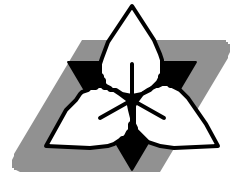


*Ontario Federation of Labour*

*7<sup>th</sup> Biennial Convention*

*November 24 - 28, 2003*



**OFL/FTO**

**As Amended**

**November 24-28, 2003**

# *Policy Document*

*Organize!*

*For Stronger Unions,  
for Stronger Human Rights,  
for Stronger Communities*

*Sheraton Centre  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada*

*“... recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world . . .”*

*Preamble to the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, 1948*

Working in solidarity with communities, the labour movement in Ontario fights for a society based on justice and equality, a society that values the inherent right of people to a decent job, publicly-funded, publicly-delivered and universally accessible education and health care, affordable housing in a safe/sustainable environment, worker protection laws, and enforcement of human rights remedies for all forms of discrimination and social justice for all.

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A word about these policy papers . . .

The policy papers for the Ontario Federation of Labour's 2003 Convention are a direct result of the Action Plan delegates endorsed at the OFL's 2001 Convention.

Delegates voted for A People's Charter campaign to begin a two-year consultation across the province to bring progressive forces together to meet, discuss, debate and decide on a priority agenda for rebuilding Ontario.

This policy paper, ***Organize! For Stronger Unions, for Stronger Human Rights, for Stronger Communities*** is the outcome of two years work by thousands of union members, activists and advocates in every corner of the province. The activists and organizations who participated in the creation of "A People's Charter" insured by their very diversity that the process and its outcome reflect the vision of all sectors of our society.

The policy papers at this Convention build on this process.

The Ontario Federation of Labour would like to thank . . .

### **Acknowledgements**

*We wish to thank and acknowledge the participation and commitment of the OFL Executive Board, OFL Executive Council and all OFL affiliated unions in the creation of A People's Charter.*

*Thanks to the following groups and organizations who shared in the development of A People's Charter:*

Campaign 2000

Canadian Actors Equity

Canadian Artists Representation - Ontario (CARO)

Canadian Housing Federation (Ontario Division)

Canadian Housing Forum, 2002

Canadian Pensioners Concerned/Alliance of Seniors to Protect Canada's Social Programs

CareVan Project

Centre for Social Justice

Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU)

Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Rights (Ontario)

Conservation Council of Ontario

Cross-Sectorial Strategy Group

Directors Guild of Canada (DGC)

Employment Standards Working Group

Equal Pay Coalition

Foundation for Equal Families

Income Security Advocacy Centre

Industrial Accident Victims Group of Ontario

Injured Workers Consultants

Inter-Faith Social Assistance Reform Coalition

Mayworks

## **Policy Document**

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### **Ontario Alternative Budget (OAB) Working Group**

The OAB is a coalition of labour, social action, community and church groups, which have come together to develop alternatives to the Common Sense Revolution and the Ontario Conservative government.

### **Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC)**

Includes representatives from: education, health care, labour, child welfare prevention, rural, First Nations, francophones, social policy, anti-poverty, professional and women's organizations.

### **Ontario Coalition for Social Justice (OCSJ)**

The OCSJ is a coalition of provincial and national groups promoting social and economic justice in Ontario.

### **Ontario Electricity Coalition**

### **Ontario Environmental Network**

### **Ontario Health Coalition (OHC)**

The OHC is Ontario's most broadly representative voice for public health care policy. Its membership encompasses 300 member groups: community health coalitions, health care workers at all levels, unions, social development agencies, women's groups, seniors' groups, low income and homeless people's organizations, ethnic and multiracial minorities' groups, faith-based organizations and other citizens' organizations.

### **Ontario Network of Injured Worker Groups**

### **Ontario Social Safety Network**

### **Toronto Organizing for Fair Employment (TOFFE)**

### **Toronto Workers' Health and Safety Legal Clinic**

### **Victims of Chemical Valley**

### **Workers Arts and Heritage Centre**

### **Workers Information Centre**

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## **Acknowledgements**

**Organizing**

**For**

**Stronger Unions**

# Organizing for Stronger Unions

## Union Drive

Together we are strong.

People need to join unions now more than ever. After facing eight years of a provincial government agenda bent on removing even the most basic rights that protect workers, people need union representation and the power of a strong labour movement.

The more union members there are in all of the province's unions, the greater the say we have in the making and enforcement of laws.

A strong labour sector ensures that union members have influence over policies and legislation that affect each working day of every person in the province, but we need our collective voice to be heard.

There's strength in numbers. We must not allow the issues of working people, their families and communities to be sidelined because we have no political power or influence. As the past eight years of anti-union government in Ontario has driven home, so much progress and so many laws protecting workers' rights can be wiped out by a stroke of a pen at Queen's Park.

There has been a steep decline in the number of workers joining unions since the Conservative government took office in 1995.

This is hardly a surprise after the last government's track record of relentlessly chopping away at workers' rights, it is now easier to decertify a union than it is to certify one.

The government sent out posters, to be posted every year on workplace bulletin boards, on how to decertify a union.

The 60-hour work week is back and the only workforce that is growing is the part-time, casual or temporary worker.

It is very hard for unions to organize minimum wage earners who are only able to work a handful of hours a week. Workers are routinely intimidated and threatened if they start a union drive but employers are free to interfere with union organizing drives without being penalized.

The thousands of workers in the information technology sector have been excluded from the *Employment Standards Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

This huge sector of workers, like agricultural workers, has been carved out of the workforce and denied basic rights and benefits that most other workers have.

It takes determination and long-term vision to organize the unorganized in such an environment.

Unions are organizing but the job is a tough one in a province like Ontario that now, thanks to the past eight years of Conservative government, has the lowest employment standards in Canada.

Employers have been almost totally let off the hook by the Ministry of Labour by sheer neglect to enforce the workplace laws that still exist.

In spite of the stiff opposition to unions that emanated from the last government, we must redouble our efforts to increase the numbers and strength of the labour movement. We must now fight to maintain basic workplace rights for the unorganized and for our members, we must bargain to include workplace protections and rights that no longer exist in Ontario's labour laws.

Organizing must be the top priority for the entire labour movement. This must be our focus and commitment. We will restore workers' rights and make this province a quality place in which to live and work.

## Arts, Heritage and Culture

The arts and cultural industry is the fourth largest sector in Ontario, and one of the fastest growing. It contributes billions of dollars to the provincial economy and generates thousands of jobs.

Despite the significant benefit of this sector to the economy, artists are among the lowest paid workers in the province. Even though they have high levels of education and years of training, annual incomes for artists remain on or below the poverty line.

As self-employed workers, most artists fall outside standard labour, health and safety, and workers' compensation legislation. They have limited access to public and private pensions and employment insurance.

