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# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

## ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

FALL 2014



VOLUME 4, ISSUE 4



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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

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

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

October 6 , 2014

Brothers and Sisters,



There's no doubt about it: the Ontario labour movement has not been so influential in a generation – thanks to the OFL's Workers' Rights campaign which stopped Tim Hudak's rise to power.

A year ago the labour movement was in the fight of its life. Hudak's Conservatives were on top of the polls and were secretly working with the U.S. Tea Party to impose anti-union, "right-to-work" policies on Ontario.

But the OFL brought our unions together in an unprecedented campaign. We engaged our local union leadership through sixteen town hall meetings and created 10,000 activists ready to help drive down the Conservative vote among union members. It worked, lowering the number of union members who vote Conservative from an estimated 30% to 18%.

Collectively, our affiliates all agreed to support incumbent NDP MPPs, and to work together to identify priority ridings to defeat Conservatives. Our OFL teams canvassed in ten ridings for the NDP, helping to send seven NDP MPPs to Queen's Park.

As a result of our success, a lot of people have taken note – even the Harper Conservatives are sending fundraising letters to their supporters warning about the power of the union movement.

Many of the strategies we used can work federally in Ontario, and in other provinces, but the election strategy will require a new calculation.

The rules of the game are different federally from those in Ontario. For instance, spending rules are much more stringent when it comes to advertising and contributions to campaigns.

As well, Harper's incumbent MPs enjoy a tremendous head start over their challengers. Our Workers' Rights campaign prevented a party from becoming government, which is much less difficult than defeating a party that is already holding government.

Another wild card is the thirty new federal ridings that have been created for the next election. Half of them are in Ontario.

On the other hand, the federal NDP is in a very strong position. Jack Layton's 2011 campaign propelled it to Official Opposition status. The NDP now holds 97 of the current 308 seats, compared with the Conservatives' 161 seats, and the Liberals' 37.

I met with NDP leader Tom Mulcair in his office on Parliament Hill last week to discuss the party's policies and election plans. I was very encouraged by our discussion and his recent public statements, particularly his promise to bring in a national child care program, to return the OAS eligibility age to 65, to protect home postal delivery services, to re-introduce the federal minimum wage at \$15 per hour, and to ensure that corporations stop their "freeloading" and pay their fair share.

The NDP is on the right track.

Ontario will be a key battleground in the federal election. We will be working very closely with the Canadian Labour Congress, which is taking the lead on developing the labour movement's strategy for the federal election, expected in October 2015 (or even sooner).

I have received many comments from our affiliates, who are rightly very proud of how our labour movement came together to defeat Hudak's anti-union agenda in the election. The OFL will be ready to work collectively with its affiliates, once again, to defeat Harper, too.

In solidarity,

Sid Ryan, President of the Ontario Federation of Labour

# OFL PRESSES WYNNE GOVERNMENT FOR BETTER WORKER PROTECTIONS

The Ontario Legislative Assembly will return on October 20, 2014, but the OFL has not been waiting for its return to begin pressing the Wynne government for better worker protection. We have used the summer months to build relationships at all levels, from parliamentary staff, to Cabinet ministers, to the Premier herself.

Since the last President's Report, the OFL has had positive and productive meetings with Premier Kathleen Wynne on July 10, Minister of Labour Kevin Flynn on July 17, and Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) Mitzie Hunter on July 28. These meetings provided an opportunity to share the labour movement's priorities for the coming months, and we did just that.

## LABOUR LAW

Following the direction of the sub-committee of the OFL Executive Board that was set up in June to lay out post-election priorities, our top item in meetings with the Premier and the Labour minister was labour law reform. It is clear that the government is considering labour law reform, which may or may not address our concerns. As a labour movement, we should prepare our leadership and membership to speak out about the importance of some key reforms, such as card check certification, successor rights in the contract sector, access to first contract arbitration and reinstatement during organizing drives. A strong and concerted voice from our movement about the importance of these reforms will ensure this opportunity for positive change is not missed.

## PENSIONS

In the meetings with the Premier and with the Associate Minister of Finance, ensuring that the Ontario Registered Pension Plan (ORPP) mirrors the Canada Pension Plan was also raised as a key priority by the OFL. The Premier expressed two central questions the government is still sorting out with the ORPP:



### ***Ensuring that the Ontario Registered Pension Plan (ORPP) mirrors the Canada Pension Plan was also raised as a key priority for the OFL***

1. How to best structure the low-income threshold; and
2. Whether and how those with existing workplace plans will access the ORPP.

