

**ONTARIO
FEDERATION OF
LABOUR**

**FÉDÉRATION
DU TRAVAIL DE
L'ONTARIO**

ONTARIO FEDERATION
**OF LABOUR
CONVENTION**

NOVEMBER 20-24, 2023

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: WORKERS STRIKE BACK 2023 VISION DOCUMENT 17TH BIENNIAL CONVENTION

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ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

VISION DOCUMENT //

2023

The Ontario Federation of Labour represents 54 unions and one million workers. It is Canada's largest provincial labour federation.

CONTENTS

	01 //	Preamble
03 //	Universal, accessible, and well-funded public services	
		› Health care
		› Long-term care
		› Social assistance
		› Education
		› Child care
		› Public housing
	11 //	Justice for workers
	15 //	Equity, racial justice, and real reconciliation
19 //	A sustainable planet & healthy communities	
	22 //	Healthy and safe workplaces
	25 //	Conclusion



Our fights are rooted in working class struggles that are sweeping the globe.

We are a generation caught in the middle of rising socioeconomic inequality, a looming cost of living crisis, increasing hate, an escalating climate crisis – while diminishing democracy underlies it all.

It can be overwhelming when we really think about the state of our communities, our province, our country, and the world we live in. Progress does not happen all at once though. It is a series of gains and sometimes, losses – one after another, after another. It is about perseverance and a steadfast belief in our collective ability.

Let's not forget that we are a generation defined by our resilience and our capacity to challenge the status quo, build movements, and demand results.

We will change the world and infuse equity into everything we do. But we don't have a moment to lose.

The world's richest one per cent own nearly 46 per cent of the world's wealth – with 47 *people* controlling \$270 billion in total wealth in this country. At the same time, the ability of workers to recover from the pandemic's recession is diminishing as corporate profits are capturing more economic growth than in any previous post-recession recovery period over the past 50 years. The net result is a historic realignment of who benefits from economic growth in Canada. Inequality, however, is not inevitable. It is a political choice.

As the rich get richer, low- and middle-income families are feeling the squeeze as the cost-of-living soars amid frozen or reduced wages. Our public services are crumbling; health care is on the brink of collapse – and at a time when it is needed most. Ontarians can barely afford to pay rent or live in the towns and cities where they grew up. Some are being forced to choose between paying for food, medication, or keeping the lights on. The reality is that the people of this province can scarcely make ends meet, while corporations and the banks are making record profits.

And, economic inequality does not affect us all in the same way. It is compounded by the realities of fascism, colonialism, racism, bigotry, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia. Underlying the growing divide between the richest one per cent and the rest of us are several intersectional layers, including its disproportionate impact on women, Indigenous and racialized peoples, immigrants, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, young people, and people requiring accommodations. Unsurprisingly, they are bearing the brunt of the crises that are defining our generation – crises that they did not create. Maintaining structural

and systemic injustices underlie much of these issues and further contribute to the rise of hate and white supremacy around the world. Hate stems from a fear of losing power, and **we must empower the working class to stand up against it.**

The negative impacts of climate change are mounting significantly faster than scientists predicted less than a decade ago. The pace and scale of what has been done thus far is insufficient to address this global crisis. As it stands, we risk missing a transient and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all – unless we act now, and we act ambitiously. Only then will we see the transformational change needed for a sustainable, healthy, and equitable world.

More and more people in this province, in this country, and across the globe are saying “enough is enough”. But we need to provide a vision to address these crises – one that is grounded in equity, inclusion, and justice for the working class.

Otherwise, workers and their families will latch onto an alternative vision peddled by the likes of Poilievre and Ford, which will see the further deregulation of markets, expansion of unfair trade and investment deals, destabilization of workers’ rights, erosion of progressive taxation, retrenchment of welfare state programs, privatization of public services, and larger transfers of wealth to the wealthy.

We cannot afford to cede that ground. Not for ourselves. And not for future generations.

The Enough is Enough campaign taps into that frustration and anger with the status quo and channels it into hope for a better future – one that includes demanding real wage increases; public schools and health care; affordable groceries, gas, and basic goods; rent control and affordable housing; and banks and corporations paying their fair share.

**Join us as we envision a world
where everyone is uplifted.**

UNIVERSAL, ACCESSIBLE, AND WELL-FUNDED PUBLIC SERVICES

The deregulation of financial districts, the expansion of unfair trade and investment deals, the destabilization of workers' rights, the erosion of progressive taxation, the retrenchment of welfare state programs, and the privatization of public services have all led to pronounced economic inequality across the globe.

Indeed, decades of neoliberal economic policies and programs have resulted in Ontario having the second highest income inequality in Canada.

Instead of investing in public services, the Ford government is perpetuating that divide as they continue to starve the public sector. In fact, Ontario's program spending per person has consistently ranked at or near the lowest among the provinces since 2008.

We must remember that well-funded public services are the great equalizer of society, ensuring equal access to essential programs – such as education and health care – for everyone.

We won't allow the attacks on our public services to continue.

HEALTH CARE

The Ford government's actions have consistently led to the unenviable state of health care in Ontario. They have allocated the lowest levels of health care spending per person in the country even during the pandemic; removed almost all public health measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, the flu, other respiratory illnesses; driven the staffing crisis with Bill 124; and failed to alleviate a severe backlog of surgeries and diagnostic tests.

As a result, Ontario public hospitals have been stretched beyond the breaking point.

Emergency departments continue to shut down in local hospitals due to the staffing crisis. In fact, emergency departments across Ontario were forced to close 158 times in the past year, resulting in the equivalent of *184 days* where local urgent care needs were left unmet.

For those emergency rooms that manage to keep their doors open, significantly high wait times have seen Ontarians leave before they receive any care, or line the hallways for hours or even days before they move to the appropriate in-patient care area.

Paramedics are reporting Code Zero events as all available ambulances are busy and unavailable for emergency calls.