### Recommendations:

- 1) Enact 'Status of the Artist' legislation so artists have the right to benefits, the right to organize, adequate health services, workers' compensation, pension benefits and income security.
- 2) Include artists in the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.
- 3) The arts sector must have formal labour relations mechanisms to enforce the collection of copyright and other payments owing to them for their creative work.
- 4) Secure and adequate funding for arts, heritage and culture.
- 5) Change to the provincial tax structure to assist artists who are the working poor, encourage tax incentives for investment in the arts and develop a competitive tax policy to attract more film and video productions.
- 6) Develop training opportunities for artists.
- 7) Democratize cultural institutions.
- 8) Volunteers must not be used to replace regular full or part-time workers in publicly funded arts institutions.
- 9) Foreign ownership and control must be monitored and limited.

## Employment Standards

The Conservative government amended the *Employment Standards Act* in 2001 to enable a 60-hour work week. For some, the work week keeps getting longer, leaving less time for family, friends and community activities. For many others working part-time or on contracts, it gets shorter.

The goal of the following policies is to ensure a living wage and fair hours of work for all.

### Existing OFL Policy:

- 32-hour work week for 40 hours pay.
- Legislate overtime pay after 40 hours in one week.
- Index the minimum wage at 70 percent of the provincial average.
- Set minimum paid vacation allowance at three weeks after five years, with a guarantee that at least two of these could be taken in weekly blocks.
- No exemption from minimum standards.
- Equal pay, benefits and rights for part-time workers.
- Full protection for homeworkers, teleworkers.
- Clear distinction between employees and independent contractors.
- Recognition and accumulation of service with different employers.

- Sunday work should be voluntary.
- Joint responsibility between employers where there is contracting out.
- Restore the Employee Wage Protection Program.
- Prohibit unjust dismissal.
- Limit weekly overtime.

### Recommendations:

- 1) Educate workers about the anti-reprisal protections included in the *Employment Standards Act*.
- 2) Minimum employment standards properly enforced for contingent workers in all sectors – this would include home care workers, farmworkers and information technology workers.
- 3) Repeal the 60-hour work week.
- 4) Workers (including sub-contracted workers) whose rights have been violated need to be able to hold companies higher up the ‘employment chain’ liable for these violations.
- 5) Temporary agency workers are particularly vulnerable to employment standards violations. The temporary services industry needs enforceable rules and regulations that give these workers basic workplace protections.

## Health and Safety/ Workers' Compensation

The occupational health and safety and workers' compensation systems have not provided proper protection for workers because pieces are missing from the equations. Pieces that labour has long fought to see implemented.

Since 1995, the situation has been made worse by attacks on both the legislated rights and protections, as well as on those institutions established to protect, educate or provide prevention or compensation related services to workers.

### Existing OFL Policy:

- Regulatory and enforcement strategy laid out in "Labour's Program for an Effective Enforcement System" (1997).
- Legislates working alone, violence and harassment protection (1997).
- Provide sustainable funding for the Workers Health and Safety Centre (WHSC) and the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW) to enable them to enforce, educate and provide resources and services to workers in the area of prevention and compensation (1999).
- Adopt the precautionary principle in regulating new chemicals (1999).
- Establish health-based exposure limits for chemical and physical agents with zero exposure to carcinogens and those that have reproductive effects (ongoing policy).

- Mandatory substitution for those chemicals that have a less toxic alternative (1999).
- Bring agricultural workers under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* including migrant and seasonal workers (ongoing policy).

### Health and Safety Resolutions:

- Restore on site investigations by Ministry of Labour inspectors (2001).
  - Increased funding for the Workers Compensation Training Project (2001).
  - Mandatory coroner inquests for all workplace deaths (resolutions from 1999 and 2001).
  - Legal right to protective reassignment for pregnant or nursing women (1999).
-

In workers' compensation, the government has privatized the vocational rehabilitation services and retraining of injured workers, leaving these workers to the mercy of private companies. Just as in Walkerton, the government abdicated its responsibility to protect the vulnerable.

**Existing OFL Policy:**

- Establish the Workers' Compensation Bill of Rights (1997).
- Extend Workers' Compensation coverage to all industry sectors (1997 and 1999).
- Introduce Universal Disability Insurance (UDI) (1997).
- Ensure Ontario's workers' compensation system is employer-funded but publicly controlled and administered (1997).
- Provide secondary victims' benefits (1999).

**Recommendations:**

1. Establish mandatory training for employers/managers on their responsibilities under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.
2. Provide specific legislative training requirements for new or young workers.
3. A Royal Commission into occupational disease.

4. Government based occupations disease/cancer database (including parental occupational information for childhood cancers, birth defects) along with an independent institution dedicated to the investigation and research into occupational disease.
5. Multi-language accessibility as well as no cost access to government transcripts or information.
6. Physician education of occupational disease and administrative changes to encourage reporting of suspected occupational illness.
7. Provide survivor benefits for family when no dependents exist.
8. Provide protective reassignment for workers with early symptoms of occupational disease.

## Income Security

It is necessary and possible to create a model for income security that reflects the needs of Ontarians and their communities. It would reflect a healthy labour market and be seen as a vital component of a larger social safety net.

A starting point would accept the fact that all Ontarians, particularly those who use and provide needed services, must be involved in the process of developing and implementing the model.

The new model should be based on the principles of universality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, accountability and democratization, preventive care and quality public services provided by unionized public sector workers.

There are a number of interrelated components in a model for income security.

### Existing OFL Policy:

#### Labour Market

- Increase minimum wage and reform *Employment Standards Act and Labour Relations Act*.
- Replace Workfare.
- Get rid of *Bill 22*.

#### Public/Community Services

- Implement universal system of high quality child care.

- End the practice of deducting the amount families receive from the National Child Tax Benefits from their social assistance cheque.
- Increase the shelter allowance in social assistance legislation to better reflect the regional cost of housing.
- End punitive and demeaning mandatory drug testing plans for persons in receipt of social assistance.
- Government Income Security Programs.
- Restore funding cuts from social assistance in 1995 and index benefits to inflation.
- Redesign a federally administered publicly-delivered income security system that gives everyone access to a decent income and services without the inequalities and anomalies resulting from conflicting programs.
- Public pensions should be indexed to inflation and portable. This would be a major factor in income security for older Canadians.
- End discrimination against persons with disabilities and review applications for benefits under the *Ontario Disability Support Act* using definitions in line with human rights developments.
- Restore rights for work-related stress claims under workers' compensation.

**Recommendations:**

**Labour Market**

1. Replace Workfare with a program that allows Ontarians to have a real opportunity to plan for their future, and access to resources to allow them to attain their goals.

**Public/Community Services**

1. End the practice of deducting the amount families receive from the National Child Tax Benefits from their social assistance cheque.
2. Increase the shelter allowance in social assistance legislation to better reflect the regional cost of housing.

**Government Income Security Programs**

1. Redesign a federally administered publicly-delivered income security system that gives everyone access to a decent income and services without the inequalities and anomalies resulting from conflicting programs.
2. Public pensions indexed to inflation and portable would be a major factor in income security for older Canadians.
3. Restore rights for work-related stress claims under workers' compensation.

## Labour Legislation

Working people have a fundamental right to secure employment. They have a right to decent pay and working conditions.

Unions play an essential role in society. Working people have a right to join them and act collectively to improve their standard of living.

Governments are not innocent bystanders in this. They have an obligation to ensure that workers have both the right and the ability to take advantage of union membership.