We emphasized how important it was for labour to continue to be consulted to ensure that the ORPP works for Ontario workers.

We urged the Premier to move away from privatization (including public-private partnerships and the monetization of assets) and advised that new revenue needs to be raised through fair taxation to ensure public services are adequately funded. In both meetings we also highlighted the need for stronger protections for vulnerable workers and a minimum wage that brings workers above the

poverty line. The tone was very positive and we hope to see progress on some key issues.

## MINIMUM WAGE

Already we see that our hard work alongside community partners advocating for a \$14-per-hour minimum wage indexed to inflation and for protections for vulnerable workers has yielded results. The introduction of Bill 18 (formerly Bill 146 and 165) on July 16 introduces changes that we have been advocating for many months or years: indexing the minimum wage to inflation, banning recruitment fees for all migrant workers, lifting the \$10,000 cap on the amount recoverable from employers for unpaid wages under the Employment Standards Act, eliminating the loophole that excludes unpaid apprentices and co-op students from health and safety protections, making client companies that hire through temp agencies responsible for their actions, and ensuring every worker has access to a poster outlining their rights.

We hope this is just the beginning and we will continue to encourage the government to put forward deeper and stronger protections for vulnerable workers.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

In our meetings health and safety was raised as an important priority for the labour movement. It has been over four years since the tragic accident that resulted in the deaths of four construction workers on a Metron Construction site in West Toronto and over three years since the Tony Dean Expert Advisory Panel released its report on Occupational Health and Safety.

However, only a fraction of the recommendations have been acted upon. We urged the government to follow up on the work of the Prevention Office and explore ways to ensure it moves along faster in the coming months. With the Minister of Labour we also raised the need for sector-specific health and safety regulation in the education sector and concerns about the underlying approach of behaviour-based safety programs.

## **WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

On the workers' compensation file, we made it clear that improving the system is a top priority for the labour movement in the coming months.

We received word last week regarding favourable changes to the "Pre-existing Conditions" policy which are explained in detail later in this President's Report on page six.

## **LABOUR ADJUSTMENT**

Members of the Labour Adjustment committee will be meeting with Reza Moridi, Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) this week. Members will remind the minister of the 2012 "Labour-Government: Guiding Principles and Best Practices in Labour Adjustment" agreement between the OFL and

the MTCU, and will discuss the important role played by Action Centres.

It is clear that we have much work to do. To facilitate communication and collaboration we continue to encourage the government to set up a Labour Market Partners Forum, which would help to facilitate communication between various labour market partners – including government, business and labour – and advise government on appropriate public policy responses and initiatives.

OFL Directors and our committee members have been in regular contact with Ministry staff to follow-up on our discussions with Ministers.

Our OFL committees are fully engaged and committed to advocating strongly for worker protection. We will be ready when the Legislative Assembly returns in a few weeks.

# **OFL AND CLC WORK TO STRENGTHEN ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN (ORPP)**

We are working with our affiliates and community partners to ensure that Ontarians benefit from the strongest Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) possible, and to push back the business community and the Harper government who want a weak, ineffective program.

The OFL has long-supported the Canadian Labour Congress' campaign to convince the

federal government to expand the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), and many provinces, including Ontario, have joined our call. But the Harper Conservatives have refused, leaving provinces like Ontario to try to provide for Ontarians' future with little federal help. The ORPP was re-announced by the Ontario Government in the July budget.

The OFL and the CLC, through our Pension Committee, are developing a briefing paper for affiliates on the ORPP. We will be developing an action plan and events across Ontario to build a strong ORPP that is compatible with the CPP.

The Ontario government is planning to hold hearings across the province, and we need to make our voices heard. More details to follow.



**CLC President Hassan Yussuff and Sid Ryan attend an activist rally for Olivia Chow**

# OFL MAKING HEADWAY ON IMPORTANT WSIB POLICIES

The OFL, working together with the Ontario Network of Injured Workers Groups (ONIWG), affiliates, health professionals and community legal clinics, is making important progress at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).