Pediatric ICUs in Ontario are forced to operate above capacity, jeopardizing treatment outcomes for sick children. That's not to mention that nearly 12,000 children are on a waitlist for surgeries across Ontario – about half of which are waiting beyond recommended wait times.

Almost half of the patients on Ontario's surgical waitlist were forced to delay longer than medically recommended – a 123 per cent increase compared to pre-pandemic levels.

And an estimated 11,000 Ontarians have died waiting for surgeries and scans in the past year.

But this crisis was largely avoidable.

Instead of resourcing and supporting local public hospitals and stopping the price gouging of private for-profit staffing agencies, the Ford government is funnelling monies and resources to private for-profit clinics and hospitals.

This year, the fastest growing area of health care spending was private, for-profit delivery as independent health facility spending went up by 106 per cent in one year.

The Ford government paved the pathway for their privatization agenda years before Bill 60 was passed. In 2022, Ford quietly increased funding by 60 per cent to private hospitals run by his donors – compared to the funding they received every year between 2011 and 2019.

For-profit clinics and staffing agencies pose a real and urgent threat to single-tier public health care.

With the passage of Bill 60, the Ford government has permanently moved OHIP-funded procedures out of public hospitals and into private independent health facilities – 97 per cent of which are for-profit facilities. This means a failure to protect patients, spending more public dollars for less, exacerbating the existing staffing crisis, and producing worse patient outcomes.

Privatization is the theft of the public good for private profit.

LONG-TERM CARE

The pandemic exposed the state of Ontario's long-term care (LTC) system. Over 3,800 people died of COVID, including 13 workers. In Ontario, the majority of LTC homes are run by private, for-profit companies. During the height of the pandemic, for-profit LTC homes in Ontario had outbreaks with nearly twice as many residents infected and 78 per cent more resident deaths than in publicly run ones.

This year, the fastest growing area of health care spending was private, for-profit delivery as independent health facility spending went up by 106 per cent in one year.



When profit comes before people, the results can be deadly.

Despite the many promises the Ford government made in 2021 to turn things around, they have failed to conduct annual inspections of every LTC home in Ontario and to boost the ratio of inspectors to homes. This is the same government that scrapped proactive inspections shortly after being elected in 2018, plunging the sector into turmoil during the pandemic.

The LTC sector took another hit when the government introduced Bill 7, which allows crowded hospitals to force some elderly patients to accept places at nursing homes without their consent — or face \$400-a-day fines. These LTC homes can be located up to 150 km away from their community. This

leaves seniors without family or communal support during a very vulnerable period and jeopardizes their treatment and care outcomes.

By 2035, one in four Canadians will be over the age of 65. This means that in the next 10 years, the demand for long-term care will increase by an average of 38 per cent. And approximately 40 per cent of people entering long-term care have high-care needs compared to a decade earlier, and the system's current staffing and capital models are not designed to provide it.

The lives of some of our most vulnerable hang in the balance.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

We must eradicate poverty in our lifetime.

The lives of far too many people are on the line. Those receiving benefits from Ontario's social assistance programs are living in a greater depth of poverty now than a generation ago. Since 2008, both Ontario Works (OW) and Ontario's Disability Support Program (ODSP) rates have been below the deep poverty line, leaving at nearly 900,000 Ontarians behind.

While ODSP rates increased a paltry 6.5 per cent in 2023, it amounted to a negligible additional \$80 per month per recipient. OW recipients have had their rates fixed at \$733 per month for five years. This means that they must survive on just 37 per cent of the funds required for them to have a roof over their heads, food on the table, and maintain a very basic standard of living. In other words, these recipients would need another \$17,000 a year just to reach the poverty line.

Ontarians who were already among the poorest and most vulnerable prior to the global pandemic are now worse off than they were before — as the cost-of-living skyrockets. For women, racialized people, new immigrants, Indigenous persons, 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and people requiring accommodations, their reality is much starker.

Ontario's broken social assistance system has left almost all recipients at risk of being unhoused, in poor health, and in deep hunger. If that wasn't troubling enough, Canada's assisted dying program, known as MAiD (Medical Assistance in Dying), has made international headlines as the dangers of making death accessible while social services remain inaccessible is coming to light. Dozens of patients are applying to escape poverty — not illness.

We need to move from exclusion to inclusion. Now.

EDUCATION

While the global pandemic presented unprecedented challenges and revealed deep levels of inequity in our society, it also highlighted the crucial role education and schools play in maintaining a strong and vibrant society. It particularly highlighted how schools are integral parts of communities and provide vital supports for students.

Ontario has a world-renowned publicly funded education system. As the foundation of public education, education workers play a critical role in helping to shape the system and develop students to be the very best they can be.

But instead of investing in our kids when they need it most, the Ford government keeps cutting funding to public schools. **As a result of the cuts, there's \$1,200 less in funding for every child this year.** That means fewer educators and support staff in schools; more crowded classrooms and less one-on-one time; missing supports for children who need them; and delayed school repairs, forcing school boards to sell buildings to make up for funding gaps.

Earlier this year, government documents showed that most of the children in Ontario waiting for publicly funded core autism therapy will not receive it any time soon. Current funding will only serve about 20,000 children in core clinical therapies. Meanwhile, there are about 60,000 children languishing on the waitlist with about 7,000 added to the list each year.

This continued underfunding and underspending in the education sector will jeopardize student outcomes and negatively impact Ontario's future. We know that for every \$1.00 increase in public education spending, \$1.30 is generated in positive economic impacts for the province – in addition to a range of private, social, and fiscal benefits.

The current education funding model, which was developed nearly 25 years ago, created disparities in funding that have only been exacerbated over the years. Investments in education funding must be made so there is adequate funding for boards to address inequalities that arise because of differences in income levels, gender, race, special education identification, newness to Canada, and Indigenous status. Improving learning conditions for everyone is about recognizing and meeting the unique needs of learners.