Government must provide protection against unfair labour practices.

### Existing OFL Policy:

- Recognize that everyone has the democratic right to join a union of their choice, free from employer interference and abuse.
- Give the Labour Relations Board the power to deal with bosses who break the law when workers attempt to organize by granting automatic certification.
- Modernize the *Labour Relations Act* to give “new economy” workers from contract employees in the tech sector to homeworkers in the garment industry the same right to organize as everyone else.
- Abolish all exclusions in the law that shut the door on collective bargaining for certain groups of employees.

- Reinstate the anti-scab laws.
- Reinstate equality of successor rights for Crown employees.

### Recommendations:

1. Implement the Supreme Court’s decision on agricultural workers without delay, giving them the unfettered right to collective bargaining.
2. Make it mandatory for non-unionized employers to post and provide employees with information on the legal steps that need to be undertaken to unionize.
3. Remove the obligation for employers to post de-unionization material in unionized workplaces.
4. Respect free collective bargaining for public sector employees rather than fixing collective bargaining by reducing the transfer of funds, legislating “no deficit” laws, or otherwise intervening in the arbitration process.
5. Refuse to provide tax dollars to employers who use sweatshop practices.
6. Enact a law barring suppliers who break minimum employment standards from receiving government contracts.

## Pensions

Our goal is to ensure a decent standard of living for everyone in their retirement years.

It is with that goal in mind that we evaluated the attempt by the previous Tory government to amend pension legislation in Ontario.

### Recommendations:

1. To protect pension security, we need indexing to protect pensions from inflationary erosion.
2. To protect pensions from greedy and incompetent corporate officers, we need to change the governance provisions for single employer pension plans, requiring that such plans be administered by a pension committee at arm's length from the employer, to whom the plan actuary must report.
3. To protect pensions from corporate raiding, members' rights to surplus must be explicitly recognized in the *Pension Benefit Act*, and that there be clear prohibitions on employer contribution holidays and access to surplus where this would undermine pension security.
4. To protect pensions from employer insolvencies, the coverage limits of the Pension Benefit Guarantee Fund (PBGF) must be increased, at least to take account of wage and pension increases since the Fund was first introduced.

## Training and Apprenticeships

Training is a universal right that must be available to all employed workers, displaced workers, and people wanting to enter or re-enter the workforce.

Skills training programs must be open to all, not just the youngest or fittest members of the workforce. It must be universally accessible, equitable and developmental.

Training must become a vehicle for correcting the discrimination that women, visible minorities, aboriginal people, and people with disabilities have had to contend with in both the educational system and the workplace.

### Training

#### Recommendations:

1. Skills training for employed workers should be guaranteed through legislation obliging employers to provide it.
2. Skills training for displaced workers and those entering or re-entering the workforce should be provided through government-financed training programs run in conjunction with public educational institutions.
3. Skills training must be developmental, portable, and generic, not employer-specific or narrowly defined.

4. Prior Learning Assessment And Recognition (PLAR) must be supported and funded to provide increased access to public education and training programs.

### Apprenticeships

Ontario's apprenticeship system provides future skills for industry and the economy. By ensuring an adequate supply of skilled workers, it allows the province to better compete in the global economy.

Changes to the apprenticeship system through the passage of Bill 55 (the *Apprenticeship Certification Act*) by the previous provincial government aims to dismantle this system, leaving it up to unions to preserve apprenticeship programs through bargaining.

#### Recommendations:

1. Skills training for employed workers should be guaranteed through legislation obliging employers to provide it.
2. Skills training for displaced workers and those entering or re-entering the workforce should be provided through government-financed training programs in conjunction with public educational institutions.

3. Skills training must be developmental, portable, and generic, not employer-specific or narrowly defined.
4. PLAR must be supported and funded to provide increased access to public education and training programs.
5. PLAR pre-apprenticeship training for workers in the basic skills required prior to entering a trade, such as math, english and science.
6. The Ontario government must adequately fund provincial training programs.
7. Compulsory certification must be introduced, after re-establishing “whole” trades.
8. The enforcement mechanisms must have consequences and penalties must be more strictly enforced and monitored. There needs to be mechanisms that administer fines when the *Act* is not followed. The established fines should be increased to higher levels.
9. Wage requirements must be re-established and tuition fees for apprenticeship programs must be abolished.
10. Advisory Committees (Provincial Advisory Committee and Industry Advisory Committee) that are established for trades and must be given more responsibility and authority.
11. School to work and pre-apprenticeship programs must be designed to adhere to the wages, ratios and standards set out by the Advisory Committees.

**MOVE TO ADOPT AS OFL POLICY THE  
RECOMMENDATIONS OF A PEOPLE'S  
CHARTER ON ORGANIZING FOR  
STRONGER UNIONS.**

**Organizing**

**For**

**Stronger Human Rights**

# Organizing for Stronger Human Rights

## Summary

Millions of people live in Ontario. If people are not treated equally they should be and it must be a goal of the labour movement to lobby governments for progressive changes, and bring pressure to bear, so no one is excluded from leading a life of dignity and opportunity. Unions must lead by example and organized workers can play a significant role in ensuring that every single workplace in the province respects human rights.

Laws need changing and updating. The laws that exist need to be enforced. Organized workers can make a huge difference in their own communities and neighbourhoods by insisting that society's institutions and organizations function within a framework of equity. This means schools, hospitals, governments, services and programs must be accessible and equitable. If they are not, people must organize and mobilize their communities and demand fairness, access, dignity and justice.

There is plenty of work to be done. We have the reality that Aboriginals and members of racial minorities and immigrants are still pushed to the fringe of society burdened with low wages, discrimination and harassment. We need laws to protect human rights and we need to create a society where there is no need for such laws because true equity exists.

The millions of people who call Ontario home deserve nothing less than full equality in every facet of their lives.

There are 1.5 million people in Ontario who are prevented from leading normal lives because of systemic barriers (persons with disabilities face, on a daily basis, often insurmountable hurdles in order to live independently, have access to transit, go to school, get the health care they need, get a job). This must change.

Communities must come together and see that justice and dignity prevail for any person living with a disability in their midst by pressuring all levels of government to support the programs and services persons with disabilities need.

Violence against women is a crime rooted in the social, political and economic inequality between women and men. It has serious effects on our children, both today and in their futures. Immediate intervention and prevention strategies must be made a government priority and all approaches must be inclusive and reflect the diversity of all women and children in Ontario.

Government has a social and legal responsibility to use public resources to stop this violence. Ending violence requires a commitment from all sectors of the community.

Workplace equity is very much a community issue. In order for our workplaces to represent the communities they serve, the workforces must reflect that community.

Workers from equity seeking groups should not be marginalized in low paying, part-time positions, nor should they be shut out from positions of authority. This is very much a human rights issue, an employment equity issue, a pay equity issue and a community issue.

Young people, young workers – they are our future, the next generation. They deserve a fair start in their working lives. Youth unemployment in Ontario is at least 2½ times higher than that of adults, and young workers have over double the level of under-employment and marginal employment than older workers. They finish post-secondary learning mired in debt from sky-high tuition fees.

