



Ontario Federation of Labour President's Report



On June 26, the OFL, CLC and social justice groups mobilized over 30,000 people. The demonstration was held to protest the austerity agenda of Stephen Harper and other G20 leaders. Thousands came together peacefully to demand that G20 leaders put people and the environment first, before corporate profits. OFL Programs Director Duncan MacDonald was part of the organizing team along with other OFL and CLC staff.

OFL Executive Board Meeting - June 28, 2010

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Ontario Federation of Labour President's Report OFL Executive Board Meeting - June 28, 2010

Part I – Campaigns & Government Relations



PENSION BREAKTHROUGH

On Thursday, June 3, President Sid Ryan participated in a Pension Roundtable called by Finance Minister Dwight Duncan. At the meeting, Ryan joined representatives from Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus (CARP); Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan (HOOPP); Ontario Bar Association - Pensions and Benefits Section; Ontario Municipal Employees Retirement System (OMERS); Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU); Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF); Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board; and others.

The OFL was represented by President Sid Ryan who explained that younger workers currently had less access to defined benefit plans and are more indebted, especially as a result of student loans. He also noted that RRSPs were not a secure or efficient way to save for retirement. He said that the growing income gap made pension reform an urgent necessity.

Although at meetings earlier this year between OFL representatives and Ontario Finance Minister Dwight Duncan, the Minister was not immediately supportive. On June 12, Ontario Minister Duncan publicly announced support for an expansion of the Canada Pension Plan. Labour's success in winning Minister Duncan's support was critical. Without support from Ontario, it would be virtually impossible for a pan-Canadian consensus to emerge, since Ontario represents one third of Canada's population.

Duncan's statement came on the eve of a key meeting between federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty and provincial and territorial finance ministers at their June 13-14 conference in Prince Edward Island. On the same day that Minister Duncan announced his support, so too did Minister Flaherty announce his support for modest increases in the Canada Pension Plan. It should be noted that Minister Flaherty had asked to participate in the OFL/CLC March Pension Roundtable. At the roundtable, Minister Flaherty had the opportunity to see first-hand the extent of support and organization within the labour movement and among retirees for the campaign to modernize the Canada Pension Plan.

The OFL used the occasion of the provincial and territorial finance ministers' meeting to release the poll it commissioned demonstrating that small business owners support improved income security for retirees, and that a majority support Labour's modest proposals to increase premiums that will allow CPP benefits to increase. The poll was crucial in refuting statements made by Catherine Swift, President of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, which suggested small business owners were opposed to improving the public pension system. Finance Minister Dwight Duncan requested—and received—a copy of the poll results. The polling data was also shared with the CLC and other provincial federations of labour. OFL Research Director Sheila Block coordinates the ongoing work of the OFL Pension Committee.

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KILL A WORKER, GO TO JAIL

OFL Campaign gets results

On May 20, in response to yet another workplace death of a worker in Whitby, President Sid Ryan was compelled to write another letter, this one to the Durham Regional Police, reminding them that the Criminal Code of Canada provides for charges to be laid against employers who fail to maintain a safe and healthy workplace. Appended to the letter was an educational package on the health and safety aspects of the Criminal Code.



In response to the December 24, 2009 deaths of four workers who were killed when they fell while working on a construction site in Toronto, the Ontario Federation of Labour launched its "Kill a worker, go to jail" campaign. The OFL continues to call on the Ministry of Labour to use the full authority of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) to impose significant fines and jail sentences against employers who are not in compliance. The OFL has issued media releases and written letters whenever a worker is killed on the job. As a result of the labour movement's campaign, on January 18, the Ministry of Labour launched a 90-day *Occupational Health and Safety Act* compliance campaign and in March, struck an Expert Panel on Occupational Health and Safety with representation from the OFL.

Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety

The Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety struck in March issued its consultation paper at the beginning of May. All affiliates were encouraged to make submissions to the Expert Panel and the deadline for submission was established as June 30. The OFL is represented on the Panel by Health and Safety Director Vern Edwards who also coordinates the work of the OFL's Health and Safety Committee. The Panel met for the first time at the beginning of May.