Publicly funded universities are vital to the economic, social, and political wellbeing of our province. And in a shifting economy, a strong commitment to funding is more important than ever. But Ontario universities continue to have the lowest per-student funding in the country – the effects of which can be felt across the sector. **Since 2010, Ontario's undergraduate fees have increased by 25 per cent. Even more egregious are Ontario's graduate and international tuition fees, which are currently, and respectively, 61 per cent and 62 per cent higher than the average for the rest of the country.**

Even when revenue from rising tuition fees is accounted for, Ontario still ranks low in per-student funding figures. The current funding model is both ineffective and, importantly, unsustainable. It is critical

that the government close the per-student funding gap so the quality of university education and research in Ontario does not continue to lag other Canadian provinces.

Every child deserves a great education, at every stage in life. Ontario's future depends on it.

CHILD CARE

After decades of action and activism, child care advocates secured a deal to make child care more affordable — a significant victory for working mothers and children across the country.

Within months of committing to that vision, however, the Ford government made concessions to for-profit daycares. The province stripped a series of checks and balances from Ontario's funding rules for daycares that join the national program — including a restriction on “undue profits” and the removal of “ineligible expenditures,” which would have prevented operators from using public money to finance their mortgages or pay executive bonuses.

These changes threaten a program that is supposed to transform the current market-based system — plagued by deregulation, long waitlists, and exorbitant fees — into one that is universally accessible and affordable.

Further, since the rollout of nation-wide early learning and child care agreements in 2022, the pressures on the child care sector have increased dramatically. As governments are radically trying to decrease the costs of child care for families, the demand for child care has skyrocketed.

Families are being promised \$10 per day child care, but that promise will remain broken if they cannot access a space — and that requires more staffing. The government must address chronic working conditions, including low wages and inadequate sick leave, which are leading to a mass exodus of trained and experienced workers. An additional dollar per hour for early childhood educators (ECEs) is woefully inadequate.

Without sufficient investment in workers and physical spaces, increases in demand will far outpace increases in supply. In fact, around 227,000 children could be left without spaces by 2026 based on the Ford government's current plans.

The reality is that Ontario's current implementation plan for child care and early learning agreements run the risk of leaving low-income families further behind — rather than closing gaps in opportunities and outcomes for their children. We need publicly funded child care with enough spaces for everyone.

PUBLIC HOUSING

There is an alarming housing affordability crisis across Ontario.

The number of Ontario households in core housing need — living in an unsuitable, inadequate, or unaffordable dwelling and not able to afford alternative housing in their community — has increased. At the same time, the number of households receiving housing support from provincial programs has decreased. Together, these two troubling trends have led to a significant rise in the waitlist for social housing — with many households waiting over ten years.

Meanwhile, there's been no meaningful action from the Ford government.

In fact, they have acknowledged that they will fall well short of their signature commitment to build 1.5 million homes by 2031.

As a result, many Ontario families are being priced out of purchasing homes and some are even being priced out of housing altogether.

In 2022, the net out-migration from Ontario was at its highest level this century, as unaffordable housing prices and rents continue to force people to leave their communities.

The present crisis has been driven by the financialization of housing, and public housing offers the straightest line to removing investment speculation from the housing market.

Housing is being treated as a commodity to be bought and sold, rather than as a human right.

That's why we're seeing the skyrocketing cost of housing; the increasing inaccessibility of home ownership; the mounting pressure to move to other cities to find housing; a system that massively favours and rewards private landlords and developers; the precarity of renters and tenants; rising personal evictions; the homelessness crisis; and the emergence of tent cities in parks.

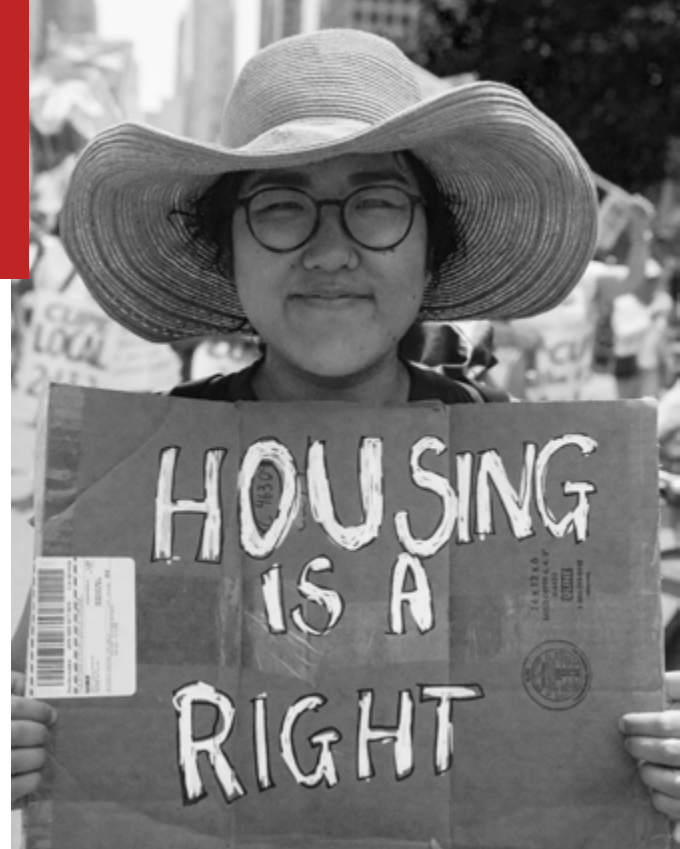
We need a province-wide public housing program that builds decent homes in every community.

We won't let our public services be sold off for profit nor will we allow them to be shortchanged. The reality is that the government has enough money to cover the shortfalls in public services — it just needs to act. Instead, the Ford government is starving these systems of the funding they need, waiting for them to crumble, and then championing privatization as the only solution.