Most injuries among new workers occur within their first year of work. Each year more than 18,000 young workers are injured on the job in Ontario. In 1999, 11 were killed on the job. Their injury rate is more than double the general average. More must be done to reverse this.

Local community action has proven to be one of the strongest ways to organize and mobilize people about social and political issues. Change in our society often happens one neighbourhood at a time. Communities coming together committed to equity issues will make all the difference.

## **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered People**

The underlining principle for any government must be to ensure members of all communities can participate fully in their society.

A cornerstone must be the recognition that individuals and families are an integral part of Ontario society. But full and equitable participation is still not the daily reality for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people.

Members of these communities who have disabilities, who are Aboriginal, people of colour, youth, seniors, immigrants and/or poor, continue to face multiple levels of discrimination.

### **Existing OFL Policy:**

- Reinstate coverage of medical procedures under OHIP for transgendered people (1999).
- Amend the Ontario Human Rights Code to include gender identity as prohibited grounds (1999).
- Amend the Criminal Code to include lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people within the hate propaganda provisions (resolution 2001).
- Call for a provocation law to disallow “homosexual panic” defence to justify violence against lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people (resolution 2001).

### **Recommendations:**

1. Respect the fundamental human and Charter rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people.
2. Recognize, affirm and support gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-gendered families.
3. Support and validate gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered youth.
4. Honour and respect gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered elders.

## Human Rights

Equality of human dignity and freedom from discrimination are fundamental rights established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights. All Canadians are entitled to these rights.

7. That the OFL, through the CLC, demand the repeal of the current Federal Bill C36 that allows the Federal government to hold secret trials and keep people in prison indefinitely without charges.

### Recommendations:

1. Enforcement of human rights in Ontario.
2. Legislation to ensure workplace equality for Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, people of colour, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered people and women.
3. Resources to strengthen the Ontario Human Rights Commission with a functioning race relations department.
4. The Human Rights Commission must be pro-active in enforcing the Ontario Human Rights Code. A case-by-case approach will not remedy systemic discrimination.
5. Amendment of the Ontario Human Rights Code to allow third party complaints and social conditions.
6. A significant increase of the amount of general damages for pain and suffering.

## **Pay Equity**

Legislated pay equity is essential to ending systemic wage discrimination. It is a basic human right which, according to the Supreme Court of Canada, is on par with other constitutional rights. Human rights are not optional expenditures to be disregarded under the guise of financial restraint.

### **Existing OFL Policy:**

- Employment equity laws are necessary (1997).
- Pay equity enforcement must be strengthened and funded (1999).
- Public sector pay equity adjustments must be fully funded (1999).

### **Recommendations:**

1. Recognize pay equity as a basic human right.
2. Ensure a proactive obligation to achieve and maintain pay equity.
3. Non-unionized women must be guaranteed access to pay equity.
4. Pay equity laws must redress race-based wage inequities.
5. Enforcement must be strengthened and fully funded.
6. Employment equity laws must give a full and meaningful role to unions.

## Persons With Disabilities

Persons with disabilities have a wide range of physical, sensory or psychological conditions, which may be visible or invisible. These conditions can affect our family members, co-workers, friends and acquaintances.

According to the *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)* Committee, over 1.5 million people in this province face a wide range of systemic barriers in all aspects of their lives.

In May 2001, the Ontario Human Rights Commission reported that 40 percent of the complaints filed were from persons with disabilities.

### Existing OFL Policy:

- Advocate for strong and effective employment equity legislation at both federal and provincial levels of government.
- Ensure that effective legislation and functioning Ontario Human Rights Commission protect the rights of all Ontarians.
- Develop a public non-profit home care service to serve the best interests of users, providers and the community.
- Organize public transportation systems to serve the needs of Ontarians with disabilities.

- Reform the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) based on the experiences of those who use it and the workers and unions delivering it.
- Enact a real *Ontarians with Disabilities Act (ODA)* to identify and remove barriers for the 1.5 million people in Ontario that face a wide range of systemic barriers.

### Recommendations:

1. The need to better understand and address the particular needs of those who identify themselves as having mental or psychiatric disabilities.
2. Advocate, within the labour movement, for accessibility of union offices and meeting/conference locations so that members with disabilities are able to participate in all union activities.
3. Ensure accessibility needs are met for Ontarians with disabilities in our secondary, post-secondary and elementary schools.

**A People's Charter recommendations are in keeping with the policies passed at the OFL 2001 Convention in the policy paper, (*Persons With Disabilities – Labour's View*).**

## **Violence Against Women**

Violence against women has serious impacts on our children, both today and in their future lives.

Strengthening women's economic and social positions must be the centerpiece of any plan to stop violence against women and children.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Increase basic social supports, including social assistance, low-income and subsidized housing, child care, health care, education and legal aid.
2. Legislative reform is needed which reflects the reality of violence against women in the areas of family, civil and criminal law and human rights.
3. Legislation is needed governing the workplace, including pay equity and employment equity and all areas of administrative law.
4. Implementation of legislative reforms with concrete practices to address violence against women.
5. Independent women controlled, community-based services, including women's shelters, sexual assault centres, neighbourhood women's centres and specific services for diverse communities of women.
6. Anti-violence education services.
7. Government commitment to public advocacy, including financial support and recognition of women's and equity seeking groups as essential to the development of policy, practice and programs to end violence against women.

## Workplace Equality

### Recommendations:

There are six criteria for measuring workplace equality that can be used by employers and unions to track the progress of having a workforce that is representative and reflects the community around it.

#### 1. Representation

The workforce must contain designated group members in the same proportion as they are in the working age population.

#### 2. Occupational Distribution

Members of these groups must be well represented throughout all occupations.

#### 3. Decision-Making/Authority

Are the designated group members in senior or executive positions or concentrated in positions with little decision-making power or authority?

#### 4. Working Conditions

The workplace must have enforceable anti-harassment policies in place and provide other options such as daycare facilities and flexible work arrangements.

#### 5. Tenure

Designated group members must not be concentrated in auxiliary and part-time positions. They must have their share of full-time, permanent work.

#### 6. Pay Equity

All workers must receive equal pay for work of equal value, with no gender or race-based wage gap.

The OFL and its affiliates promote bargaining of employment equity plans which measure workplaces based on these six criteria.

The OFL and affiliates lobby the provincial government for legislation giving unions the right to bargain these plans.

## Youth

At a time of globalization and economic restructuring, downsizing and layoffs put young workers at a particular disadvantage when competing with more mature workers with more experience and seniority.

Youth unemployment in Ontario is about 2½ times that of adults, and young workers have over double the level of underemployment and marginal employment than older workers.

### Existing OFL Policy:

- All OFL Conventions to support a Youth Forum commencing in 2001, organized by youth for youth (resolution 1999).
- Campaign to educate young workers on their rights to join a union, health and safety, right to a harassment and violence-free workplace and their rights under the *Employment Standards Act* (resolution 1999).
- Promote the recruitment of young workers within unions (resolution 1999).
- Endorse *SolidarityWORKS!* as an annual project (resolution 1999).
- 32-hour work week for 40 hours pay.
- Index the minimum wage at 70 percent of the provincial average.