On June 15, President Sid Ryan made a presentation to the panel, stressing the following points:

- Employers must make health and safety a priority within the workplace culture.
- The Ontario government must strengthen and enforce senior management accountability for health and safety responsibility.
- The government must protect vulnerable workers, including the promotion of the "Don't Ask – Don't Tell" policy regarding the immigration status of workers.
- The government must impose mandatory entry level H&S training for workers, supervisors and small business owners must be put in place.
- Employees must have meaningful protection from employer reprisals and prosecute any employer that carries out reprisals.
- Health and safety committees must have a stronger role in improving

workplace health and safety; employers must be obligated to consult with workers.

- Concrete measures must be taken to ensure the provisions in the Criminal Code of Canada are applied. (In 2004, Bill C-45 amended the Code to provide for the criminal prosecution of employers who disregard their obligations to maintain healthy and safe workplaces.) Ministry of Labour *Occupational Health and Safety Act* Compliance Blitz.

On May 13, Labour Minister Peter Fonseca held a media conference announcing the results of the 90-day inspection blitz of construction sites. More than half (56%) of the 3,421 orders issued during the campaign were for violations relating to 'missing or improper use or maintenance of guardrails' and 'non-suspended scaffolds and fall protection systems'. The Ministry issued 784 Stop Work Orders. The report validated labour's calls for tougher measures to ensure employer compliance with the OHSA. Full Ministry of Labour report at: <http://bit.ly/b788Cv>.

Culture of Fear: Report on Reprisals

A Report on the Status of Reprisal Protection for Workers under the *Ontario Occupational Health and Safety Act* was produced for the OFL by Brendan McCutchen. It was titled: *Culture of Fear*. It documents the extent of reprisals against workers who ask for the implementation of their rights under the OHSA. The Report has been submitted to the Chair of the Expert Panel on Occupational Health and Safety. In addition, copies have been made available to the OFL Executive Board and the OFL's Health and Safety Committee.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Privatized services are now public – Big win for Labour

In 1998, the Conservative government of Mike Harris privatized all Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services. These services were previously provided by trained Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) staff. The privatized program was re-named Labour Market Re-entry (LMR). The effect was to create a program that benefitted neither workers nor employers. Workers themselves received little counselling or support for future planning. While program costs escalated—nearly doubling since 1998—the WSIB had difficulty monitoring the effectiveness of the program.

After more than a decade of lobbying by the Ontario labour movement—including CUPE Local 1750 whose members work at the WSIB, Laurie Hardwick, Director of Organization Services, the OFL's Workers Compensation Committee and injured workers themselves—the WSIB announced on June 23 that LMR services will be restored to the WSIB. This means the services will be delivered by fully-trained WSIB staff. Restoring these services will ensure the WSIB can exercise adequate, system-wide oversight and provide the stakeholders with the transparency that has been lacking since 1998.



This move will increase the staffing levels at the WSIB and provide greater job security for members of CUPE Local 1750 and improve the quality of the services offered. The expertise of these workers can now be put to use in shaping the design and implementation of the Labour Market Re-entry program, now re-named: Work Re-integration. Further, the training that had been previously sold to injured workers by for-profit service providers will once again be delivered by Ontario's public colleges and universities. The OFL and its affiliates have long advocated for the return of training to public colleges and universities, since the private companies too often charged high fees and delivered poor quality training.

\$2 million in new funding for OFL-ODRT: First increase in over a decade

President Sid Ryan and the staff of the OFL's Occupational Disability Response Team—including Director Laurie Hardwick; Clarence MacPherson, OFL-ODRT Funding Coordinator; Colin Argyle OFL-ODRT Co-ordinator of Services and Promotion; and Al Bieksa, ODRT Training Coordinator—have been meeting regularly with senior staff of the WSIB and with Board Chair Steve Mahoney to seek funding for a major disability prevention project. The OFL requested \$385,000 of additional funding for the current year and \$850,000 of additional funding for each of the next two years to improve the sustainability and effectiveness of return to work programs for injured workers.