This is about priorities. And the Ford government has the wrong ones.

We need universal, accessible, and well-funded public services. That means:

- › Ensuring that big corporations and the rich pay their fair share of taxes, including taxes that remain unpaid, undeclared, or hidden revenue





- › Establishing, investing in, and improving access to publicly delivered universal services and programs — such as health care, mental health care, pharma care, dental care, eye and vision care, child care, long-term care, housing, elementary and secondary education, post-secondary education, social and community services, and public pensions — for all residents of Ontario
- › Providing public services in an inclusive and equitable manner and centering equity concerns in the design, delivery, and expansion of services
- › Stopping the privatization of our public services and assets, including Crown corporations, as well as our health care, education, child care, infrastructure systems, and any other service or program
- › Guaranteeing professional-level wages for all public sector workers
- › Increasing annual hospital funding to protect and expand service levels and rebuild capacity, including a greater availability of beds in regular care and intensive care units
- › Ending staff shortages among front-line workers in health care and long-term care and developing a long-term strategy to train, recruit, and retain front-line workers
- › Ensuring that all work in health care and long-term care is decent work, with full-time employment, job security, and access to paid sick days, benefits, pensions, and a livable wage
- › Legislating at least four hours of hands-on care per resident per day in every long-term care facility in Ontario
- › Restoring province-wide standards of care in long-term care, funding them properly, and implementing them by legislation in the *Time to Care Act*
- › Making all long-term care public and not-for-profit
- › Expanding access to home care for seniors living at home
- › Declaring the opioid crisis a public health emergency
- › Ensuring universal access to mental health, addiction, treatment consumption, and overdose prevention services and infrastructure, as well as investing in harm reduction strategies
- › Creating a comprehensive provincial social housing program that treats housing as a public utility
- › Implementing a comprehensive housing strategy that provides housing for unhoused people — without policing them — and secures housing for people in precarious accommodations — without threatening the environment

- › Passing real rent control and a Tenants' Bill of Rights, capping mortgage payments as inflation rates rise, as well as stopping evictions and foreclosures
- › Creating non-profit, affordable, and accessible child care spaces as well as ending the licensing of new for-profit child care centres
- › Removing barriers to child care subsidies for low-income families
- › Instituting a proper salary scale starting at \$30 per hour for registered ECEs and \$25 per hour for non-registered ECEs
- › Providing enhanced and sufficient ventilation, including government-mandated and funded assessments and upgrades, for primary and secondary schools and all essential public institutions
- › Reducing class sizes, while maintaining adequate levels of staffing and educational support in schools
- › Increasing supports for students with special education needs in primary and secondary schools
- › Defending and bolstering Canada's social safety net, including the Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, and Employment Insurance
- › Eliminating tuition fees for all post-secondary students and ensuring that the overall cost of post-secondary education is publicly funded
- › Implementing a system of non-repayable grants to fund students' cost of living while enrolled in college or university
- › Cancelling all student debt
- › Doubling social assistance rates and Ontario Disability Support Payment (ODSP) to sit well above the poverty line
- › Implementing a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy that ensures food and housing security, access to education and job training, employment opportunities, and other supports
- › Expanding access to social assistance for all persons regardless of their immigration status and providing supports with dignity, care, and respect
- › Providing funding to provincial, regional, and municipal agencies, departments, programs, etc. that provide the public with increased access to community centres, recreational centres, sports and leisure activities, cultural centres, museums and galleries, libraries, and the arts



JUSTICE FOR WORKERS

Given growing levels of social and economic inequality in the wake of the pandemic, the need to facilitate unionization is more urgent than ever. Unionized workers experienced much greater levels of job security during the pandemic. Unionized workers also earn better wages and have better benefits than their non-union counterparts. At a time when workers across the country are standing up for better working conditions and their desire for dignity and voice at work, fewer than one in three workers in Canada are unionized.

But wanting a union and securing a union are two very different things. It's no coincidence that the rate of unionization has fallen alongside the passage of anti-union labour law reforms. Those reforms have made it more difficult for workers to exercise their legal right to unionize and easier for employers to interfere in union organizing campaigns.

Only months after his election, Ford instituted back-to-work legislation and targeted hard-won decent work laws, cancelling the scheduled \$15 minimum wage, eliminating two paid sick days, repealing equal pay for equal work, and making it harder for workers to access union protections.

Through Bill 124, wage restraint legislation that capped public sector compensation at one per cent for three years, the Ford government purposefully targeted public sector workers across the province — including those working in education, health care, social services, and the civil service. They moved to shrink the size of the public sector; eroded the quality of public services; drove down wages in both the public and private sector; attacked workplace benefits like pensions; and interfered with collective bargaining rights.

Even though the Ontario Superior Court of Justice struck down Bill 124 in 2022, ruling that it violated workers' constitutional rights to collectively bargain and to strike, the Ford government is actively appealing this decision — once again spending public dollars to fight workers in court.

In October 2022, the Ford government introduced Bill 28, four days before bargaining with CUPE education workers was done. Bill 28 was pre-emptive back-to-work legislation that forced the government's offer on workers and overrode their rights and freedoms under the Charter and *Human Rights Code* for five years. The Ford government used the notwithstanding clause once again to ram through legislation, but this time to override constitutionally protected labour rights.

This had never been done before.

But less than a week after the introduction of the bill, it was defeated by the collective power of workers. The government returned to the table to negotiate with CUPE education workers with their right to strike intact.

With prices for essentials like housing and food skyrocketing, making the minimum wage for non-unionized workers is far from making a living. But nearly half a million Ontarians are having to make do, feeling squeezed with everyday financial choices.

They won't forget that the Ford government froze the minimum wage in 2018, leaving it at \$14 for two years and cancelled a series of planned increases that were set to begin with a \$15 minimum wage in 2019. Further increases, mandated by 2014 legislation and tied to inflation, would have adjusted the minimum wage upward each October since then.