### Recommendations:

1. Targeted accident prevention.
2. Legislation must be introduced to provide mandatory occupational health and safety training for young workers.
3. Support and expand youth employment programs.
4. Lower and eventually eliminate post-secondary tuition fees.

**MOVE TO ADOPT AS OFL POLICY THE  
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEOPLE'S  
CHARTER ON ORGANIZING FOR STRONGER  
HUMAN RIGHTS.**

**Organizing**

**For**

**Stronger**  
**Communities**

# Organizing for Stronger Communities

## Summary

Our public services and systems are essential to the health and well-being of every person in Ontario – every city, town, neighbourhood and community. Everybody knows this, wants this and needs quality services to live. Our whole standard of living depends on it.

The foundation of our society has been built on the critical importance of these services to provide the care, education, living standards and protections each one of us needs now, or will, in the future.

What's happened? In the past eight years, the former Tory regime neglected, and undermined our universal, publicly-funded and publicly-delivered systems such as health care and education. Absolutely no progress was made for comprehensive child care or housing. The environment has been degraded.

Local governments have had staggering cuts to their budgets and crucial provincial public services downloaded onto municipalities.

We have all felt the effects.

All this damage was done by the past provincial government in its headlong rush to embrace privatization; treated public services like a business and allowed its corporate friends to profit from formerly non-profit services.

Problem is this government was dead wrong. There is no more graphic example of this than the tragedy of Walkerton. Economic short-sightedness and neglect undermined our health security – people lost their lives.

The former provincial government deliberately underfunded our public services to try and render them weak and incompetent so that it could introduce privatization as the remedy. Not only was privatization a false remedy for manufactured problems, it did not provide services on a fair and democratic basis to all the people.

We know that quality, publicly-funded and publicly-delivered services are an investment, not an expense. It is an investment that creates healthy communities, safe and secure jobs, a decent income, good housing, quality education and a healthy environment. These services are created and maintained to benefit everyone.

Organizing for stronger communities must go to the top of the priority list. In the past, it was workers, families, coalitions and organizations that brought pressure to bear on government to create the services we all use and need.

Once again, it will be workers and their communities coming together that will restore and establish this foundation.

That's people power.

## Child Care

Child care is key to supporting working women and ensuring that they remain productive members of the labour force. The labour movement has long fought for a system of child care that is universally accessible, affordable, non-profit and high quality. We know that, as in the cases of education and health care, our vision cannot be achieved through market forces.

### Existing OFL Policy:

- OFL continue support for the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care. Demand the government guarantee standards are maintained through regular monitoring, continue wage grants, provide fee subsidies only to regulated child care programs and reinstate the provincial share of child care funding.
- The OFL continue its opposition to governments offering tax deduction and credits, vouchers and commercial child care (resolution 1997).
- The OFL through the CLC call upon the Federal government to withhold further Early Child Care Development payments to Ontario until the province guarantees adequate child care funding and support (resolution 2001).
- The OFL lobby all levels of government to implement an accessible, universal, and high quality National Child Care Program (resolution 2001).

### Recommendations:

1. A systemic and integrated approach to policy development and implementation.
2. A strong and equal partnership with the education system.
3. A universal approach to access, with particular attention to children in need of special support.
4. Substantial public investment in services and infrastructure.
5. A participatory approach to quality improvement and assurance with regulatory standards supported by coordinated investment.
6. Appropriate training and working conditions for all staff across the sector.
7. Creation of a thorough monitoring system and data collection.
8. Long-term investment in research to continue to improve the system.

## **Education (Kindergarten to Grade 12)**

Public education is a cornerstone of democracy.

Public education must meet the individual needs of all Ontario students, as well as the collective needs of society.

### **Existing OFL Policy:**

- Abolish the Ontario College of Teachers (resolution 1997).
- Demand the government of Ontario withdraw *Bill 160, the Education Quality Improvement Act* and restore the nearly \$1 billion that has already been removed from education funding (resolution 1997).
- OFL affiliates mount a public campaign to fight the attack on public education and that the OFL and its affiliates commit to publicly-funded and supported education delivered through the public education system (resolution 1997).
- OFL Submission on *Bill 160, The Education Quality Improvement Act, 1997* to the Standing Committee on Administration of Justice (1997).
- The OFL demand that the Ontario government drop the proposal to further reduce funding to elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. The OFL convene an Education is a Right Task Force of affiliates and others (parents).
- The OFL support education affiliates as they fight government cuts in negotiations with school boards, Council of Regents for colleges and universities.
- The OFL in conjunction with affiliates, organize protest actions across the province in defence of public education (resolution 1999).
- Introduce legislation that would make unlawful any and all commercialization of the public school system with particular reference to the Young News Network (resolution 1999).
- The Privatization of Ontario's Education System: 1995-2001. OFL Education is a Right Task Force Report on Publicly-Funded Education in Ontario.
- Presentation by the OFL to the Standing Committee on Justice and Social Policy on *Bill 74, an Act to Amend the Education Act (2000)*.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Accountability that recognizes local decision-making.
2. Assessment based on the whole child.
3. Restore collective bargaining rights that allow for full scope of bargaining for all education workers.
4. Class and school size must meet the needs of students, not the funding formula.

5. Education programs must meet the diverse needs of Ontario.
6. Educational support staff, programs and services must be mandated and fully funded.
7. Privatization of any education services, programs or facilities must not be tolerated.
8. Safety of all students and staff must be of prime concern.
9. Funding must meet all the needs of a publicly-funded and publicly-delivered education system that is a cornerstone of democracy.

## **Education (Post-Secondary)**

Post-secondary education should be a right for every person who wants it.

Access to a post-secondary institution must be universal and equitable. A firm commitment from federal and provincial governments is required to maintain and enhance post-secondary education as a public institution under democratic public control.

### **Existing OFL Policy:**

- Demand and lobby the Ontario government to immediately reduce tuition fees in Ontario (resolution 1999).
- OFL, affiliates and labour councils join with the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS) across Ontario in a campaign to achieve fully accessible and affordable tuition free post-secondary education (resolution 1999).
- OFL work with CFS to stop the provincial government's plans to merge colleges and universities (resolution 1999).
- The OFL demand that the Ontario government drop the proposal to further reduce funding to elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. The OFL convene an Education is a Right Task Force of affiliates and others (parents). The OFL support education affiliates as they fight government cuts in negotiations with school boards, Council of Regents for colleges and universities.

- The OFL in conjunction with affiliates, organize protest actions across the province in defence of public education (resolution 1999).
- OFL call upon the Canadian Labour Congress to pressure the Federal government to repeal this unfair tax on student loans.
- The Privatization of Ontario's Education System: 1995-2001. OFL Education is a Right Task Force Report on Publicly-Funded Education in Ontario.

### **Recommendations:**

1. Access to a college or university education should be based on ability to learn, not ability to pay.
2. Reverse privatization and corporate influence over academic programs.
3. Reverse the contracting out of post-secondary education support services.
4. Governments should not require institutions to seek private sector partners to build new facilities or expand existing ones.
5. Funding is required to complete work that has been deferred for years because of underfunding.
6. Corporate interests should not control research at universities.

