

OFL STATEMENT

March 5, 2010

**OFL International Women's Day Statement March 8th 2010
COMMUNITIES THAT WORK: What Ontario Women Need
In This Budget**

(TORONTO) - International Women's Day is a day for solidarity among women. It is a day to celebrate the gains women have made and to call for the changes that are still needed.

March 8th is particularly important this year as it precedes the Ontario Budget; a budget that can either support women or leave them to battle the historic inequalities alone. Women are calling on the McGuinty government to ensure that the ongoing struggle to secure women's economic equality is advanced in its 2010 budget. The top priority must be to preserve and create good jobs.

"Women make up over 50 per cent of Ontario's workforce," said Marie Kelly, Ontario Federation of Labour officer responsible for women's issues. "Women and their families need support in these troubled times; they need the support of our public services and access to good jobs in both the public and private sectors of the economy."

In this time of economic upheaval, child care, more than any other public investment, is critical. In good times or bad, child care is good for the economy, but this is especially true when times are bad. Child care gives families the ability to weather the storm while keeping jobs, looking for new work, or attending community colleges and universities and participating in re-training.

If the McGuinty government doesn't continue providing the \$63.5 million in funding for community/municipal based child care it will mean a loss of subsidized child care spaces, the loss of child care jobs and even closure of child care centers. The ripple effect of those cuts will lead to a catastrophic collapse of our fragile child care system. Women are calling on Premier McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan to:

- ensure \$63.5 million in child care funding is on-going;

- ensure that the provincial government provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of service; and recognize the cost of living and other legitimate increases in operating costs;
- provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an Early Learning Program and ensure the child care system remains stable and sustainable.

“This government owes working women thousands of dollars in pay equity money,” said Kelly. “Over 100,000 women, doing society’s most valuable work – child care workers, children’s services, women’s shelters – have been undervalued and under-paid for decades not only is it the right thing to do but it would also result in a very real stimulus for our ailing economy. Any additional money they get will be spent in their local community buying food and shelter.”

We know the majority of precarious workers are women, particularly racialized women and new Canadians. More and more Ontario jobs are part-time, contract, casual, or temp agency jobs that don’t give workers the income they need to live decently, bring their kids up properly, or retire with dignity. For people who are struggling in these kinds of jobs, better employment standards, and better enforcement of existing standards, can protect their incomes.

Women and their families know this budget is really about what kind of Ontario we want to live in. Do we want a province with good jobs and strong public services, or do we want deteriorating services and more part-time, temporary, low-wage jobs that people can’t afford to live on?

“When we come out of this recession women and their families must be stronger and on a more equal footing if our society is going to prosper,” said Kelly. “Paying down the deficit won’t create good jobs, but creating good jobs will pay down the deficit. The McGuinty government budget must address Ontario women and their families envision by:

- 1) supporting private sector labour markets preserve existing good jobs and facilitating the creation of new good, green jobs;
- 2) maintaining the important public sector jobs and services which have provided a bulwark against the recession;
- 3) providing support for employment through training, retraining and support for child care;

- 4) avoiding exacerbation of the deficit by rethinking cuts to the corporate income tax rate; and,
- 5) providing support for precariously employed workers in their struggle.

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