They also won't forget that they are still being forced to choose between staying home when they're sick and making ends meet. The Ford government doubled down on their refusal to legislate paid sick days for the lowest paid, most vulnerable workers earlier this year, cancelling the insufficient three paid sick days provided during the height of the pandemic. We can't move past the pandemic without real public health supports.

The reality is that many minimum-wage workers — who Ford once hailed as heroes — put their own health at risk to keep working on the frontlines throughout the height of the pandemic, and they paid the price with thousands of dollars lost for the three-year delay in raising the minimum wage to \$15.

And gig workers are even further behind. With the passage of Bill 88 in Ontario, there's now a special rule for determining how wages will be calculated for gig workers. Instead of counting every hour and minute that gig workers are at work, employers will only count the time spent on each work assignment or delivery — known as “engaged time.” That means it's legal to pay gig workers less than the full amount they are owed under the *Employment Standards Act*. In fact, Uber drivers in Toronto earn an average of \$7.90 an hour, well below Ontario's minimum wage, after costs associated with using their personal cars for work are deducted from their pay.

The Ford government is incredibly far off from the realities facing the working class.

In Toronto alone, Ontario's minimum wage would need to rise to \$33.60 an hour for workers to comfortably afford a one-bedroom apartment and still have money left over for food and utilities. The current minimum wage of \$16.55 per hour is nowhere close to what is needed.

In 2021, almost six million people were food insecure in Canada. More than a third lived in Ontario, where one in six households struggled with food insecurity. Food insecurity ranges from having to limit the essentials to doing without food entirely because of a lack of money. **Ontario was the only province where more people were food insecure in 2021 than in 2020. Not only are food banks seeing existing clients more often, but there is also a growing number of people turning to food banks for support for the first time.**

Instead of raising the bar for decent work in this province, this government is engaging in a race to the bottom for workers.





We need justice for workers.

That means:

- › Introducing a \$20 minimum wage and removing all exemptions for students, liquor servers, farm workers, gig workers, and other workers
- › Ensuring that job-protected paid leave covers survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence — without the need for disclosure
- › Restoring and expanding equal pay for equal work standards with greater enforcement and no loopholes — regardless of gender, racialization, immigration status, or status as part-time, contract, or temporary agency workers
- › Restoring and expanding fair scheduling laws that would guarantee workers a minimum number of hours per week, additional hours for existing workers, and sufficient notice of work schedules
- › Requiring employers to provide pay transparency so workers can enforce equal pay and help fight gender- and race-based wage discrimination
- › Strengthening protections for temporary agency workers, including making companies responsible for agency workers' injuries, working conditions, and collective bargaining
- › Ensuring all temporary agency workers are hired directly by the client company after three months of work, and providing protections against being terminated before the three-month deadline if another temporary worker is hired to do the same work
- › Dismissing the so-called Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee and rejecting any of its proposals to amend labour legislation
- › Implementing the Gig Workers' Bill of Rights and ending the misclassification of gig workers
- › Guaranteeing that all workers, including migrant, undocumented, and gig workers, are covered under the *Employment Standards Act* (ESA) or the *Labour Relations Act* (LRA) — with no loopholes or exemptions
- › Providing permanent residency status upon arrival for all new migrant workers and permanent residency status for all migrant and undocumented workers already here
- › Ensuring job protection against unjust dismissal for workers who stand up for their rights at work, including during union drives and the certification process



- › Moving to a sectoral bargaining model in recognition of the reality that collective bargaining no longer only occurs between one union and one employer within an individual workplace
- › Removing barriers for non-unionized workers to unionize their workplaces and providing access to workplace information when a union is engaged in an organizing drive
- › Extending card-based certification to all sectors
- › Making it easier to certify a union across franchises and sub-contractors
- › Empowering workers to hold all employers accountable when they have contravened the LRA
- › Providing automatic access to first-contract arbitration in all cases
- › Extending successor rights to all contracted services, including the protection of wages, benefits, seniority rights, and union coverage, and ending contract flipping
- › Guaranteeing the right of employees to return to work following a lawful strike or lockout – without the threat of reprisal
- › Legislating robust anti-scab laws
- › Ending government interference in the collective bargaining process, including the use of back-to-work legislation, replacement workers, and legislated maximums on bargained working conditions and forms of compensation
- › Highlighting workers' rights, consumer protection, and tax compliance in all new and emerging business models
- › Increasing access to meaningful paid work-integrated learning opportunities for students
- › Strengthening benefit security for existing pension plan members and expanding coverage to the millions without any employer pension plan
- › Promoting defined benefit pension plans over all other retirement schemes
- › Prioritizing workers' wages, severance pay, and pension funds over all other creditors in the case of bankruptcy
- › Increasing pension insurance coverage to reflect inflationary pressures
- › Ensuring members have a voice when significant changes are made to pension plan funding

EQUITY, RACIAL JUSTICE, AND REAL RECONCILIATION

The prevalence of hate is a threat that demands a united front from our leaders across the political spectrum – to boldly declare that hate has no home here in this province, in this country, or in this world.

Instead, the Ford government has actively contributed to the rise of hate by both partaking in extremely problematic discourse as well as failing to speak out against harmful actions and language.

A Premier should not have to be asked to condemn hate.

A Premier should condemn hate as soon as they see it.

Both before and during his tenure as Premier, Ford has faced repeated calls to denounce and distance himself from white supremacists and far-right nationalists who have endorsed him or attempted to join his campaigns. And he has failed to do so. Repeatedly.

In January 2022, the Ford government abandoned Ottawa as they failed to confront widespread instances of hate and harassment facing workers and residents, when the so-called “Freedom Convoy” protestors occupied the city’s downtown for three weeks. As a result of their inaction, they fueled a climate of hate and emboldened racists and bigots who targeted health care workers, transit workers, elected members of parliament, public health officials, and those respecting public health measures.