After two years of inundating us with consultations, studies and meetings, the WSIB has developed new and revised policies as part of its Benefits Policy Review. Specifically, a new Pre-existing Conditions policy and a new Determining Permanent Impairments policy were developed. They will come into force on November 1, 2014.

We have taken our first look at the policies, most importantly the Pre-Existing Condition Policy, and there are several positives.

The policy now incorporates the requirement that the WSIB decide claims on their true merits and justice, giving the benefit of the doubt to the injured worker. The policy has been revised to incorporate the long accepted approach to claims adjudication, which is that the claim will be allowed if the workplace injury has made a significant contribution to the worker's health condition.

While these are not everything we asked for, it is an important step forward. Now the challenge

will be to make sure the WSIB implements the changes.

We are seeing, from the injured workers we represent, that the Board has been cutting injured workers' compensation by ignoring its own long-standing policies, denying claims, and deeming that injured workers have returned to work, whether they have or not. Older workers have borne the brunt. The WSIB routinely denies their claims or reduces their benefits if there is even a hint of evidence that they have a "pre-existing" condition, even if that condition never gave them any problems before or caused them to lose time from work.

Labour and the injured worker movement launched an aggressive campaign against these policies the Board was proposing. Support came from health professionals who deal with injured workers as well as from municipalities concerned about downloading of costs to the Ontario Works Program. Our efforts have had a significant positive impact.

While these are major steps forward, we remain concerned that the revised policy still allows employers or WSIB to focus on whether the pre-existing condition has "overwhelmed" the work injuries. This means that for worker representatives and injured workers, we will need to show that the injuries suffered by the

worker resulted in a significant permanent worsening of the worker's health condition. In a sense, this is what we have always had to prove. But the difference in 2014 from 2008 is that WSIB's frontline adjudication is much more stringent – basically they are asking for much more evidence that the work injury contributed to the worker's health condition.

This all means that we must now work hard with the WSIB to influence the best practices and adjudicative guidance documents which they will develop to direct the decision making by their adjudicators.

One hundred years ago, Ontario's workers won a major victory, when our public workers' compensation system was established following the recommendations of Chief Justice Meredith. Overall, this system has served workers well, providing guaranteed no-fault benefits to vulnerable injured workers through a publicly administered Board.

We want that system to continue to provide income security to workers when they need it most, and that is why we have fought so hard on these crucial issues of benefits policies. Have we made progress? Yes. But we need to remain vigilant and work hard to ensure that these improvements in policy are real on the ground.



OFL WCB Committee members



# OFL OFFERS DIALOGUE BETWEEN ONTARIO NDP AND LABOUR MOVEMENT

The Ontario NDP has been meeting with riding associations to collect feedback on the June Ontario election campaign, and the Provincial Council meeting in Toronto this month was another opportunity to hear from members. More than 250 delegates attended, and the OFL's Labour Caucus meeting was standing-room-only.

From our many conversations with party activists and officials, there is no doubt that communication between the party and the labour movement can be strengthened. The Ontario Federation of Labour has invited the senior leadership of the Ontario NDP to hold a discussion with labour movement leaders.

The party should also consider holding similar discussions with community organizations and

activist groups. As well, a variety of issues that emerged from the floor could be addressed through an ad hoc committee of riding associations, working with party officials.

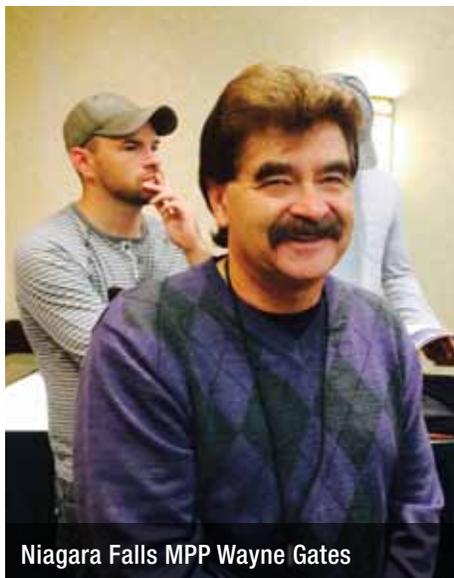
A meeting with Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath's new Chief of Staff and Principal Secretary at Queen's Park, Michael Balagus, will be held in the coming weeks.