7. All governing bodies should include representation from all sectors of the community.
8. All workers in the post-secondary sector deserve fair wages, good working conditions and job security.
9. Adequate government funding levels are required to reverse the trend of relying on student fees and corporate sponsors. Funds are needed to repair buildings and ensure that there are adequate spaces for all qualified students.

## Environment

Our goal is a healthy environment, with diverse and vibrant ecosystems. A healthy society needs a healthy economy that does not damage the environment.

### Existing OFL Policy:

#### Just Transition to a Green Economy

- We must practise the principles of “Just Transition” and allow workers and communities the right to choose both economic security and a healthy environment.

#### Protect the Diversity of Ecosystems and Species

- Addressing the economic and social concerns of workers, their communities and Aboriginal Peoples, all of whom depend on the health of existing ecosystems.

#### Guarantee Clean Air and Water

- Set air emission standards at levels protective of human health.
- Restore staffing levels and funding for the Ministry of Environment.
- Preserve and enhance the role of the public sector in providing environmental regulation and services.
- Reject for-profit water utilities.

- Revitalize the Ontario Clean Water Agency.
- Prevent the export of bulk water.

#### Eliminate Toxins

- Revise standards for pesticides and pollutants to ensure persistent toxins are targeted for virtual elimination.
- Reduce household hazardous wastes and improve the standards for disposal.

#### Promote Energy Conservation and Green Sources of Energy

- Commit to preserving and enhancing the leading role of the public sector in electricity generation and distribution.

#### Promote an Environmentally Responsible, Sustainable Economy

- Ensure that all workers have the right to refuse to pollute.
- Involve workers and their communities in the development of “Just Transition” programs.

#### Strengthen Democracy

- Involve workers and their communities in developing and implementing community economic development strategies.

- Support public participation in discussion and decisions related to North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), World Trade Organization (WTO), Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and other agreements furthering an increasingly global economic system.
- 7. Protect prime farmland and significant ecological systems such as wetlands and moraines.
- 8. Revise the *Planning Act* to promote ecosystem-based planning, urban intensification and land use planning rules that support public transit.

**Recommendations:**

1. Protect the diversity of ecosystems and species by developing a network of protected areas and prohibiting the intentional introduction of non-native species, including products of biotechnology.
2. Guarantee clean air and water by adopting a *Safe Drinking Water Act*, as drafted by the Canadian Environmental Law Association.
3. Eliminate toxins. Pesticides for cosmetic purposes should be banned.
4. Develop a comprehensive provincial policy to clean up contaminated lands and waters.
5. Promote energy conservation and green sources of energy. Adopt a public benefits charge on electricity bills and a standard requiring utilities to increase the use of renewable energy sources. Promote energy efficiency in new buildings by adopting R2000 and C2000 standards.
6. Create compact, healthy communities and stop urban sprawl.
9. Provide adequate funding for public transit by linking it to gasoline taxes.
10. Promote an environmentally responsible, sustainable economy by banning the disposal of refillable, reusable, repairable, recyclable and compostable items from landfill sites. Extended producer responsibility must be at the core of waste management policies.
11. Major investment is required by governments to provide the research, technology and practice that Canadians and Canadian companies need to meet the targets of the Kyoto Accord (reduce greenhouse gases by 250 megatons by 2008-2012).

## Health Care

Full health care should encourage the prevention of illness. Important determinants of good health are a safe and secure job, a decent income, good housing, quality education, and a healthy environment.

Medicare has saved us billions of dollars and improved our health. Expanding it into other vital areas will not only improve health, it will also make the system more efficient.

All parts of the health care system must be comprehensive, universal, accessible, portable, publicly-run, and non-profit.

### Recommendations:

#### Hospitals and Long Term Care

1. Reverse all hospital and bed closures and revert private clinics into public services.
2. Return rehabilitation, laboratories, housekeeping, dietary, laundry, and administrative and other related health care services back to the public sector.
3. Restore full funding for chronic care beds and facilities.
4. Stop awarding long term care beds to private, for-profit companies.
5. Stop all for-profit hospital projects, including public-private-partnerships.

6. Increase staffing levels in hospitals, acute care, long term and chronic care and psychiatric facilities.
7. Appropriate funding for wages must be set aside and wage parity should exist across the health care system.
8. Increase funding for beds and programs for people with serious mental illness.
9. Improve lengths of stay and care. The level of care should be based on patient need, not budget needs.

#### Home Care Services

1. Develop community-based health care with democratically elected boards reflecting local constituencies.
2. Provide all home care services through one publicly-funded program in each community.
3. No user fees for non-profit services.
4. Increase integration of service, teamwork and continuity of care.
5. Eliminate profit-making from illness.

#### Primary Health Care

1. Must be publicly-funded, administered and delivered.

2. Physician control of health care must end. Primary care organizations must draw on the skill of the full range of health care providers.
3. Services should be accessible 24 hours/day, 7 days/week in every community.
4. Doctors and all health care providers must be moved from fee-for-service to salaries.

## **Housing and Homelessness**

Ontario is the richest province in one of the richest countries in the world. Our province has the financial resources to ensure every resident access to good quality, decent, safe and affordable housing. Spending on housing and income assistance is an investment in people.

### **Existing OFL Policy:**

#### **Homelessness and Poverty (2001)**

- Reinstate rent controls.
- Reverse downloading of social housing onto municipalities.
- Ensure rapid construction of low-cost affordable housing, including co-ops.
- Ensure no one sleeps outdoors.

#### **Provincial Funding for National Housing Program (2001)**

- Ontario match Federal contributions to this housing program by non-profit/co-op groups.

### **Recommendations :**

#### **New Supply:**

1. A full range of housing options is needed across Ontario, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing for tenants with special needs and permanent housing.

2. 18,400 new units needed annually. The province must fund new supply to meet this projection.
3. The emphasis must be on long term, social housing.

### **Aboriginal Control of Aboriginal Housing**

1. Any new supply must include a targeted component to create Aboriginal housing under Aboriginal control.

### **Housing for Northern Communities**

1. Northern, rural and remote communities lack adequate funding for services and social housing.

### **Adequate Standard of Living**

1. The government must implement a minimum annual income for all Ontarians reflecting the real cost of housing, food and other necessities.

### **End Discrimination in Housing**

1. The Ontario Human Rights Code and principles of non-discrimination and equality must be upheld in the provision of all types of housing.

### **Effective Rent Control and Tenant Protection**

1. Full rent controls must be established.

2. The so-called *Tenant Protection Act* must be replaced with a law that actually protects tenants and provides for a firm process with proper notification and adequate timelines.

**Expand Existing Supply**

1. Affordable rental housing and rent geared-to-income subsidies.

**Control Utility Rates and Other Costs**

1. Electricity, water and sewer charges.

**Provision of Adequate Funding**

1. Provincial social housing programs. Senior levels of government should either resume funding these programs or provide municipalities with the appropriate taxing powers.