On June 23, the OFL learned that its project grant application had been successful. With a total value of approximately \$2 million, this successful grant application marks the first time in over a decade that the OFL has won significant new funding for a labour-led initiative. This project will allow the OFL-ODRT to hire five additional staff and organize a series of community seminars addressing disability prevention principles, legal provisions and best practices for return to work programs. It will also allow the OFL-ODRT staff to provide workplace-based facilitation services to develop return to work policies, programs, best practices and establish baseline measures.

Injured Workers' Day

On June 1, hundreds of injured workers and their allies gathered on the lawns of Queen's Park for Injured Workers' Day, to rally against any move to cut benefits to injured workers. A 2009 Auditor General report had highlighted mounting unfunded liability for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) and left the door open to cuts in income support for injured workers. President Sid Ryan spoke at the rally noting that during the mid-1990s, Conservative Premier Mike Harris allowed employers to reduce their contributions to the workers' compensation system, producing today's unfunded liability. He argued that injured workers should not accept cuts in income supports and employers should be paying their fair share.



Ryan also pledged to bring a motion to the OFL Executive Board asking that a seat be created on the OFL Executive Board for injured workers so that injured workers can bring their concerns directly to the leadership of the labour movement in Ontario. The seat would have voice, but no vote, and would help politicize the deplorable circumstances faced by injured workers in the province.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Bill 168 – It's the law

On June 15, Bill 168, *An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters*, came into legal effect, making workplaces and communities a little safer, especially for women. At the June 15 Queen's Park media event, OFL Vice-President-Workers of Colour Elizabeth Ha represented the OFL at the event. OFL Directors Carrol Anne Sceviour (Women's Rights/Solidarity & Pride) and Janice Gairey (Human Rights) also participated in the event.



At the time of the announcement, Secretary-Treasurer Marie Kelly and Executive Vice-President Terry Downey were attending the Ontario Nurses Association Provincial Coordinators Meeting and were able to personally congratulate ONA on the work they undertook to highlight the story of Lori Dupont, the nurse at Hotel-Dieu Grace in Windsor who, in 2005, was murdered by her ex-boyfriend—a doctor at Hotel-Dieu Grace.



The passage of Bill 168 would not have been possible without the united efforts of OFL affiliates and the families of Lori Dupont and Theresa Vince, who, in 1996, was also murdered at work by an employer who had been sexually harassing her for years.

Next steps in addressing violence and harassment

Despite the success represented by the implementation of Bill 168, further steps must be taken to protect those who are exposed to violence and harassment. While the *Occupational Health & Safety Act* now defines workplace violence as a hazard, strong regulations are required to ensure adequate training and consultation with workplace joint Health and Safety Committees. Furthermore, the WSIB policy on compensation for chronic stress must be expanded to cover workers who experience harassment or verbal or emotional abuse.

Currently, the *Employment Standards Act* provides job protection and 10 weeks of compassionate leave. The labour and women's movements want the definition of compassionate leave expanded to cover abused women who need time to address legal issues, find housing, secure child care and heal, both mentally and physically. The *Human Rights Code*, *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the *Employment Standards Act* must be amended to provide abused women the right to workplace accommodation. The right to alternative work, flexible hours and job transfers should be options for women dealing with violence.

Even with these legislative and regulatory changes, a multi-language public education campaign is required to ensure Ontario workers can know—and enforce—their workplace rights. Violence is not part of any job description and should not be condoned in any workplace. Funding should be provided to women's organizations that support women who experience harassment and allow such organizations to develop community education programs.