Labour Caucus



Oshawa MPP Jennifer French and Sid Ryan



Niagara Falls MPP Wayne Gates



Labour Caucus

# THIS LABOUR DAY, ONTARIO IS BENEFITING FROM THE “UNION ADVANTAGE”

BY SID RYAN

A year from today, Canada could be in the throes of a federal election. Stephen Harper's Conservatives have already started laying the groundwork for their re-election campaign, and two important themes are emerging: jobs and the economy.

A key battleground will be Ontario. Our province is vital to Harper's re-election plans, because it sent plenty of Conservative MPs to Ottawa last time around – enough to give Harper a majority government, despite the fact that the Conservatives flopped completely in Quebec.

But in the years since the 2011 election, our economy has taken a beating. Ontario's unemployment rate is running higher than the national average, and even hit 9% in beleaguered Windsor, leaving a lot of people anxious about their future.

This hardship has Harper worried, so his finance minister Joe Oliver spent a whole week in southwestern Ontario in August trying to convince people that the Conservatives really care about the unemployed and job creation.

Stephen Harper's track record has shown that he considers workers to be bumps in the road for the big-business-friendly changes he wants to make to the economy.

He has used his power to force federal workers back to work, has introduced laws targeting unions' finances unfairly, and has abused his Temporary Foreign Worker Program to drive down wages on the backs of vulnerable and exploited migrant workers.

But by focusing on his perceived political enemies, Stephen Harper would be taking a big risk. He could end up tanking just like Tim Hudak did in the provincial election this year.

Tim Hudak's Conservatives stole a page from the U.S. “Tea Party” movement's playbook, promoting laws to bar workers from bargaining

over pensions, health coverage, safety, sick leave or vacations. Fortunately, the union movement came together in a campaign to convince Ontarians to reject the Conservatives' attacks.

Over the next year the Canadian Labour Congress and the Ontario Federation of Labour will be informing voters about the “union advantage.”

For instance, nearly one in three people employed in Ontario is a union member. If you are one of these 1.6 million workers, you enjoy a tremendous advantage because your union has negotiated a fair wage and workday for you.

In Ontario the average hourly wage for union members is \$29.22, a full \$6.42 more per hour

***Stephen Harper's track record has shown that he considers workers to be bumps in the road for the big-business-friendly changes he wants to make to the economy***

— Sid Ryan

than their non-unionized co-workers, who only earn an average of \$22.80 per hour.

The union advantage isn't just good for workers, it's good for Ontario communities too.

Unionized workers provide an extra \$366 million to Ontario's economy every week. Toronto's share of the union advantage adds up to an extra \$105 million every week spent by the city's 600,000 unionized workers.

It's clear that unions benefit their members, but the Ontario Federation of Labour is working to help people who don't have a union too.

The OFL has been working closely with community groups, and together we convinced the Ontario government to boost the minimum wage to \$11 per hour, but that's still not high enough. Everyone knows that \$11 falls far short of a livable wage, so we will continue to advocate for the minimum wage to be raised to \$14 per hour.

The OFL also wants to ensure that everyone can retire with dignity. Two-thirds of the workforce have no pensions.

In Ontario, nearly 1.3 million workers do not have access to any type of employer-sponsored workplace pension.

The Ontario Federation of Labour has been supporting the Canadian Labour Congress's efforts to convince the federal government to expand the Canada Pension Plan.

Ottawa is dragging its feet, but the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan was included in the latest provincial budget at Queen's Park. We will work to ensure that the ORPP is introduced with the strongest provisions possible, that it is compatible with the Canada Pension Plan, and that it provides a defined benefit funded through mandatory contributions.

We have a busy year ahead, and by the time the federal election rolls around on Labour Day next year, Stephen Harper will have a hard time winning votes by attacking unions. The Conservatives already have to contend with angry veterans, scientists, environmentalists, First Nations and many others.

After Tim Hudak's resignation, the new leader of the Ontario Conservatives remarked that the party needs to “stop attacking people.” I think that would be good advice for Stephen Harper, too.

*Sid Ryan is the President of the Ontario Federation of Labour, representing 1 million members in Ontario.*

# ONTARIO'S UNION ADVANTAGE YOUNG WORKERS

**\$11.1 MILLION** more every week!

There were **110,000** union members between 15 and 24 years old working everywhere in Ontario in 2013 – about **13%** of the province's workforce in that age group.

They earned, on average, **\$2.69/hour** more, thanks to their union.