In September 2023, Premier Ford and Education Minister Lecce made harmful and irresponsible comments, suggesting that public educators are trying to “indoctrinate” kids who decide to use different pronouns. Their divisive actions fanned the flames of ultra-conservative forces who attempted to manufacture false divisions between parents, educators, and students over issues of student privacy and gender expression through the so-called “Million Person March for Children.”

We cannot let hate be normalized, and we must challenge the environment and the actors that makes such acts possible in the first place.

Over one year in Ontario, hate crimes motivated by religion grew 53 per cent, by race or ethnicity increased nearly 20 per cent, and by sexual identity swelled 107 per cent. In fact, the province has the highest number of hate crimes based on sexual expression in the country. In Toronto alone, the 2SLGBTQIA+ community experienced a

tripling in reported hate crimes since 2020 – the sharpest rise among any group. And members of Toronto's 2SLGBTQIA+ community were the most frequent victims of hate crime-related physical assaults in 2021.

And, these are only the hate crimes that have been reported.

Interactions with the police for racialized people continue to be disproportionately high. Racialized people were up to 1.6 times more likely to face violence when interacting with Toronto police in 2020, and Black residents were more likely to have a police officer point a firearm at them when they appeared to be unarmed than white people. And systemic racism within policing extends beyond Toronto. The numbers were higher in other parts of the province, including Ottawa and Peel.

In Canada, Indigenous women and girls are killed at rate six times higher than their non-Indigenous counterparts. And in cases of murder, where the victim was Indigenous, police laid or recommended first-degree murder charges half as often. These statistics are part of the colonial legacy that we continue to untangle, but for all the families, survivors, and communities living with the loss of their missing and murdered loved ones, we must continue to do better.

The people and communities behind these numbers are real.

Many routinely experience incidents of hate in everyday life – in their communities, in their schools, on the streets, on transit, in their places of worship, in their workplaces, and even in their homes. These are all places where we should feel safe.

In the face of injustices, we must reaffirm our openness, our love for one another, and our determination to build a better future together. Let us strive for a world where love rejoices over fear, compassion trumps prejudice, and acceptance conquers intolerance.

Every person, regardless of who they love, how they worship, or how they define themselves, deserves to be free. And, none of us are free until all of us are free.

We need equity, racial justice, and real reconciliation. That means:

- › Promoting justice and equity by repairing historic, discontinuing current, and preventing future oppression of Indigenous communities, Black communities, racialized communities, migrant communities, immigrants and refugees, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities, as well as other affected communities and groups



“The people and communities behind these numbers are real.”

- › Agitating for a whole-of-government approach that is equity-focused and intersectional: anti-colonialist, anti-racist, feminist, anti-ableist, anti-ageist, and 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusive
- › Launching a province-wide anti-hate strategy that centers the lived experiences of sexism, misogyny, racism, bigotry, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism, as well as bigger systems of oppression such as white supremacy, settler-colonialism, right-wing populism, imperialism, fascism, and others
- › Eliminating systemic anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism, including from government bodies, departments, agencies, etc. such as school boards, children's aid societies, the workforce, and decision-making structures
- › Ending police killings of Black and Indigenous people and communities
- › Defunding police institutions and services, as well as redirecting funds allocated to overfunded police budgets towards public services, especially social and mental health supports, in the communities
- › Developing and implementing alternatives to police services, including decriminalization, disarmament, demilitarization, and other abolition strategies
- › Supporting and funding community-driven and -led solutions to community safety and well-being
- › Abolishing the discriminatory practice of racial profiling, such as police carding
- › Strengthening and expanding the scope and mandate of the Anti-Racism Directorate
- › Adopting the 94 recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission
- › Recognizing September 30, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, as a statutory holiday in Ontario
- › Demanding immediate action on prosperity for all Indigenous peoples, including, but not limited to, access to clean water, housing, and food security
- › Ensuring that the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls reflects and supports the needs of Indigenous communities
- › Ensuring the full implementation of all demands of the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
- › Addressing the lack of institutional will to tackle the ongoing violence towards Indigenous women, girls, queer, and two-spirit people
- › Funding local and regional initiatives that support meaningful processes of reconciliation and decolonization, especially within education, health care, and other public services



- › Demanding permanent resident status and family unity for all current migrants and refugees, as well as landed status on arrival for those in the future
- › Establishing Ontario as a sanctuary province for those with precarious status and who have been harmed by policies of exclusion
- › Closing the wage gap through funding, enforcing, and expanding pay equity and employment equity legislation
- › Demanding an economic justice strategy that promotes women's meaningful participation in the workforce, recognizes the care penalty imposed in female-dominated employment, and improves access to public services and programs, such as child care
- › Ending violence against women through a comprehensive action framework that focuses on prevention, supports, and services
- › Breaking down barriers for workers with accommodations and facilitating the integration of people with disabilities into every aspect of the workplace and society
- › Establishing the Disability Rights Secretariat
- › Eliminating homophobia and transphobia and making it safe for people to live authentically
- › Ensuring that 2SLGBTQIA+ people have access to appropriate and timely health care options that are friendly and competent and meet their respective needs
- › Addressing the prevalence of suicide attempts among 2SLGBTQIA+ youth through increased supports, such as mental health services, housing, and other supports
- › Ending violence against Trans peoples, including those who identify through an intersectional lens
- › Restoring general funding for all Legal Aid Ontario services and improving access
- › Removing restrictions on Legal Aid Ontario funding for immigration and refugee cases
- › Filling all adjudicator vacancies and expanding the number of adjudicators, especially BIPOC adjudicators, at the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario
- › Providing sufficient resources to eliminate the backlog of cases at the Immigration and Refugee Board and the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario

A SUSTAINABLE PLANET & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Time is running out.

