEDERATION OF  
**LABOUR**



### **CONVENTION REPORT: HUMAN RIGHTS**

#### **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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1.

# HUMAN RIGHTS DEPARTMENT CONVENTION REPORT: INTRODUCTION

**“ Building strong secure relationships with our community allies around common issues and struggles. ”**

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We begin this report with a heartfelt thank you to two OFL Directors who retired since our last convention, Brother Duncan MacDonald and Sister Janice Gairey, whose support, knowledge and commitment to our work have led the way to numerous equity gains.

The OFL Human Rights Department is comprised of the Human Rights Committee, the Aboriginal Circle, the Workers of Colour Committee, the Persons with a Disability Committee and the Solidarity and Pride Committee. Together, the Department has made community building a central priority, with a specific focus on migrant workers, employment equity, youth, austerity, poverty, minimum wage and the Good Jobs for All campaign.

The OFL Human Rights Department has acted on many of the recommendations and resolutions passed at the 2013 OFL Convention. The resolutions and recommendations encompassed defending the next generation where the focus remains evident today: austerity, good jobs, protecting public services, (un)employment insurance for all, alleviating poverty, tax fairness and revenue generation, giving young people a fair chance at work and in society, securing pensions and benefits for all. The clear mandate from the 2013 Convention was supporting workers and their families in their communities and workplaces politically and socially.

One of our other mandates was to continue building strong secure relationships with our community allies around common issues and struggles. The plan of action incorporated a serious renewed commitment to putting human rights and equity issues at the centre of all OFL activism and mobilizations.

## 2.

# HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

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The OFL Human Rights Committee is made up of affiliate members and staff with expertise in human rights issues. The Standing Committee reports, advises and makes recommendations on human rights and equity: labour, civil, cultural, economic, political and social issues from a thematic or province-specific perspective to the OFL Executive Board and Council. With the support of the Human Rights Department, the committee undertakes resolving issues and concerns of a broader, structural and sometimes systemic nature through collective discussion and resolve. It is followed up with recommendations to the OFL Executive Board. The Committee brings alleged human rights violations or abuses to the OFL's attention. They contribute to the development of human rights standards and policy for labour. They engage in advocacy, raise public awareness, and provide advice to the other OFL departmental committees or working groups through an equity lens.

The Committee has worked hard to build longstanding, sustainable and respectful relationships with equity-centered community organizations like the Colour of Change, the Urban Alliance, the African Canadian, South Asian and Asian Legal Clinics, the Canadian Arab Federation, CBTU, ACLA and LATUC have been very successful initiatives both for labour and the community.

There has been consistently equal participation in community and labour organization sponsored events like workshops, OFL Common Front assemblies, educationals and community events.

Over the next term, the Committee will continue to work together to educate, lobby and develop training tools around austerity and other campaigns on equity and human rights specific issues that will dispel myths, build solidarity and eliminate barriers for all workers in Ontario.

The Committee will map out and initiate a focused lobby directed at the provincial government to re-enact employment equity legislation with clear guidelines, targets and enforcement policies.

The Committee will mount a campaign to lobby the provincial government to establish the Anti-Racism Secretariat outlined in the *Human Rights Code Amendment Act* as an entity to advance racial and social justice. The Committee will encourage this model of equity self-identification to be incorporated in all future OFL events, so that the findings can be documented and reported to the OFL Executive Board on a regular basis.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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- Jennifer Ahamed, OPSEU
- Mohamad Alsadi, UNIFOR
- Lloyd Brown, PSAC
- Anita Bryan, USW
- Learie Charles, CUPW
- Sharon DeSousa, PSAC
- Gino DiCiocco, OECTA
- Ana Fonseca, COPE
- Gina Gignac, CUPE
- Chris Karuhanga, OECTA
- Heather Kelley, VP-IAM
- Mehdi Kouhestaninejad, CLC
- Naveen Mehta, UFCW
- Wayne Milliner, OSSTF
- John Odell, UNIFOR
- Sonia Reynolds, SEIU
- Karen Sandercock, ONA
- Andy Summers, ONA
- Jackie Taylor, COPE
- Tricia Watt, TWU
- Joanne Webb, CUPE alternate

### OFL Officer and Staff:

- Irwin Nanda, OFL Executive Vice-President
- Carrol Anne Sceviour, OFL Human Rights Director

### 3.

## ABORIGINAL CIRCLE

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The Ontario Federation of Labour and its affiliates recognize the urgent need to respect and promote the inherent human rights of Aboriginal peoples particularly the right for their families and communities to retain shared responsibility for the upbringing, training, education, social and financial well being of their children and families.

Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit Peoples regionally, nationally and internationally have faced ongoing dispossession of their lands and resources. They are subject to repeated racism and discrimination and other human rights abuses. The OFL Vice-President representing Aboriginal Peoples and the OFL Aboriginal Circle's mandate is to gather appointed Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit representatives together to address, lobby, advocate and politicize economical, social, cultural, political, civil, spiritual and environmental rights specific to the First Nations peoples here in Ontario. When necessary, the OFL Aboriginal Circle supports any national or global campaigns initiated by Aboriginal, Métis and Inuit people, the Canadian Labour Congress and community allies.

Through recommendations, actions and activism, the OFL Aboriginal Circle encourages the labour movement and the governments of Ontario and Canada to follow the guidelines outlined in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* where cooperation with the First Nations people on the principles of justice, non discrimination, equality, democracy and respect for human rights is critical and necessary. The OFL Aboriginal Circle will continue to be part of the following campaigns:

- Truth and Reconciliation
- Shannen's Dream
- Idle No More
- Grassy Narrows
- February 14<sup>th</sup> Women's Memorial March
- Sisters in Spirit
- Boiled Water Alerts
- Assembly of First Nations
- Chiefs of Ontario
- Defenders of the Land

The Circle will also be preparing tools resources kit for affiliates on how to set up an effective Aboriginal Circle. The Circle will continue to host meetings with affiliate and community Aboriginal Circles and committees to talk about a collective community/union action plan for the next term.

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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- Michelle Byck-Johnston, IFPTE
- Gina Gignac, CUPE alternate
- Sheila Karasiewicz, PSAC alternate
- Pamela Lepine, CUPW
- Cynthia Lilly, IUEC
- Sandra Miller, OSSTF
- Tony Nicolas, PSAC
- Wanda Power, USW
- Linda Prosser, OPSEU
- Michelle Riley, CUPW
- Pauline Saulnier, OPSEU
- Joanne Webb, CUPE
- Glenn Wheeler, COPE
- Elaine White, UNIFOR

#### OFL Officer and Staff:

- Irwin Nanda, OFL Executive Vice-President
- Carrol Anne Sceviour, OFL Human Rights Director

## 4.

# WORKERS OF COLOUR COMMITTEE

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The OFL Workers of Colour Committee was formed to address the effect of racism, oppression, social injustice and other human rights violations. The space at the Committee allows representatives from affiliates to share and continuously acknowledge, recognize, confront and address pervasive racism at individual, workplace, systemic and institutional levels.

The OFL's Annual Equity Retreat provided a space for OFL Equity Committees to join in open dialogue and strategic planning to fight back against austerity and move an intersectional equality agenda forward. The Workers of Colour Symposium in 2015 was attended by over 100 delegates.

The committee was also responsible for acknowledging Black History Month by co-sponsoring events in 2014 and 2015. Two successful South Asian celebrations were also hosted as well in 2014 and 2015 where the South Asian community and Union activists were acknowledged.

A key event for the committee was the second African Canadian Summit where over 200 community and labour leaders came together on engaging labour, governments and public institutions as a resource for the African Canadian Community and other racialized communities to address the intricacies of austerity specific to their communities. The Summit also addressed the need for positive opportunities for education and training for youth followed by decent full time non-precarious employment with benefits. This action is one of the most important platforms on which the battle for dignity, fairness and access to good jobs is needed by advocating for fair wages and income equality.

A key success flowing from the Summit was the commitment secured from Toronto Mayor John Tory to end the police practice of “carding” – the practice of routinely and randomly stopping citizens in the streets to obtain personal information which disproportionately affect young black men.

Another major action that flowed from the African Canadian Summit was the vote mobilization for the 2015 federal elections. Comprehensive training and mobilizing materials for the “Black Votes Matter” were developed.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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- Gogi Bhandal, CLC
- Gina Gignac, CUPE alternate
- Sandra Griffiths-Bonaparte, PSAC
- Elizabeth Ha, OPSEU
- Eleanor Hercules, USW
- Veriline Howe, CUPE
- Chris Karuhanga, OECTA
- Luristein Lewis, CUPW
- Nicole Ma, PSAC alternate
- Naveen Mehta, UFCW
- John O'Dell, CEP
- Ruth Pryce, UNIFOR
- Frank Saptel, IAM – Guest
- Irene Taylor, OSSTF
- Jackie Taylor, COPE
- Peter Thompson, OPSEU
- Tricia Watt, TWU

### OFL Officer and Staff:

- Irwin Nanda, OFL Executive Vice-President
- Carrol Anne Sceviour, OFL Human Rights Director

## 5.

# PERSONS WITH A DISABILITY COMMITTEE

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The Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) was passed in 2005. Its goal is to make Ontario accessible for people with disabilities by 2025. Ontario now has accessibility standards in five areas:

- customer service;
- employment;
- information and communications;
- transportation; and
- design of public spaces.