**\$15.66/HOUR**

**\$12.97/HOUR**

This added up to **\$11,105,600** every week!

## FAIRNESS WORKS



Women with unions earned **\$7.83/hour** more than women without a union at work. The wage gap\* was **\$93/week** smaller for women with a union.

\*the gap in average weekly pay between women and men working the same hours, union vs non-union.



Workers of all ages earned, on average, **\$6.42/hour** more with a union at work. That delivered over **\$366.2 MILLION** more each week into communities across the province.

The **UNION ADVANTAGE** really adds up.

The fair wages and work hours that unions negotiated delivered over **\$11.1 MILLION** more every week into the pockets of young workers to help them start their lives and support their families.

Those extra dollars get spent at local businesses, where they sustain jobs, and support community services that add to everyone's quality of life.

**That's the union advantage!**



Canadian Labour Congress  
Congrès du travail du Canada

[www.fairnessworks.ca](http://www.fairnessworks.ca)



# ONTARIO'S UNION ADVANTAGE FOR WORKERS

**\$366.2 MILLION** more every week!

There were **1,629,200** union members working everywhere in Ontario in 2013 – about **28%** of the province's workforce. Those workers earned, on average, **\$6.42/hour** more because their unions negotiated fair wages and work hours.



**\$29.22/HOUR**

**\$22.80/HOUR**

This added up to **\$366,227,868** every week!

## FAIRNESS WORKS



Women with unions earned **\$7.83/hour** more than women without a union at work. The wage gap\* was **\$93/week** smaller for women with a union.



Young workers (aged 15-24) earned **\$2.69/hour** more with a union at work. That added over **\$11.1 MILLION** more each week to help start their lives and support their families.

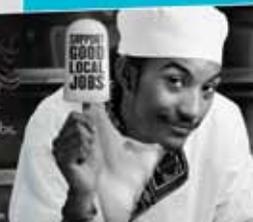
The **UNION ADVANTAGE** really adds up.

The fair wages and work hours that unions negotiated delivered over **\$366.2 MILLION** more every week into the provincial economy through better paycheques for workers.

Those extra dollars get spent at local businesses, where they sustain jobs, and support community services that add to everyone's quality of life. **That's the union advantage.**

Canadian Labour Congress  
Congrès du travail du Canada

[www.fairnessworks.ca](http://www.fairnessworks.ca)



# ONTARIO'S UNION ADVANTAGE FOR WOMEN

**\$231.2 MILLION** more every week!

There were **842,000** women union members working everywhere in Ontario in 2013 – about **28.8%** of women employees. They earned, on average, **\$7.83/hour** more than non-union women because their unions negotiated fair wages and work hours.



**\$28.58/HOUR**

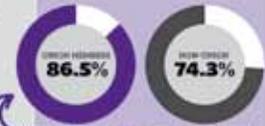
**\$20.75/HOUR**

This added up to **\$231,198,156** every week!

## FAIRNESS WORKS

On average in Ontario, the wage gap\* was **\$93/week** smaller for women with a union at work.

\*the gap in average weekly pay between women and men working the same hours, union vs non-union.



Women's average weekly wage as a % of men's

The **UNION ADVANTAGE** really adds up.

The fair wages and work hours that unions negotiated delivered over **\$231.2 MILLION** more every week into the provincial economy through better paycheques for working women.

Collective bargaining and pay equity measures significantly reduce the gap between what women get paid for their time, compared to men when they work the same hours.

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PHOTO GALLERY



Toronto and York Region Labour Council Labour Day Parade



World Pride 2014

# PHOTO GALLERY



Underground Freedom Ride



Hamilton Take Back the Night



OFL Aboriginal Circle



Young Workers workshop

Rally to Save Canada Post



Peoples' Social Forum

## OFL'S LABOUR POST-SECONDARY SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

The OFL awards two scholarships worth \$2,000 each to a member or the child of a member of a local union affiliated to the OFL.

The 2014-15 recipients are Prama Roy of Midland, who is starting her first year of

the Bachelor of Science (Honours) program at Queens University, and Karlee Sobczak of Dundas, who is enrolled in the Social Sciences Program at McMaster University.

This year, applicants were asked to answer the following question:

“What advice would you give to the labour movement for engaging youth and young workers?”