Photo: Bill Burke/Page One Photography

TRAINING

College of Trades

In October 2009, the Ontario government adopted legislation to create a College of Trades. The college will be established by the first Appointments Council that was appointed on May 21. Of the eight appointed to the Council, two were members of the OFL's Apprenticeship Committee: Patrick Dillon of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario and Colin Heslop of CAW. While it is expected that the new structure will provide some transparency in decision-making in trades and apprenticeship-related issues, there are also concerns that new provisions for disciplining workers under the College will create challenges. There are further concerns that the College of Trades will be used as the vehicle for implementing the labour mobility provisions of the Agreement in Internal Trade (AIT), a non-binding agreement among provinces to harmonize training standards across Canada. In December 2009, the Ontario government passed the *Ontario Labour Mobility Act* that gives some legal standing to the AIT. Analysis suggests that the AIT could further undermine and fragment authentic trades while accelerating the trend toward skills sets.

Second Career: Labour wins improvements

Originally launched during the summer of 2008, the Second Career Program was intended to provide income support for the growing numbers of Ontario workers who were losing their jobs in the manufacturing and forestry sectors. However, with the onset of the even deeper global economic crisis in November 2008, interest in the Program increased dramatically. Within one year, three-times the expected number of people applied for the Program, creating a backlog of applications and a shortage of money. As a consequence, in November 2009, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) implemented significant changes in the Program's eligibility criteria, reducing access significantly. Even when workers were approved for training under the Second Career Program, too often the income support provided was inadequate to sustain a worker—never mind their family—and many have been forced to withdraw from the Program.

The OFL and its affiliates have been actively lobbying for an expansion of and improvements to the Second Career Program. These concerns were raised by President Sid Ryan and Executive Vice-President Terry Downey at a variety of meetings with Finance Minister Dwight Duncan and Training, Colleges and Universities Minister John Milloy.

In March, the Ontario Budget reflected \$600 million in new money for the Second Career Program to assist 30,000 additional workers without jobs. While the OFL welcomed the commitment to maintain the Program, at the time, the MTCU indicated it was not prepared to make changes to the 2009 eligibility criteria used to screen applicants. Consequently, the OFL's Labour Adjustment Committee intensified lobbying with senior MTCU staff.

Finally, on June 8, 2010, the MTCU announced modest changes to the eligibility criteria for the Second Career Program. Specifically, the Ministry has adopted some changes recommended by the OFL and its affiliates. These changes include improvements in the Program's income support policies and changes to the assessment matrix. The government agreed to modify the matrix in the areas of: active job search; duration of unemployment; work history; and occupational skills. It is hoped that workers in precarious employment will now have greater access to Second Career retraining dollars. As recommended by the OFL, the changes will be applied retroactively to November 2009 when the eligibility criteria were last changed. In addition, there is now a limited appeal process for workers whose financial circumstances changed subsequent to their submitting the Program application.

Employment Insurance (EI) and Training

The Extended Employment Insurance Training Initiative (EEITI) was a temporary federal government measure that was intended to extend Employment Insurance income support to workers enrolled in approved training programs. It was introduced in September 2009 after extended lobbying from the labour movement. However, due to the extremely tight eligibility restrictions embedded in the program (the program was only available to a small number of long-tenured, unemployed workers) few unemployed workers were able to access the program and it expired on May 31. Despite the disappointing results of the federal EEITI, it is a matter of some urgency that a new and expanded version of the program be introduced and included in the federal *Employment Insurance Act*.

Given the inadequacies of the income support provided through the Ontario Second Career Program, an extended EI training program would help maximize the training dollars available both provincially and federally and increase access to retraining for more workers without jobs. President Sid Ryan and Executive Vice-President Terry Downey have both written letters to the federal government urging action on this important issue. In addition, the OFL will be working with other provincial federations of labour during the upcoming Council of the Federation meeting in August to win support for an expanded, permanent EI Training program.





OFL wins access to new money for workplace learning

The OFL's joint proposal for workplace learning, submitted with the Ontario Literacy Coalition, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association, and other affiliates and organizations, was approved in February.

The first phase of the project will facilitate four work sites for literacy and foundational skills delivery. An additional proposal has been submitted for an additional eleven work sites; approval for the second phase is pending. Education Director Pam Frache represents the OFL at the joint meetings of the Collaborative Development Approach workplace teaching partners (CODA).