**Stop Criminalizing the Poor**

1. No more criminalizing the poor and homeless people forcing them into jails. Commitment to decreasing current levels of imprisonment.
2. All correctional facilities must remain in, or be returned to, the public sector.

## Local Government

People want their communities to have effective local governments with democratic processes enabling them to identify and implement a progressive inclusive agenda.

This should reflect the vibrancy of the community, the diversity of its members and provide opportunities for employment and education.

Local governments must be funded properly to serve the needs of the community.

### Existing OFL Policy:

- Policies that create and maintain quality employment, fair wages and benefits, safe workplaces, respect for the environment and equity for all citizens.
- Policies that create and maintain a social safety net through which public sector workers deliver services when and where needed.
- Making all programs, services and facilities in the community accessible to everyone.
- Preserving and enhancing the leading role of the public sector in water and sewage treatment, and electricity generation and distribution.

### Recommendations:

1. Make the existing legislation framework more effective for dealing with governance revenue generation and sharing for local governments.
2. A 'lead by positive example' model for local government.
3. Work together to ensure the presence of a strong, viable, accessible public transit, funded by linking funding to the gasoline tax.
4. Environmentally sustainable planning and activities.

**MOVE TO ADOPT AS OFL POLICY THE  
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PEOPLE'S  
CHARTER ON ORGANIZING FOR STRONGER  
COMMUNITIES.**

**OFL Action Plan:  
Reversing the  
Destruction**

**As Amended November 28, 2003**

## OFL Action Plan: Reversing the Destruction

After eight years of the Conservative government's relentless destruction of the province's social fabric, the people of Ontario said last October 2<sup>nd</sup> that enough is enough, fired Premier Ernie Eves's government and gave the Liberals a majority government on the slogan "*Choose Change.*"

The Ontario Federation of Labour and its affiliated unions are in favour of change in Ontario.

This is why at the last OFL Convention delegates voted to build A People's Charter by working with progressive forces such as community, faith and social action groups. The aim was to meet, discuss, debate and decide on a priority agenda for rebuilding Ontario.

The Liberal platform is **not** our platform. Their positions fall short compared to the policies of the OFL and A People's Charter.

There is, for example, no substantive labour law reform, such as an anti-scab provision.

We stand on our positions democratically arrived at OFL Conventions, coupled with those arising through the consultation process with community and social action groups forming A People's Charter.

The results of A People's Charter process are set out in this Convention's policy papers.

The recommendations voted on suggest the following components for the Action Plan.

## 1. Improving the Quality of Work Life and Organizing For Stronger Unions

The Ontario Federation of Labour dedicates itself to work with community groups to improve the quality of working life.

The two-thirds of the workforce without a union depend upon fair and enforced employment standards legislation.

The former Conservative government amendments bringing in such anti-worker provisions as the 60-hour work week and averaging overtime must be repealed.

The Ontario Federation of Labour and its affiliated unions must also work to increase the percentage of unionized workers within the province of Ontario for three major reasons:

- Firstly, there are too many unorganized workers facing daily problems on the job that need our help;
- Secondly, the higher the percentage of workers organized, the more everyone's wages, working conditions and benefits improve, and
- Thirdly, the more workers organized the more influence labour has on government and progressive public policy.

The labour movement will build and execute a campaign to encompass the workplace issues important to our members coupled with a campaign to increase unionization.

The Liberal election platform, though lacking in many areas, does reflect a number of changes consistent with A People's Charter and its recommendations.

But we cannot count on the Liberal government to make positive change without intense pressure from community and labour groups.

The business supporters of the Liberals can be expected to oppose much of their progressive platform planks.

We must call on community organizations which helped build A People's Charter and others to join with us to rebuild our province.

Our priority will be to fight for the policies endorsed and adopted by this Convention. These are now official OFL policies.

As a first step in the fight to get labour's priorities implemented without delay, we will campaign to ensure that the Liberal provincial government lives up to the progressive parts of their "Choose Change" election platform.

Included in these Liberal promises, as outlined in the letter responding to the OFL pre-election questionnaire of April 4, 2003, is a promise to eliminate the 60-hour work week and other regressive provisions enacted by the Harris-Eves Conservatives in the *Employment Standards Act (ESA)* (see promises).

In the same letter, the Liberals have also made a number of promises to repeal the regressive amendments the Conservative government made to the *Ontario Labour Relations Act (OLRA)*, such as returning the power of the Labour Relations Board to certify a union where the employer has grossly violated the law during an organizing campaign, to bring back

successor rights for public sector workers and to post a worker's right to join a union in all non-union workplaces (see promises).

In addition, the labour movement needs a campaign to encompass the workplace issues important to our members. Listed in our policy paper are issues upon which the Liberals made no promises.

### *Liberal Promises*

*We intend to make the Liberals deliver on their promises as a first step towards rebuilding Ontario in the interests of working people:*

- *“Eliminate the 60-hour work week”*
- *“We will raise the minimum wage to \$8/hour, phased in over four years”.*
- *Promise “fewer injuries, less deaths” in the workplace.*
- *“We will not allow ‘phone inspections’.”*
- *“Injured workers and their dependents should not have to rely on their pensions being topped up by welfare payments.”*
- *“Importantly, Ontario Liberals would also consider the introduction of a stringent programme to improve the collection of unpaid and uncollected employer premiums.”*
- *Promise to “review the system of WSIB and the extent of its coverage.”*
- *“Unions are appropriate in large-scale (agricultural) facilities.”*
- *“Returning... the power to the Labour Board is a specific case where Tory law should be reversed.”*
- *“Will restore successor rights for Ontario government employees.”*
- *“Where information can be posted to decertify a union, information to certify a union should also be posted.”*
- *“Uphold our commitments to pay equity.”*

*Liberal Promises (cont'd)*

**Education**

- *“Our plan not only addresses the issues highlighted in the Rozanski Report, it also invests in a number of new and important educational initiatives.”*
- *“Smaller class sizes ... that caps class size at 20.”*
- *“Immediately freeze college and university (tuition).”*
- *“Cancel the private school tax credit.”*
- *“We will make the Ontario Student Assistance Plan work for more students.”*
- *“A commitment to increase capacity of post-secondary institutions by at least 10 percent over five years, creating room for almost 50,000 new students”*

**Arts and Culture**

- *“Will provide longterm, stable, increased funding to the arts and culture sector of Ontario.”*
- *“Work with our artists to develop a comprehensive report on artists in Ontario including the need for Status of the Artist legislation.”*

**Health Care**

- *“Restoring standards and providing the necessary funding to increase the level of nursing care that longterm care residents receive.”*
- *Against “the Harris-Eves plan to allow Public Private Partnerships (P3) hospitals and private MRI/CT clinics.”*
- *“ Public hospitals should exist in facilities that are publicly owned.”*

**Child Care**

- *Support “ the Federal government and its National Child Care Agenda, and these Federal dollars will be spent on regulated, centre-based care.”*

*Liberal Promises (cont'd)*

***Environment***

- *Significantly increase the Ministry of Environment's resources, "and hire more prosecutors and inspectors."*
- *"Deregulation and privatization are dead.... will keep the ownership of Ontario's electricity highway where it belongs – in public hands."*

***Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered Issues***

- *"Enforce the Human Rights Act to ensure that there is no discrimination, harassment, or violence towards any of our citizens."*

***Housing***

- *"By the end of our first mandate we plan to create 20,000 units of affordable housing."*
- *"Repeal the Tenant Protection Act and replace it with legislation that balances the needs of both tenants and landlords."*
- *"Return to rent control in tight rental markets."*

***Human Rights***

- *"Believe in equality .... Responsibility for Human Rights from Citizenship to the Attorney General Ministry."*

***Training and Apprenticeship***

- *"Training and apprenticeship will be an important area."*

***Violence Against Women***

- *"To restoring funding for second stage housing and for services and support that go along with this."*

Ensuring that workers have the ability to form unions free of employer intimidation and harassment is central to building stronger unions.