Here is what they told us:



***The union movement must reflect the priorities of young people as more youth start to participant in [unions].***

— Prama Roy, Queens University

***It is important to engage young workers and the most successful way is to take the time to listen to their concerns and then embark on a discussion of the union.***

— Karlee Sobczak, McMaster University



## NEW INDUCTEES TO LABOUR HONOUR ROLL ANNOUNCED

Each year, the Ontario Federation of Labour recognizes the contribution of five retired or deceased trade union activists by adding their names to the OFL's Labour Honour Roll and awarding two scholarships in their names.

This year the OFL is proud to recognize five new inductees:

**Brother Robert Barlow**, PSAC/UTE (deceased)

**Sister Kathie Fowlie**,

Unifor, Local 222 (deceased)

**Brother Armando Colafranceschi**,

IUPAT District Council 46 (deceased)

**Brother Romeo Le Blanc**,

COPE 343 (deceased)

**Sister Beth Wheatley**, OSSTF

Their names will be added to the Labour Honour Roll plaque in the OFL's office. We hope their activism will inspire current and future generations of activists to dedicate themselves to the labour movement and progressive social change.

# 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 EDUCATIONAL GATHERING

NOVEMBER 28 – 30, 2014  
 Ontario Federation of Labour 15, Gervais Drive, Toronto

Plan to attend the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Aboriginal Educational Gathering. The OFL and its affiliates have a long history of activism and lobbying on Aboriginal Peoples, Métis and Inuit issues. This is a Gathering that is reaching out to all non-Aboriginal People – labour and community.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** contact  
 Janice Gairey at 416-443-7655 or [jgairey@ofl.ca](mailto:jgairey@ofl.ca).  
 Visit the OFL website: [ofl.ca/index.php/category/issues/aboriginal](http://ofl.ca/index.php/category/issues/aboriginal)

# ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR LENDERS ITS SUPPORT TO HEAL100KIDS

The Ontario Federation of Labour has thrown its support behind the Heal100Kids humanitarian project led by Palestinian physician Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish. The project hopes to bring 100 severely wounded children from war-torn Gaza to Canada for medical treatment.

Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish is a Palestinian physician and the author of *I Shall Not Hate: A Gaza Doctor's Journey*, a memoir about the loss of his three daughters and his niece to Israeli shelling in 2009. He is now based at the University of Toronto.

"I spoke to Dr. Abuelaish and thanked him personally for his remarkable efforts and inspiring commitment to peace," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "I am pleased to offer him the support of the Ontario Federation of Labour to help the children of Gaza."



Dr. Izzeldin Abuelaish

The need for medical assistance is urgent. September's Gaza update from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that 4,281 Palestinians were injured by Israeli forces.

"The OFL calls upon Prime Minister Stephen Harper to support this project fully," said OFL President Sid Ryan. "Let's get the most seriously wounded Palestinian children out of the fighting in Gaza, and give them safe passage into Canada's well-equipped hospitals, as soon as possible."

Dr. Abuelaish's humanitarian project, described on the website [www.heal100kids.com](http://www.heal100kids.com), is receiving widespread support. Kingston General Hospital has already said that it will accept these children, as has SickKids Hospital in Toronto. Tom Mulcair's NDP Official Opposition has supported the project, as well as Liberal Party Leader Justin Trudeau.

Learn more at [Heal100Kids.com](http://Heal100Kids.com)

## PHOTO GALLERY



CBTU Convention





## 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

# CUBAN MP MARIELA CASTRO ESPIN PRESENTED OFL WORKERS' RIGHTS AWARD AT WORLD PRIDE

The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) presented Mariela Castro Espin of Cuba with the OFL Outstanding Workers' Rights Advances Award for 2014. Ms. Castro Espin was presented the award by Sid Ryan, President of the OFL, at a reception hosted by the Canadian Labour Congress at Pride Labour House on June 26, 2014.

Mariela Castro Espin is a Member of the Cuban Parliament and Director of the Cuban National Center for Sex Education (CENESEX).

CENESEX campaigns for effective AIDS prevention as well as recognition and acceptance of homosexuality, bisexuality, transvestitism, transsexuality and human rights.

In 2005, Ms. Castro Espin proposed a project to allow transgendered Cubans to receive sex reassignment surgery and change their legal gender. The measure became law in June 2008 and sex reassignment surgery is now available to Cubans without charge.