Funding for the project came from the Canada-Ontario Labour Market agreement that allocated \$90 million over two years for literacy, but not necessarily workplace-based literacy training. After concerted lobbying, the 2009 Ontario Budget earmarked a portion of those resources for workplace-based literacy pilot projects. The funding was formally distributed in February, marking the first time since the late 1990's—when the OFL's Basic Education and Skills Training (BEST) program was cut by the Conservative Mike Harris government—that new money has been allocated for workplace-based learning and basic skills.

INTER-PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ISSUES

Tri-partite "*Labour Market Partners Forum*" gets traction

Since federal government responsibilities were transferred to the provinces through the Labour Market Agreements and Labour Market Development Agreements, the OFL and CLC have been calling for the creation of tri-partite bodies—comprised of labour, employer and government representatives—to develop effective jobs and training strategies. "Recent government relations meetings have given us reason to think this proposal could get traction with the Ontario Premier," said President Sid Ryan. "Given there are already similar tri-partite structures in Newfoundland and Labrador and in Québec. A breakthrough in Ontario may pave the way in other provinces and federally."

Council of the Federation Meeting: August 4 to 6

The Council of the Federation—the gathering of provincial and territorial premiers—will be meeting in Manitoba from August 4 through 6. Presidents of provincial federations of labour and the Canadian Labour Congress will be meeting at the same time. Plans are already underway to host a meeting with the Premiers. This Council of the Federation meeting will be an important opportunity to influence premiers on key issues like pensions, job creation strategies, training (including workplace learning), and the need for labour market partners forums in each province and across Canada. Sandra Clifford, Director of Legislative and Political Education, coordinates the government relations work of the OFL.

Part II – Solidarity

UFCW - EDUCATION HAS NO BORDERS

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Canada's pioneering efforts to protect and promote the rights of agricultural workers have been at the forefront of change for more than two decades. UFCW provides critical and ground-breaking services to the most vulnerable workers. Their work has built bridges with union and non-union workers, and especially migrant workers. UFCW's newest campaign uses education to empower migrant workers to take their fight into the mainstream. Launched on May 13 at a celebration in Toronto, the campaign brings together national, regional and local education-based initiatives such as the Students against Migrant Exploitation, the UFCW Canada Academic Support Network, and WebCampus demonstrations. The OFL was represented by President Sid Ryan at the event.



INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF HOMOPHOBIA

On May 17, the OFL joined with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) people and their families to affirm their fundamental human right to live their lives "Out and Proud." Over the past 40 years, the efforts of LGBT people and their allies inside and outside the labour movement have helped to secure important legal rights for the LGBT community. However, the OFL acknowledges that too often, legal rights do not translate into social equality. It is a fact that in more than 80 countries, it is still a crime to be gay or lesbian; in seven countries, homosexuality is punishable by death. On May 17 the OFL reaffirmed its commitment to challenge, with the strongest possible effort, all discrimination against the LGBT community and to fight for true equality for all. OFL Director Carrol Anne Sceviour coordinates the work of the OFL's Solidarity & Pride Committee.



WOMEN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE

On May 17, in the wake of Prime Minister Harper's G20 maternal health initiative that will bar access to safe abortion, members of the Ontario Coalition for Abortion Clinics (OCAC) organized a "die-in" at the Bowmanville constituency office of federal Status of Women Minister Bev Oda. President Sid Ryan joined Carolyn Egan, president of the Steelworkers Toronto Area Council and member of the OCAC, and many others at the event that sparked nation-wide media coverage.



Even without Harper's latest restrictions, 19 million women annually must resort to unsafe abortions and 70,000 will die. After years of struggle, in 1989 the Supreme Court struck down the laws that criminalize abortion. Nevertheless, the Harper government has signalled its intent to move forward with its anti-choice agenda with its maternal health initiative, and labour must be vigilant on this issue.



MASSEY CENTRE WORKERS

On May 18, Secretary-Treasurer Marie Kelly joined 55 Service Employees International Union members on the picket line at Massey Centre, bringing solidarity greetings from the Ontario Federation of Labour. The Massey Centre is a Toronto-based multi-service agency for women, providing a comprehensive range of programs and services for families and babies.

