

Workers Under 30

OFL CONVENTION 2009

The Ontario Federation of Labour Biennial Convention took place November 23 to 27 at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto. On the Wednesday evening, 27 young delegates attended the Workers Under 30 Caucus to elect their representative to the OFL Executive Board. Matt Dumas from Canadian Office and Professional Employees Union (COPE) was elected to the position of Vice-President representing Workers Under 30, and Krista Maracle from OPSEU was elected as the alternate. ***Congratulations to both!***



Matt Dumas, WU30 Vice-President



Krista Maracle, WU30 Alternate

YOUTH RESOLUTIONS SUCCESSFUL AT THE 2009 OFL CONVENTION – MATT DUMAS, COPE

The 2009 OFL convention will definitely be remembered as a key time for the labour movement. We saw Brother Wayne Samuelson and Sister Irene Harris leave their leadership posts after years of great service for working people in Ontario and we are now heading into the future with a progressive and dedicated leadership team headed by Brother Sid Ryan and Sisters Marie Kelly and Terry Downey.

This convention also proved to be pivotal for young workers in Ontario. In total there were two resolutions that were submitted; the first dealing with repealing the student minimum wage and giving student workers a fair working wage and the second resolution was about the OFL holding a conference of all affiliate young workers' committees.

The student minimum wage resolution was passed unanimously when many delegates lined up at the microphones to speak in favour of the intent of this resolution. The delegates who spoke at the microphones and those who voted to pass the resolution made it clear that every working person in Ontario is deserving of at least the standard regular minimum wage regardless of whether they are students or not.

The young workers committees' conference resolution was also passed unanimously, but not without an interesting path this resolution took to make it to the convention floor. At the beginning of the convention the resolution was scheduled to be

raised at some point during the course of the week, but then due to some of the wording of the resolution it was going to be referred back to the Executive Board.

After some discussion between the OFL resolutions committee and a group of young workers, the resolution was allowed to be put to the floor. Just like the minimum wage resolution, there were line-ups at the microphones by young workers and baby boomers alike who wanted to speak to the importance of holding a meeting of all of the young workers' committees and the positive impact this conference will have on the overall labour movement.

At the end of the convention, there was a sense of positive change in the air. With a new progressive leadership team in place that includes incumbent OFL Executive Vice President, Terry Downey, the OFL is poised to make a great impact on the lives of all working people in Ontario.

This is especially true for current young workers and future generations. With the passing of these two resolutions, we have the clear message that we need to work together in solidarity and fight for a brighter future for working people.

The seeds of change are planted at conventions like this, but it is ultimately the resolve, passion and hard work of activists that will deliver this change.

DEBORA DEANGELIS WINS OFL'S 2009 YOUTH BOOSTER AWARD



The OFL Youth Committee was established at the 1997 convention. Twenty-four youth delegates attended the convention and at the first youth caucus set an age limit of 30 years and under for inclusion in their committee.

At the following convention, the Youth Committee established a "Youth Booster" award; to be presented to someone who the committee feels has made outstanding contributions to advancing the cause of young workers.

De Angelis received the award for her initiative, enthusiasm and "never-take-no-for-an-answer" attitude that infused the OFL's fledgling youth committee with a dynamism and sense of purpose that spurred its members to undertake an endless series of activities and projects.

The 2009 Award was presented on the Tuesday of convention, to Debora De Angelis, a union activist who was a founding member of the OFL Youth Committee. Debora was elected Youth VP at that first youth caucus in 1997, and served on the OFL Executive Board in that capacity for six years. Originally representing UNITE on the Board, Debora was hired by UFCW Canada and continued her work with youth as "Youth Coordinator," until 2004 when Debora (retired) and moved on to other representative duties. Today Debora works in the Training and Education Department for UFCW Canada.

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WU30 Forum — *blow back: the recession and young workers*



Effie, David, Erin, Patricia, Niki

Approximately 40 people attended the Workers Under 30 Forum on the Wednesday night of convention. OFL Executive Vice-President, Terry Downey, opened the Forum by congratulating newly-elected OFL WU30 Vice-President Matt Dumas (COPE) and alternate Krista Maracle (OPSEU). Terry then turned the chair over to CLC youth representative, **Erin Harrison**.

The first speaker on the panel was NDP MP for Churchill Manitoba, **Niki Ashton**. Niki is the Federal NDP Critic for Youth and Post-Secondary Education, among other things. She spoke about the consultations the NDP has been doing around the recession, and how young people have borne the brunt of the economic downturn.

Effie Vlachoyannacos, from the Youth Union Movement, spoke about the Good Jobs Coalition and how over 40 organizations are working together to build an agenda to work for good jobs for everyone. The youth workshop at their recent conference had over 200 participants, discussing how young people want and need to be in leadership roles as we try to build a culture of validating sustainability and green jobs.

David Scrivener, Outreach Organizer for the Canadian Federation of Students (CFS), spoke about the importance of unions and students working together to resist the pressure on governments to axe social programs. The Provincial Liberal government has allowed tuition fees to rise 4–8% while student aid programs are cut and youth unemployment is at a record high.

Patricia Chong, from the Asian Canadian Labour Alliance, closed out the panel by engaging participants in a quiz that helped look at the effects of the recession through an equity lens. Her solutions included a renewed push for Employment Equity and making more women and young people eligible for EI.

BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE – JENNIFER OJALAMMI, OSSTF

an Issue of Health and Safety and of Human Rights



When we think of health and safety in the workplace, issues such as working conditions and hazardous materials come to mind. Workplace bullying is not often considered a health and safety issue as it is often psychological in nature and therefore often invisible. Workplace bullying, as invisible as it may be, can also result in physical and mental health problems, causing reduced productivity and quality of life. Some health issues associated with bullying in the workplace are stress, reduced self-esteem, posttraumatic stress disorder, phobias, depression, digestive problems and/or musculoskeletal problems. All of these health concerns can lead to greater problems and can impact one's personal life and quality of life.

Bullying in the workplace is a particular issue for young people because age, experience and status within the organization are factors that increase one's susceptibility for bullying. Those with less experience and less seniority often find themselves being coerced into doing work that they may not feel comfortable with for fear of being subject to reprimand, unfair treatment or dismissal. It is also particularly difficult for young people to speak out against coercive treatment because they do not have the organizational support that more veteran workers may have. Young workers therefore are often targets of bullying because of their vulnerability within the workforce.

Workplace bullying is often more difficult to identify because unlike harassment, bullying is often covert and often involves trivial criticisms that are part of on-going behaviour that intimidates, degrades, offends and humiliates a worker. Also, bullying can lead to relational aggression where a single bully encourages other members of the organization to intimidate and humiliate a single worker, resulting in isolation. Finally, bullying may be an entrenched part of the organization, disguising itself as a demanding work environment with high expectations of its workers.

Examples of Workplace Bullying:

- unwarranted or invalid criticism
- blame without factual criticism
- being treated differently than the rest of your work group
- being sworn at
- exclusion or social isolation
- being shouted at or being humiliated
- being the target of practical jokes
- excessive monitoring

As the older members of our workforce begin to retire, workplace bullying against young workers has the potential to become increasingly common. It is important for young workers to recognize the signs of bullying and to speak out against it to prevent it in the future. Young workers should take advantage of their union or federation representatives and speak to them about mediation or representation if they feel they are being bullied by their peers or supervisors in the workplace.

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How to stop a bully:

- ▶ Be assertive
- ▶ Make eye contact
- ▶ Tell the bully to stop
- ▶ Have confidence in who you are
- ▶ Make good friends and stick together
- ▶ Talk to someone you can trust

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