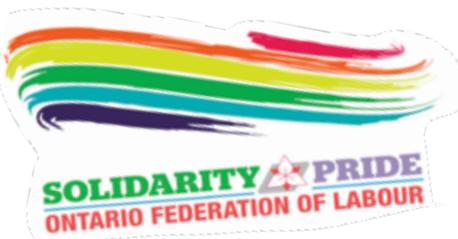
Because of Ms. Mariela's commitment to LGBTQ rights, in 2013 amendments to the Workplace Code of Cuba including discrimination protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity and HIV status.

"Sister Castro Espin's tireless work has secured protections for LGBTQ workers in every sector of Cuba's workforce," said Sid Ryan. "The Ontario Federation of Labour and our 54 affiliated unions recognize this historic achievement and celebrate it as an inspiration for unions across the Americas."

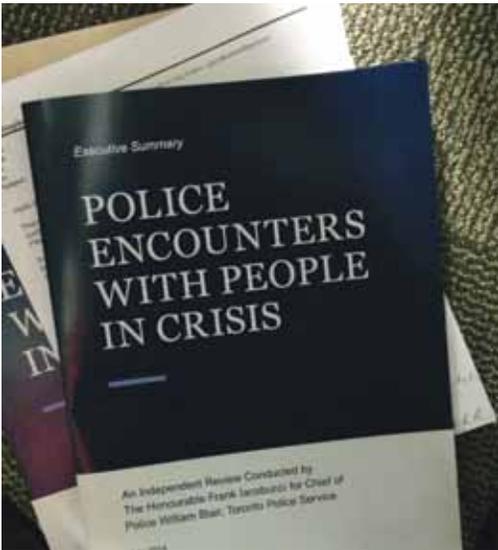
Ms. Castro Espin is the daughter of current Cuban president Raúl Castro and feminist and revolutionary Vilma Espin, and is the niece of former president Fidel Castro.



Mariela Castro Espin accepts the 2014 OFL Outstanding Workers' Rights Advances Award from Sid Ryan



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



Gary Pieters of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations and Irwin Nanda of the OFL speak to reporters

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.

 The banner features a photograph of a diverse crowd of people at a Pride event, with many raising their hands. Overlaid on the right side of the image is a purple graphic with white text.
 

**out4equality**

OFL SOLIDARITY & PRIDE CONFERENCE

November 20 – 22, 2014  
Oakham House, Ryerson University, Toronto

[ofl.ca/index.php/ofl-solidarity-pride-conference-nov-20-22-2014](http://ofl.ca/index.php/ofl-solidarity-pride-conference-nov-20-22-2014)

# NDP PROPOSES FOR \$15 PER HOUR FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE

Federal NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair, while speaking to Unifor members in Vancouver, announced that if elected, the NDP would reintroduce a federal minimum wage indexed to inflation, and would set it at \$15 per hour.

The OFL was consulted by the federal NDP because of our successful campaign in Ontario, with many community partners, to increase Ontario's minimum wage. This year Ontario's minimum wage was indexed to inflation for the first time, but was only raised to \$11 per hour, three dollars short of our proposed target of \$14 per hour.

We encouraged the federal NDP to go even higher to \$15 per hour, which they did, setting an important standard for all provinces and territories to achieve. In the OFL release to the Ontario news media, President Sid Ryan said, "This is a progressive measure that reduces income inequality and promotes social justice."

The federal minimum wage is part of a series of progressive proposals, including national childcare, and restoring home mail delivery service.



## OFUR ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT



Suzanne Clancy, OPSEU Local 240, Mohawk College faculty, was elected the new president of the Ontario Federation of Union Retirees (OFUR) at its Eleventh Biennial Convention, April 10-11, 2014, held at the Travelodge Hotel Toronto Airport.

The convention was attended by over 70 delegates and guests. John Cartwright,

President of Toronto and York Region Labour Council welcomed the delegates; Sid Ryan, President of OFL, gave a rousing and inspiring keynote speech reinforcing the role and importance of retirees in the union movement; and Sister Brynne Sinclair-Waters gave an update on the OFL campaign to defeat Hudak and the attack on worker rights.

OFUR evolved from a chapter of the Canadian Congress of Union Retirees in the mid-1980s and is dedicated to the proposition that Ontario retirees, as free citizens, are entitled to secure and protect their mutual welfare and that of their families by all legitimate means. A wide range of retiree clubs and affiliates representing thousands of retirees are affiliated with OFUR.