The Centre relies on government funding for 80 percent of its budget. Already burdened by a 25 percent funding cut imposed by the Conservative Mike Harris government in the mid-1990s, today, the Centre faces a \$500,000 debt. To ease budget pressure in the past, workers receiving promotions voluntarily accepted a two-year pay freeze. But more than ten years later, this pay freeze has continued. Adding insult to injury, Massey workers have been waiting for seven years for \$80,000 in government funding for pay equity, a cost incurred in 2003. The Massey Centre workers—the majority of whom are sisters of colour—have been walking the picket lines since April 21, defending decent wages and quality services.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AWARENESS WEEK

The OFL issued a statement to mark Sexual Harassment Awareness week (June 1 to 7) and to acknowledge the coming into force of anti-workplace violence and harassment laws in Ontario. Secretary-Treasurer Marie Kelly used the occasion to call for further improvements in curbing violence against women and workplace harassment.



REDUCING THE COST OF GENERIC DRUGS

Despite fierce resistance from pharmacy chains like Shoppers' Drug Mart, on June 7, Health and Long Term Care Minister Deb Matthews organized a media event to announce the regulations that will reduce the cost of generic drugs for all Ontarians. President Sid Ryan joined with representatives from Canada's Association for the Fifty-Plus (CARP), the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and others in supporting the Ontario government's initiative. By organizing in support of this initiative, the labour movement played a role in preventing the Ontario government from back-tracking on its promises. Special acknowledgement must go to the London and District Labour Council for joining the campaign to boycott Shoppers' Drug Mart.

Reducing generic drug costs will allow more employers to offer drug plans for their workers and make existing plans more comprehensive or more affordable through the elimination of co-payments. Minister Matthews assured Ontarians that the \$750 million expected to be saved annually will be reinvested into public health care.

ABORIGINAL SOLIDARITY DAY

On June 21, President Sid Ryan and Executive Vice-President Terry Downey urged working people to participate in Aboriginal Solidarity Day. Aboriginal Solidarity Day—otherwise known as National Aboriginal Day—was proclaimed by the federal government in 1996 after years of lobbying by the Assembly of First Nations (formerly the National Indian Brotherhood). Since 1996, June 21 has been seen as a day for celebration, reflection and solidarity with the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.



The statement issued noted the following:

- In 2006, the median income for Aboriginal peoples was 30 percent lower than for the rest of Canadians—a difference of over \$8,000 annually.
- Data from the past two censuses show that children in Aboriginal families experience poverty rates significantly higher than the average Ontario rate. The infant mortality rate is twice as high for Aboriginals.
- According to Statistics Canada data released in May 2010, the global economic recession was particularly devastating for First Nations workers in Canada:
 - Between 2008 and 2009 the official unemployment rate among Aboriginal workers increased from 10.4 percent in 2008 to 13.9 percent in 2009. By contrast, the official unemployment rate for non-Aboriginal workers rose from 6.0 percent to 8.1 percent.
 - In manufacturing, Aboriginal employment fell by 30 percent compared to an 8 percent decline among non-aboriginal workers.
 - In the construction industry, Aboriginal employment fell by 16 percent, compared to a 5 percent decline among non-aboriginal workers.

In light of these facts, Ryan and Downey called on all workers to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal peoples inside and outside the labour movement.

Part III – Affiliate Communication & Outreach



CANADIAN AUTO WORKERS

On June 1, the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) officially rejoined the OFL, submitting per capita fees based on an initial membership of 15,000. This development would not have been possible without the leadership of CAW President Ken Lewenza, who has always believed in the power and strength of a united labour movement. CAW's membership has already re-invigorated the Ontario labour movement.

On June 14, Ryan attended the CAW Skilled Trades Sub-Council, Niagara Region. The meeting discussed issues pertaining to the skilled trades, including the recently appointed College of Trades, as well as job creation and training strategies.



CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES – ONTARIO DIVISION

On Wednesday, May 26, President Sid Ryan addressed delegates to the 47th Annual Convention of CUPE Ontario. Ryan used the occasion to call for strong, united labour action during the 2010 municipal elections. He urged solidarity among all unions to ensure that each municipal ward had a single, pro-labour candidate that all unions could support. He said that municipalities must take a leading role in implementing a jobs strategy and developing local procurement policies. Executive Vice-President Terry Downey also attended the Convention.



ONTARIO PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF MACHINISTS

The Ontario Provincial Council of Machinists (International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, IAM) met from June 4 to June 6 in North Bay, and celebrated their 50th anniversary. Sister Kim Valliere is President of the Council. Speakers included: Dave Ritchie, General Vice President IAM Canada; Tom Buffenbarger, International President IAM; Andrea Horwath, Ontario New Democratic Party Leader; Glen Hare, Deputy Grand Chief of the Anishinabek First Nations (Union of Ontario Indians); Marianna Couchie, Chief for Nipissing First Nation; Henri Giroux, President of the North Bay and District Labour Council; OFL President Sid Ryan and many others.

Ryan spoke to delegates about the need for provincial and federal governments to develop and implement a good jobs strategy. He said that despite some modest local procurement measures adopted in *Ontario's Green Energy Act*, such strategies could be at risk under a Canada-Europe Trade Agreement (CETA). Experience suggests that CETA could have the effect of imposing market dictates on the policies of provincial and municipal governments, thereby undermining democratic decision-making. Ryan also called for improved support for workers without jobs and to improve retirement security through the CLC's call for reforms to the Canada Pension Plan.

ONTARIO NURSES' ASSOCIATION

The Ontario Nurses' Association Provincial Coordinators Meeting took place from June 15 to 16. Secretary-Treasurer Marie Kelly and Executive Vice-President Terry Downey attended the meeting. Kelly and Downey gave solidarity greetings on behalf of the OFL and provided an overview of current activities. Both highlighted the work of the OFL and its affiliates on achieving anti-workplace violence and harassment amendments to the OHSA, acknowledging the critical contribution made by ONA in highlighting the tragedy of Lori DuPont, a nurse murdered at work in 2005. On June 10, Kelly attended the ONA's leadership development meeting and spoke to the participants about the importance of involving and developing young leaders.



ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES UNION

The Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) held its annual convention from May 5 to 8. Secretary-Treasurer Marie Kelly and Executive Vice-President Terry Downey were in attendance. On May 7, the OPSEU Provincial Women's Committee held its annual Breakfast Event where Downey received the Committee's 'Bread and Roses' award. In her remarks, Downey said that women's committees play a key role in advancing a feminist agenda forward and that such work must continue until all gender barriers are overcome inside and outside the labour movement. She highlighted the ongoing struggle for pay equity, for an end to violence against women, and for universal access to child care and elder care.

UNITED FOOD AND COMMERCIAL WORKERS

The United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Stewards Meeting took place from June 18 to 20, bringing together over 350 shop stewards. The meeting was intended to build the confidence of young stewards by sharing international experience and celebrating victories. UFCW has been on the forefront of the struggle to protect and expand the rights of migrant workers and has developed a cutting edge education program tailored to their unique circumstances. UFCW has also been leading the fight against Walmart from hard-fought—but successful—union drives to galvanizing opposition to the expansion of the big box retailer. By mobilizing workers resistance in Canada and around the world, these UFCW campaigns are part of the ongoing campaign against corporate globalization. These issues were highlighted by President Sid Ryan, who was among a variety of guest speakers from the United States and Canada. As part of their new media outreach strategy in the lead-up to the People First rally on June 26, UFCW also interviewed Ryan about the impact of the G20 and corporate globalization.