We must commit to making organizing our number one priority.

**We will do so by:**

- **developing an organizing strategy and campaigns, in consultation with affiliated unions, to ensure that all workers in this province can exercise their right to join a union;**
- **develop and implement a comprehensive campaign directed at the current Liberal government to produce major amendments to the Ontario Labour Relations Act in order to restore the rights of workers;**
- **through initiating an “Activist as Organizer Campaign” to ensure that our members have the skills and knowledge to participate in organizing, and**
- **explore the feasibility of developing an organizing institute to promote organizing in Ontario.**

## 2. Organizing For Stronger Human Rights

Millions of people live in Ontario and they should all be treated equally. Integral to our goals and this Action Plan is to lobby governments for progressive changes and bring pressure to bear, so no one is excluded from enjoying a life of dignity, opportunity and respect.

Unions must lead by example. Organized workers can play a significant role in ensuring that every single workplace in the province respects human rights.

In organizing strong unions, we must remember that the majority of workers who need and want unions are women, youth and people of colour.

We need internal policies and legislative change to ensure workers can exercise their right to join a union. Social justice can be furthered by ensuring that there are strong equity and human rights caucuses with input into all labour's campaigns.

**The Ontario Federation of Labour will hold special meetings with equity seeking groups to ensure networking occurs, priority issues identified and further action plans are developed.**

It is also important to promote equality by changing and updating laws and ensuring their enforcement.

We need strong laws to protect human rights. Everyone who calls Ontario their home deserves nothing less than full equality in every facet of their lives.

Equity issues must be the foundation and the underpinning of all our actions.

Our endeavours must respect and reflect labour's full commitment to human rights, the rights of disabled persons, people of colour, Aboriginal peoples, employment equity, pay equity, gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered persons, women and youth.

**This Action Plan will build equity and human rights into all of the campaigns and actions we undertake. Whether it be demanding the Ontario Liberal government make good on its promises or labour's campaigns to lobby for OFL policies including those that have come from A People's Charter recommendations.**

**In particular the OFL will:**

- **partner with equity seeking coalitions to produce research on demographic changes in Ontario to advance employment equity in organizing and at the bargaining table;**
- **the OFL will work with equity seeking coalitions to vigorously lobby the provincial government for employment equity legislation, and**
- **OFL will mount a campaign in conjunction with social allies to restore adequate resources to the Ontario Human Rights Commission.**

The challenge will be to assess the manner in which equity seeking groups face exclusion in our society and then to build inclusion.

### 3. Organizing For Stronger Communities

The Liberal government has made a long list of promises to the people of Ontario. The Ontario Federation of Labour will work with its affiliated unions and community allies to ensure that every progressive commitment is delivered.

We will build on the relationships we have developed with the groups who built A People's Charter and who share our vision of community services.

Here again, the Liberal platform is **not** our platform.

Their positions fall short of the policies of the OFL and A People's Charter. Nonetheless, as a first step, we will campaign to ensure that the Liberal government lives up to the reforms of their "Choose Change" election platform.

Included in these Liberal promises as outlined in their letter responding to the OFL questionnaire of April 4, 2003, are promises concerning education for changes such as smaller classes and freezing college and university tuition.

In health care, the promises include stopping the Harris-Eves plan to privatize hospitals under the rhetoric of public-private partnerships known as P3s.

There are a number of further promises that speak to our concerns in terms of stable funding for the arts, support for child care, the environment and human rights.

Of particular interest is the Liberal promise to create 20,000 units of affordable housing in their first mandate.

The above Liberal commitments are but a part of their election promises.

It will take considerable pressure, from lobbying to solidarity actions in the streets, to ensure the Liberals enact them.

In addition, the labour movement needs a campaign to encompass the community issues important to people and on which the Liberals made no promise.

**The new Liberal government has already demonstrated that they will not deliver on their promises. Labour in Ontario needs to mobilize its members on the ground to oppose this government.**

**- The Ontario Federation of Labour will organize province-wide action planning meetings of community organizations, labour councils and affiliated unions to:**

- (i) develop strategies for public pressure to implement policy planks of the Liberals we agree with, and**
- (ii) then proceed to develop strategies and public pressure for the recommendations of A People's Charter that go beyond the Liberal platform.**
- (iii) develop a campaign directed at the provincial government to force them to back-off the use of public-private partnerships as a means of financing capital infrastructure in the public sector.**

**This will include corporate campaigns in Ontario against companies that are part of public- private-partnerships (P3s) deals with the Provincial Government.**

**In some circumstances we will recommend a campaign to the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) to move such anti-corporate actions to the national level and thereby assist other provincial federations who are fighting public-private-partnerships (P3s) deal with the same corporations.**

#### 4. Justice For Unemployed Workers

The Ontario Federation of Labour is committed to ensuring that all workers who have lost their jobs due to corporate restructuring, down-sizing, public sector cutbacks and workplace closures receive the basic support that they deserve. Yet justice has not been forthcoming.

There is something very wrong with the unemployment insurance system when only 30 percent of unemployed men and 27 percent of unemployed women even qualify to receive benefits.

We pay but we can't collect. Unemployment insurance is supposed to be there for us when we need it. The money is there, a \$50 billion dollar surplus, but it is only available to a handful of workers.

The money belongs to the people who pay into the unemployment insurance plan. It's not a chequing account for the Federal government, it is not the government's money it is ours. It is supposed to be insurance. A surplus mostly used by the Federal Liberal government for other purposes.

Where's the justice in this? Workers are being short-changed, particularly women, people with disabilities, immigrants, Aboriginals, people of colour and youth.

These groups of workers are also over-represented in the contingent or temporary work sectors and they find it almost impossible to get enough work hours to qualify for unemployment insurance.

While we campaign to rebuild Ontario, we also reaffirm our commitment to work with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) on national campaigns.

In particular, we will make the unemployment insurance campaign a priority and thereby reaffirm our commitment to economic justice for unemployed workers.

## **5. Report-Back Mechanism**

**Through the OFL Executive Board and Executive Council the OFL will report back to affiliates and Labour Councils on a semi-annual basis with:**

- a detailed action plan;**
- timelines on each campaign , and**
- how coalitions and labour councils will be engaged in fight-back campaigns.**

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