The seventeen elected OFUR Council members bring a broad range of skill and experience to the organization, representing affiliates from Unifor, Soar, OSSTF/ARM, SEIU and OPSEU, from Sarnia, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Oshawa, Hamilton, Kitchener and Toronto.

If your retiree group is not already a member of OFUR, or has let its membership lapse, we welcome you to join our movement. Let's promote the achievement of retirees, and all working peoples, who are interested in all fields of common endeavour. Affiliation forms are available on the website, [www.ofur.ca](http://www.ofur.ca), or contact Joyce Cruickshank, Secretary, OFUR, 50 Four Seasons Court, Kitchener, Ontario, N2E 2A1.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## OCT. 18 & 19: ONTARIO HEALTH COALITION (OHC) HEALTH ACTION ASSEMBLY & CONFERENCE

The OHC Assembly and Conference will be held at St. Stephen's Community House in Kensington Market, 91 Bellevue Avenue, Toronto. Further information on their website <http://web.net/ohc/>

## NOV. 8: COALITION OF BLACK TRADE UNIONISTS ONTARIO CHAPTER (CBTU)

### PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF VENUE!!

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists invites you to their 18th Annual Awards Dinner, Dance & Fundraiser on November 8, with the theme, "Looking Forward to the Future." It will be held at Spirale Banquet & Conference Centre, 888 Don Mills Road, Toronto. To purchase tickets contact Tricia Watt: 647-333-8065 or [trinicwat@rogers.com](mailto:trinicwat@rogers.com), For more information visit <http://cbtu.ca>

## NOV. 14-16: ONTARIO NDP 2014 CONVENTION

Located at South Building Metro Toronto Convention Centre, 222 Bremner Boulevard, Toronto. For convention details go to [www.ontariondp.ca/convention\\_2014](http://www.ontariondp.ca/convention_2014)

## NOV. 20-22: OFL SOLIDARITY & PRIDE CONFERENCE

The Ontario Federation of Labour Solidarity and Pride conference is scheduled for November 20 – 22, 2014. The conference will be held at Oakham House, Ryerson University, Student Centre, 55 Gould Street, Toronto. For further information go to the OFL website: <http://ofl.ca/index.php/ofl-solidarity-pride-conference-nov-20-22-2014/>

Join conference delegates on the evening of November 20 at 7:00 p.m. for Transgender Day of Remembrance. The Memorial and Vigil will be held at 519 Church Street Community Centre which serves as the political and spiritual hub of the LGBTQ in Toronto.

## NOV. 28-30: OFL ABORIGINAL EDUCATIONAL GATHERING

Plan to attend the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) Aboriginal Educational Gathering from November 28 – 30, 2014. The OFL and its affiliates have a long history of activism and lobbying on Aboriginal Peoples, Métis and Inuit issues. This is a Gathering that is reaching out to all non-Aboriginal People – labour and community.

Location will be at the Ontario Federation of Labour 15, Gervais Drive, Toronto ON M3C 1Y8. For more information contact Janice Gairey at 416-443-7655 or [jgairey@ofl.ca](mailto:jgairey@ofl.ca). Visit the OFL website: <http://ofl.ca/index.php/category/issues/aboriginal/>.

To have your event considered to be included in the next OFL President's Report, contact Paulette Hazel at [phazel@ofl.ca](mailto:phazel@ofl.ca)

Advertising opportunities are also available. Ask for our rate card.

## LABOUR & HUMAN RIGHTS DATES

October	Women's History Month
Oct 10	World Mental Health Day
Oct 17	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
Oct 29	Child Care Worker & Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day
Nov 20	Transgender Day of Remembrance
Nov 25	International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
Nov 29	International Women Human Rights Defenders Day
Dec 1	World AIDS Day
Dec 3	International Day of Persons with Disabilities
Dec 6	National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada
Dec 10	International Human Rights Day
Dec 18	International Migrants Day



**WATCH OFL.CA for new publications and news from the Ontario Federation of Labour.**

**New Affiliates:** CUPE Local 44 – 107 members

### Photographers:

Julius Arscott	Joel Duff	Izzy Pouliot
Carol Baker	Laurie Hardwick	Sid Ryan
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