UNITED STEELWORKERS

On June 15, President Sid Ryan attended the United Steelworkers National Staff Meeting. In his remarks, he made the following points:

- The economic crisis that has wreaked havoc on the lives and livelihoods of working people is far from over.
- Not only is the 'global recovery' fragile and uncertain, but in the Eurozone the financial crisis has evolved into a wave of speculation against major currencies and sovereign states.
- Governments' coordinated stimulus policy is now being replaced, under pressure from bond markets, with a premature focus on deficit reduction.
- This risks tipping the global economy back into recession with catastrophic results.
- We need to remember that this crisis has resulted in a massive transfer of public funds to the private financial sector.
- Cutting public expenditure to pay for this transfer is morally unjust, and economically unsound.
- The global labour movement rejects public spending cuts that reduce wages, pensions and social programmes. This will only increase unemployment, reduce spending on health care, education and other important social expenditures, and harm the living and working conditions of working families.
- Governments must abandon this failed neo-liberal orthodoxy. Instead, they should focus on building growth and raising revenue, giving priority to progressive taxation, and new sources of finance including, a financial transactions tax.
- The recent attack on the Euro serves as a sharp reminder of the need for G20 Leaders to prioritize the re-regulation and downsizing of the financial sector and to return it to its legitimate function of serving the real economy.
- G20 Leaders need to support concrete steps towards an effective climate change agreement. They should work with trade unions to deliver a 'Just Transition' towards a low-carbon, sustainable economy.
- G20 Leaders - and the G8 in particular - must not turn their backs on past commitments to developing countries at this time of crisis.

Part IV – In Memoriam

OFL STATEMENT ON THE TRAGIC DEATH OF SHANNEN KOOSTACHIN

June 3, 2010: It is with great sadness and shock that the Ontario Federation of Labour has learned of the untimely and tragic death of Shannen Koostachin. Shannen was just 16 years old when she passed away, but had already established herself among first nations, social justice and trade union activists as a powerful young fighter for truth and justice.

In November 2009, Shannen was a keynote speaker at the Ontario Federation of Labour's biennial convention. To an audience of hundreds, Shannen spoke of her successful campaign to push the federal government to build a new school for the children of the Attawapiskat community off the coast of James Bay in Northern Ontario.

The school had been contaminated by a diesel spill in 1979 and was never properly cleaned. Despite the toxic risks and resulting illnesses, the school was kept in use for the next 21 years. It was only closed when parents refused to enrol their children and teachers refused to work in the building. Portable classes—with insufficient insulation and ventilation problems—were brought in as a stop-gap measure. For the next decade hundreds of Attawapiskat children received their schooling in sub-standard portables while both Liberal and Conservative federal governments failed to provide the funding necessary to rebuild the school.

Shannen was just 13 years old and a grade eight student when she spearheaded the campaign for a new school in Attawapiskat. Launched in 2008, her campaign spread across Canada and eventually to the United Nations. Thousands of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal youth united to make the campaign the largest youth-driven, child's rights movement in Canadian history. Shannen was nominated for the International Children's Peace Prize.

Thirty-three years after the original diesel spill contaminated the building and the land on which it stood, a new elementary school is finally set to open in Attawapiskat in 2012. It would never have been built without the leadership of Shannen Koostachin.

The Ontario Federation of Labour mourns Shannen's death. Our deepest condolences go out to her family and friends, and to her enormous network of social justice activists. Shannen's life was cut short, but she made a deep and lasting imprint on her community and on Canada. She made life better—not only for the students who will now have access to a proper education facility—but for the youth who were inspired by her. Indeed, we have all learned that when young people set out to make change they can transform the world. Today, we mourn her passing, but we thank her for sharing her gifts with us, and, importantly, we re-commit ourselves to Shannen's struggle for solidarity and justice.



Part V – External Communications

MEDIA

Between May 10 and June 28, the OFL has enjoyed significant media coverage and has established itself as a reliable and positive source of information and commentary. The OFL has been featured in the following international, national, provincial and local news outlets:

- Agence France-Presse;
- Fox News (UK);
- Reuters;
- Sky News;
- CBC News Network;
- CTV National;
- Canada AM;
- CP24;
- CBC Radio;
- NewsTalk 1010;
- AM640;
- National Post;
- Globe and Mail;
- Toronto Star;
- Toronto Sun;
- Now Magazine; and
- many others.

A clippings compendium is appended to this report.

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