The OFL Persons With a Disabilities Committee's mandate is to work with affiliates and partners with like-minded community organizations like the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)* to educate the broader labour movement on current disability issues and partner with community organizations who lobby the provincial government on behalf of the disabilities community.

The Committee worked with the OFL's Occupational Disability Support Program (ODRT) to develop the OFL Member & Community Service Policy which was in compliance with the Customer Service Standard developed under the AODA. The document was circulated to all affiliates and they were encouraged to develop similar policies for their organizations.

The Committee is working closely on all OFL events and campaigns to ensure they are accessible to all members. Early in 2015, the Committee met and made recommendations to the OFL Executive Board to ensure that the 2015 OFL Convention is the most accessible to date.

The members are kept informed of OFL activities such as rallies, conferences and educationals to ensure that the voices and concerns of injured workers and people with disabilities are heard, acknowledged and addressed.

At the national level, the committee members are made aware of the Canadian Labour Congress' Disability Working Group's action plan.

The Committee will continue to work with the AODA Alliance to get a full update on how many organizations have filed mandatory Accessibility Reports under the AODA, as well as how many have been audited or inspected.

It is the Committee's top priority to create a fully accessible province where every Ontarian who lives or visits can fully participate economically, socially, and physically.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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- Teresa Colangelo, CUPE
- Tracy Danbook, OPSEU
- Gina Gignac, CUPE alternate
- Terry Hall, COPE
- Cynthia Haynes, OPSEU
- John Jedrasik, PSAC alternate
- Marc Praill, UFCW
- Greg Snider, OPSEU alternate
- Souda Soubra, PSAC
- Steve Wanless, UNIFOR

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- Carrol Anne Sceviour, OFL Human Rights Director

## 6.

# SOLIDARITY & PRIDE COMMITTEE

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The OFL Solidarity & Pride Committee has had an active two years. Members serve as a resource to both affiliates and community members on combating homophobia and transphobia in the workplace and our communities.

Coming out or being out at work can be challenging and, for many workers, dangerous. The Committee continues to build awareness of workers' rights on anti-harassment and violence under the *Occupational Health & Safety Act*. The Committee raises the issues of bullying and violence in our promotion of Pink Shirt Day held in April of each year. Throughout the year, the Committee highlights the issue of violence experienced by members of the trans community and marks November 25<sup>th</sup> National Day of Trans Remembrance.

On May 17, the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, we stand in solidarity with our lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members and with LGBT communities around the world. The committee has developed a poster and statements which are available to our affiliates and community partners.

There are LGBTQ workers in every equity-seeking community. The OFL's Annual Equity Retreat provided a space for Solidarity & Pride Committee members to join in open dialogue and strategic planning to move an intersectional equality agenda forward.

In December 2014, a diverse group of 100 union and community LGBTQ activists and allies attended the OFL's Out4Equality Conference. Participants shared strategies on how to support, empower and mobilize LGBTQ members in their workplaces, unions and communities.

A key legislative victory was passage of Ontario NDP MP Cheri DiNovo Bill to ban so-called "conversion therapy" for minors, a practice aimed at changing the sexual orientation of youths who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transsexual. Ontario became the first province to do so.

The committee worked with the CLC, EGALE, NDP and other national groups for federal legislation for trans rights.

A key focus of our work is the co-ordination, mobilization and participation in Pride events such as parades, picnics and rallies which are scheduled across the province from May to September each year. The Committee develops pride event lists, educational materials and union-proud handouts for distribution.

The 2014 provincial election and 2015 federal election saw the OFL's Solidarity & Pride Committee actively organizing a campaign to mobilize the Queer vote.



## MOVING FORWARD

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Through our membership in International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) the Committee will continue to support the decriminalisation of sexual minorities in more than 70 UN member states. We will focus on mobilizing Ontario participation and visibility in both year round community events and Pride week activities.

To strengthen protections for transition workers the Committee will continue to work with the CLC, EGALE and other national groups for federal legislation for trans rights.

Convention resolutions will reflect the concerns, priorities and actions required as identified by activists in addressing LGBTQ equality. The Committee will review its 2015 mandate in early 2016 and set a work plan to strengthen this essential work.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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- Sheri Birch, ETFO
- David Carr, PSAC
- Rashida Collins, CLC
- Laura Davis, UNIFOR alternate
- Carolyn Egan, USW
- Cheryl Fullerton, OECTA
- Jacques Marengere, PSAC alternate
- Wayne Milliner, OSSTF alternate
- Casey Oraa, COPE
- Chandra-Li Paul, IATSE
- Chris Peterson, OSSTF
- Kellie Scanlan, UNIFOR
- Stephen Seaborn, VP CUPE
- Thulasi Srikanthan, UFCW
- Martine Stonehouse, CUPE
- Karen Urchak, CUPW
- Jay Yerex, UNITE HERE 75

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