Canada is warming faster than the world as a whole – at more than twice the global rate – and the Canadian Arctic is warming at about three times the global rate.

We're working against the clock, but we need to act now.

Because there's no life on a dead planet.

Emissions of carbon dioxide, methane, and other greenhouse gases – primarily from burning coal, oil, gas, and other fossil fuels – have destabilized and will continue to destabilize the Earth's climate in increasingly dangerous ways.

We see it in our everyday lives.

From poor air quality, to boil water advisories for Indigenous communities, to the impacts of mega oil infrastructure projects, to the plastics in our oceans, to the threats towards both humans and wildlife, there's no escape.

We see it in the extreme climate events that are happening much too frequently.

From raging wildfires on our eastern and western coasts, to devastating floods across the country, to droughts ravaging our agricultural landscapes, there's nowhere left to hide.

We know that climate risks are highest among Ontario's most vulnerable populations, including migrant farmworkers and racialized workers, and will continue to amplify existing disparities and inequities.

Workers stand on the frontlines of climate change, including fighting wildfires, restoring downed power lines, rebuilding our communities after dangerous weather hits, or working in extreme temperatures and hazardous environments.

Workers are also front and centre dealing with the impacts of the needed economic transition, like the energy workers worried about the future, the farmworkers battling droughts, or the construction workers who continue to build through sweltering heatwaves.

But protecting the environment and saving the planet can co-exist with a healthy economy and good jobs for everyone.

It's not one or the other.

We need solutions that care for our planet; safeguard workers and their families; keep seniors, people requiring accommodations, and others safe; respect Indigenous people; and defend our public services.

We need leadership. But the Ford government continues to bury their heads in the sand.

The 2023 Provincial Climate Change Impact Assessment warns that climate change poses high risks to Ontario, impacting everything from food production to infrastructure to workers. Specifically, it projects a soaring number of days with extreme heat across Ontario, as well as increases in flooding and more frequent wildfires. By the 2080s, for example, the number of days with extreme heat — 30 degrees and up — could quadruple in the province.

Instead of providing a roadmap on how to address climate change, the Ford government withheld this report for eight months, and then quietly released it.

Similarly, they quietly revised their plan to meet Ontario's 2030 targets for cutting carbon emissions in 2022. Their 2018 plan, for instance, pledged a 2.3 megatonne reduction of CO2 emissions in natural gas, which has now shrunk to almost nothing in the new plan.

Last year, the Ford government announced their intention to open the Greenbelt up for development, removing protections from 7,400 acres — breaking their often-repeated promise that the land would remain intact.

At least four developers have either donated to the PC party, hired conservative lobbyists, or both.

As a result, the Greenbelt controversy has spawned three investigations and four resignations.

Ontario's integrity commissioner found that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing broke ethics rules. In a blistering 166-page report — which echoed a previous, and equally damning, account from Ontario's auditor general — the commissioner said the way the government went about removing 3,000 hectares from the Greenbelt was “marked by misinterpretation, unnecessary hastiness and deception.” The responsibility of which landed at the Minister's door. This led to his resignation from Cabinet.

Amid mounting and continuing public pressure, Ford reversed course — although the new legislation to do this includes blanket immunity for Ford and all members of the Ontario government.

6 **Protecting the environment and saving the planet can co-exist with a healthy economy and good jobs for everyone.**





The RCMP has now launched a criminal investigation into the scandal.

This was never about building affordable housing. It was always about the richer getting richer.

We need a sustainable and livable planet, including healthy communities.

That means:

- › Securing for all people clean air and water, climate and community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature, and a sustainable environment
- › Improving the public's access to provincial parks and other publicly managed green spaces
- › Achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers – with meaningful community input from communities and labour
- › Demanding that governments play the central role in leading a fair and just transition of the economy and ensure that corporations, for-profit bodies, and the private sector adhere to all climate-related legislation, policies, practices, etc.
- › Dedicating resources to assist the integration of refugees and immigrants displaced by climate change
- › Creating millions of decent, high-wage jobs and transforming low-carbon jobs into good jobs, while expanding low-carbon sectors
- › Ensuring that climate justice solutions respect and support Indigenous sovereignty, racial and gender justice, and other equity concerns
- › Developing public, not-for-profit green energy solutions
- › Improving, repairing, and expanding infrastructure that provides climate justice solutions, such as building mass transit systems within and between cities and regions and creating high-quality affordable housing near places of work
- › Supporting meaningful green investment strategies regarding the responsible management of pension funds
- › Restoring environmental regulations, policies, reporting mechanisms, etc. that have been eliminated or weakened by government
- › Holding big corporate polluters responsible for their actions
- › Imposing bigger fines and greater penalties for corporate and business practices that harm the environment

HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKPLACES

The importance of upholding the health of our planet starts with our communities and our workplaces.

Workers fought long and hard for the health and safety standards that employers must legally uphold in all Ontario workplaces. But too many employers see health and safety as a threat to their bottom line and either try to evade protections or lobby the government to weaken or eliminate them altogether.

Predictably, Ford's approach to health and safety has been to give employers a break. Through the so-called *Working for Workers Act, 2022*, Ford enabled the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to funnel 1.5 billion dollars to employers, while many injured and ill workers and their families continue to wait years on end for due compensation.

In terms of prevention, workplace inspections went from 3500 in 2017, to a mere 215 in 2022 – at the height of the pandemic when workplace inspections should have hit a record high.

Because of Ford's actions or lack thereof ...

In 2022, more than 2,000 Ontario workers died of traumatic incidents and hazardous exposures at work.

In 2022, 366,500 Ontario workers were injured or made ill in connection with traumatic incidents and hazardous exposures at work.

And these are extremely conservative estimates. Many more may have succumbed to occupational illnesses that went unreported or undiagnosed. Further, between 40 to 60 per cent of potentially compensable conditions are typically not reported to the WSIB.

