

Defeat Conservative anti-worker laws

5 step guide for local union leaders

**Protect our members • Protect our collective agreements
Protect our pensions • Protect our unions**

Introduction

Both the Hudak and Harper Conservatives are launching aggressive attacks on workers' rights. This is the biggest challenge our unions have ever faced.

These attacks cannot be defeated by a single union committee or by a handful of dedicated activists. Defending our movement and our members must be the top priority of the labour movement and every union organization.

As the Conservatives crank up their attack, every public campaign that we are waging with our allies has new meaning and importance. For example, labour's support for the campaign to raise the minimum wage demonstrates our commitment to all workers—union and non-union.

The time for action is NOW! Time is short—we cannot afford to wait until the next provincial election is announced.

This guide was prepared for use by local unions to strengthen our battle for the hearts, minds and votes of union members. **Together**, we can defeat the Conservative attack and renew our unions in the process.

Our immediate challenges:

-  **Overcome denial within our unions about the seriousness of the attack**
-  **Devote adequate attention and resources to defending workers' rights**
-  **Engage members one-on-one in a well-organized workplace campaign**
-  **Affirm the value of union membership and warn members of the threat to their living standards and working conditions**

Overview of the Conservatives' Attack

- ✗ Any requirement that workers pay union dues would be **illegal**.
- ✗ All clauses in collective agreements that require workers to join a union would be **illegal**.
- ✗ Dues check-off by employers in the public sector would be **banned**.
- ✗ Private sector employers would have the sole discretion to include or **ignore** dues check-off requirements.
- ✗ The progressive voice of labour would be severely curtailed by **limits** on union funding for community, social and political campaigns.
- ✗ The Conservatives also plan to **privatize** the WSIB, placing injured workers in the hands of private insurance companies.

Step 1

Schedule an urgent meeting for all local leaders, stewards, activists and staff

At the meeting:

- Read aloud the *Overview of the Conservatives' Attack* (left column on this page).
- Discuss in detail: How would the Conservatives' plans impact our union? Our collective agreements? Our workplace? Our members?
- Be ready to patiently overcome denial.
- Ask for a commitment from everyone at the meeting: Will we all work hard together to defend our rights and our union?
- How can we each reduce time spent on day-to-day union tasks—so that this campaign can be the number one priority of everyone who cares about the union's future?

Step 2

Discuss the importance of preparing union members for the onslaught of anti-union propaganda

- The Conservatives plan to aggressively target our members with their union-bashing message.
- Now is the time to connect with members face-to-face, listen to their concerns, affirm the value of union membership and warn them that they will pay a heavy price if the Hudak Conservatives are elected. (See *An important message to union members* on the back panel of this brochure).
- The Hudak Conservatives plan to use their attack on unions to **increase** their support among union members. We must make sure that Hudak loses votes among union members—including the votes of members who usually vote Conservative.

Step 3

Make a detailed plan to engage members from now until the election

- Engage the Local Executive Board or similar body in making the plan.
- Map the membership: make a workplace diagram of who works where.
- Make a detailed plan of who will talk with each member. Plan to have at least three conversations with each member in the coming months.
- Overcome barriers that may have excluded some members from participation in the past. Look for diverse new leaders and activists.
- Use a buddy system. Set up teams. Assign a full time organizer(s).
- Provide training on the campaign issues and discussion skills—especially listening skills.
- Get materials from your union, labour council and/or the OFL.

Step 4

Put your plan in motion immediately

- Start by discussing campaign issues with members who already value the union.
- Provide ongoing follow-up and support. Bring together the people who are meeting with members to discuss what's working and what's not.
- Give campaign issues a high profile on websites, in all union communications, and at all scheduled union activities including membership meetings, training sessions and conferences.

Step 5

Support public campaigns on progressive issues

- The labour movement is working hard to remind people of the positive contributions made to society by unions.
- We must also demonstrate our current commitment and relevance to the fight for fairness.
- The Conservative smear campaign against unions makes our community action on progressive issues more important than ever.
- Our workplace campaign is one-on-one with members. Our public campaign is focussed on our ongoing organizing with community allies to advance our equity agenda, fight poverty and racism, demand good jobs, protect the environment and create a better world for the next generation.

The provincial election

The member-focused campaign is essential groundwork for the coming provincial election. Let's work together to ensure that labour participation in the election is the most effective ever! The stakes have never been higher—for the future of our movement and for the well-being of working people.

An important message to union members

Conservative leader Tim Hudak has announced plans to significantly weaken your union and every other union in Ontario.



Weaker unions would mean:

- ✗ Reduced bargaining power in negotiations with your employer
- ✗ Even more downward pressure on the wages and benefits of both union and non-union workers
- ✗ Increased threats to workers' pensions
- ✗ Reduced workplace safety and union representation
- ✗ Fewer good jobs for the next generation
- ✗ Weaker defense of public services, human rights and the environment.

Tim Hudak claims that his target is union leaders, not rank-and-file workers—but this is not true. If Hudak is elected, the biggest losers would be working people. He is concealing his intentions by using phrases like “creating a competitive labour market”—these are code words for a low-wage economy.

It is time to pay attention to our union rights

To weaken unions and lower the living standards of workers, the Conservatives have imported from the U.S. a scheme that would drastically change labour laws. The attack on labour laws is being promoted by think tanks that are funded by wealthy corporations.

Under U.S.-style labour laws, any worker in a unionized workplace can quit their union and stop paying dues. This would open the door to employer campaigns to seriously divide and weaken us.

We need stronger unions and better protection for working people

Hudak's big lie is that nothing bad will happen to workers if their union loses members, dues and bargaining power.

Even Conservative union members are having second thoughts about voting for extreme policies that would hit them in the pocketbook now and weaken defense of their pensions in the future.

Fairness is a Canadian value

Existing labour laws require that everybody pays their fair share for union representation. That's how it should be.

For more campaign information and materials, check with your union and/or visit:

www.OFL.ca • www.labourcouncil.ca • www.fairnessworks.ca