Next year marks the 20th anniversary of the Westray Law, a workplace criminalization law passed after 26 miners were buried alive in a preventable mine explosion on May 9th, 1992 in Pictou County, Nova Scotia. The explosion was caused by a buildup of methane gas, and coal dust. An inquiry found a series of issues such as poor planning, collapsed roofs, inadequate ventilation, and dangerous levels of coal dust that the employer and inspectors failed to address.

Because of the advocacy of the United Steelworkers and their allies, amendments were made to the *Criminal Code* of Canada, enshrined as the Westray Law. The law enables negligent employers to be charged and convicted under the *Criminal Code* for criminal negligence, with the possibility of going to jail and a criminal record.

But it is rarely enforced.

We continue to lobby both the Ontario Solicitor and Attorney General to draft policies and protocols to guide workplace death investigations using a Westray lens, like they have in Nova Scotia, British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba.

The status quo where worker deaths go uninvestigated using a criminal lens is unacceptable, and deadly.

Currently, coroner's inquests are only a legislative requirement in certain circumstances, such as when a death occurs at a construction site, mine, pit, or quarry — leaving out other sectors of workers, including those that are predominantly female like health care and education.

Even when these inquests take place, it is extremely rare that recommendations from the independent jury are implemented — putting already-grieving families through emotional turmoil all over again — with no justice. In 2022, for example, it was revealed that all of the coroner's jury recommendations in a 2014 trench collapse that killed 35-year-old Michael Picanco, were rejected by Ontario's Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development. This included increasing the number of unannounced inspections, mandating trench safety training for workers, implementing stronger penalties for companies with repeated safety violations, and requiring health and safety representatives at smaller work sites.

Such a failure will cost workers their lives.

The term “accident” is used too often to describe preventable injuries, illnesses, and deaths. “An ‘accident’ waiting to happen” was how the Westray tragedy was described.

But it's no “accident” if there are known hazards in the workplace that both employers and the Ministry refuse to address.

It's negligence, and it's often criminal.

We will continue to mourn workers who lost their lives at work, and all others who suffered work-related injury and disease — and we will continue to fight like hell for the living.

We need healthy and safe workplaces. That means:

- › Lobbying government to approach psychosocial hazards equally to all other hazards according to the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*
- › Ensuring that labour-governed organizations are prioritized and properly funded, including the Workers Health and Safety Centre, Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW), and Prevention Link
- › Ensuring that health and safety training, as well as disability prevention training, remains delivered by workers for workers in virtual or in-person classroom settings
- › Fighting back against eLearning (“click, play, walk away” information on a page) as a form of training
- › Increasing the frequency and scope of pre-emptive workplace inspections by the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development

- › Escalating the OFL's campaign, The Heat is ON, on the intersection between the climate crisis and heat stress experienced across workers in all sectors
- › Implementing a zero-tolerance policy for toxic and lethal substances, including asbestos, in workplaces and ensuring strong enforcement
- › Working with the CLC to ensure that changes to the *Hazardous Products Act* do not disadvantage workers
- › Pushing for the full implementation of the independent review recommendations by Dr. Paul Demers on the work-relatedness of cancer (Jan. 2020) and the Expert Advisory Panel on Occupational Health and Safety (Dec. 2010)
- › Monitoring and auditing the evolution of the Occupational Exposure Registry originating from the Occupational Disease Landscape Review
- › Demanding universal workers' compensation for every worker in Ontario
- › Ensuring that any WSIB surplus is directed to injured workers, and not handed over to employers
- › Pushing back against the 2022 Value for Money Audit (VFMA) recommendations and keeping a close watch on the implementation of any changes to the WSIB appeals system
- › Lobbying the government to expand the list of compensable occupational diseases presumed to be work-related
- › Abolishing the unfair practice of 'deeming' by the WSIB
- › Lobbying the Solicitor and Attorney General for policies and protocols related to Westray to apply a criminal negligence lens to every workplace death investigation
- › Holding employers accountable for the health and safety of their workers and pushing for the prosecution of negligent employers for killing workers
- › Demanding province-wide enforcement of the Westray Law, which establishes the criminal liability of corporations for workplace deaths and injuries
- › Hosting joint training sessions with labour councils on the Westray Law
- › Making companies that use temporary agencies financially responsible under the WSIB for workplace deaths and injuries
- › Monitoring the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal's new pre-hearing process
- › Expanding the requirement for a mandatory coroner's inquest into a workplace-based death in construction and mining to all sectors, including agriculture, and pushing for mandatory implementation of recommendations
- › Opposing any and all forms of discrimination and/or harassment in the workplace, including on Ontario Human Rights Code-based grounds



CONCLUSION

Every generation is tasked with fighting hard to dig through the layers of oppression that weigh heavily on our backs. It is incumbent upon us to demonstrate that a unified and strong labour movement can help deliver the grounds for change — that are deep and far reaching. That begins with a vision that is filled with hope and care for another — where everyone is uplifted.

We must assert our role as key players in struggles for social change — in both the workplace and broader society. That means expanding the fight to advocate for class solidarity and social justice across all spectrums. The future of unionized workers is tied directly to the interests of the entire working class and the communities in which we live and work.

We must weave together the work of labour, our community and coalition partners, and our political allies if we are to successfully build a broad and united social movement that is capable of confronting and ending systems of oppression and exploitation.

But building a movement is never quite over.



While there are victories that happen along the way – and they should be celebrated – the collective power that has been built in workplaces and in communities should never sit idle. Otherwise, it will diminish and disappear. The moment that workers stop exhibiting the union, it loses its power.

Fortunately, there's more excitement, a greater spirit of militancy and experimentation, and more hope in today's labor movement than there has been in a long time. We know what we can achieve when we all work together towards a common goal.

**Let us harness that
collective energy and
change the world
for the better.**



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54 unions and one million workers.**

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