

# POWER OF MANY

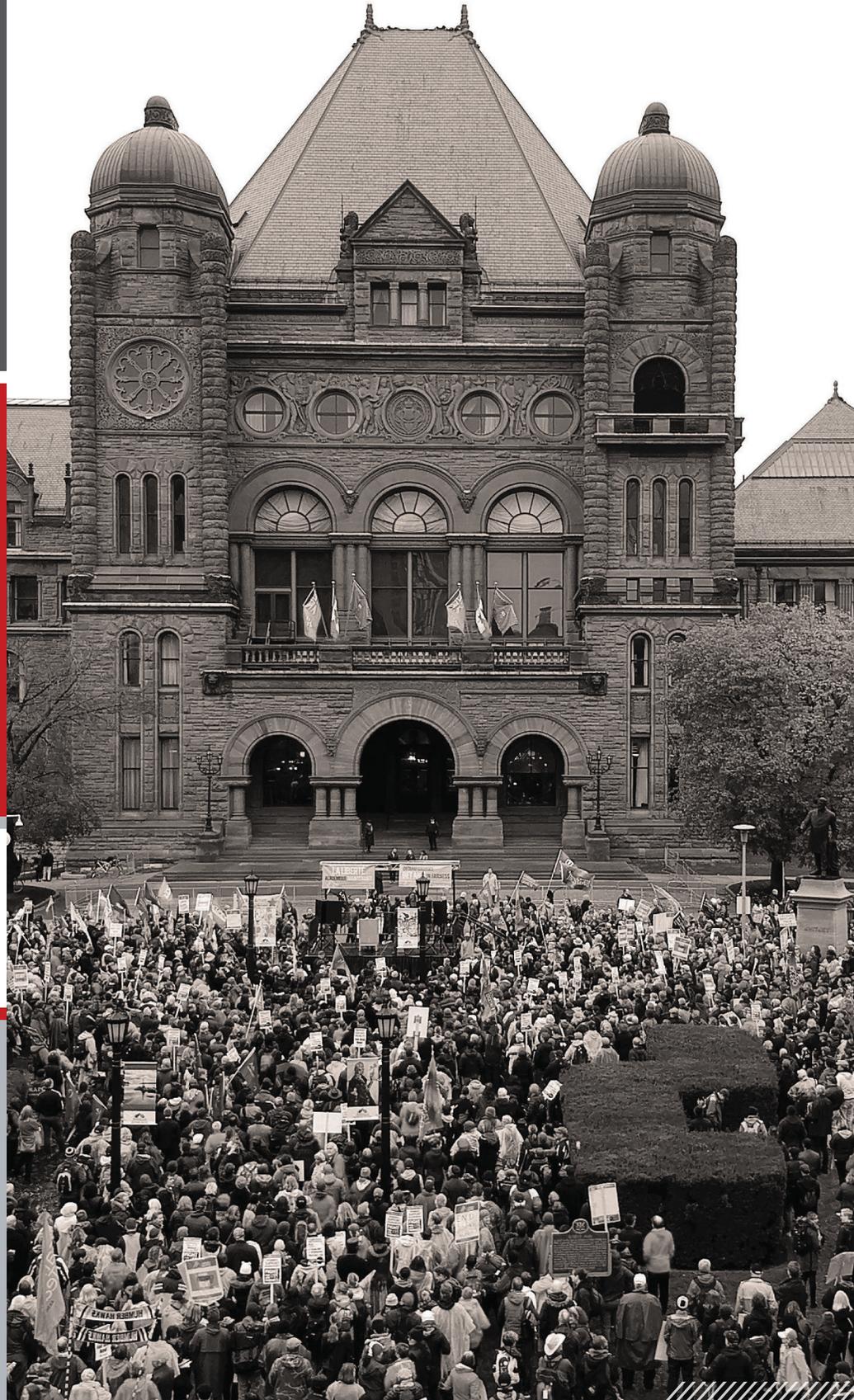
15<sup>TH</sup> OFL BIENNIAL CONVENTION

ONTARIO FEDERATION  
OF LABOUR

THE POWER OF MANY

# VISION

**FÉDÉRATION DU  
TRAVAIL  
DE L'ONTARIO**  **ONTARIO  
FEDERATION OF  
LABOUR**

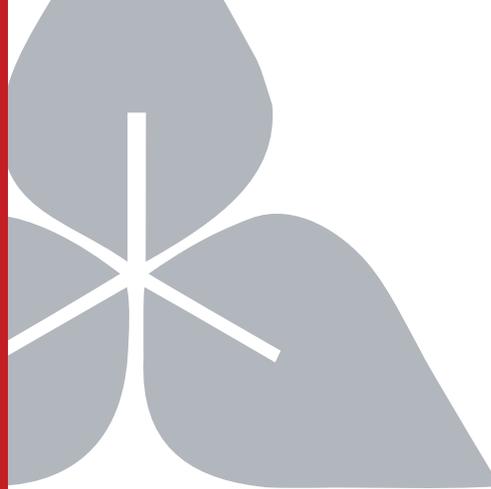


// 15<sup>TH</sup> ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR CONVENTION  
NOVEMBER 25 – 29, 2019  
SHERATON CENTRE TORONTO HOTEL  
Toronto, Ontario

**2019**

**15<sup>TH</sup> BIENNIAL OFL CONVENTION**

**ONTARIO FEDERATION  
OF LABOUR**  
**THE POWER OF MANY  
VISION**



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**AGENDA**

**NOVEMBER 2019**

**25**

**MONDAY**

DECENT WORK FOR ALL (PM)

**26**

**TUESDAY**

HEALTHY AND SAFE  
COMMUNITIES FOR ALL (AM)

PUBLIC SERVICES FOR ALL (PM)

**27**

**WEDNESDAY**

JUSTICE FOR ALL (AM + PM)

**28**

**THURSDAY**

HEALTHY AND SAFE  
WORKPLACES FOR ALL (AM)

**29**

**FRIDAY**

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

The **POWER OF MANY VISION DOCUMENT** was produced for the 15<sup>th</sup> Biennial OFL Convention, 2019.

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# PREAMBLE

**History has shown us that when people act from a place of fear – rather than a place of hope – they sometimes turn to the right.**

Around the world, including in Canada, right-wing populism is becoming more prevalent and more pronounced.

**Working people feel left behind.**

**But it is more than just a feeling. It is a reality.**

Many communities across the country have been shut out of political, social, and economic power – particularly as the divide between the working class and rich grow; as our social safety net is systematically dismantled; as our institutions remain unresponsive to our lived experiences; and as our hopes for ourselves, our communities, and our world at large feel increasingly out of reach.

The right has tapped into these realities, stoking fears that there is not enough for everyone, while villainizing and targeting marginalized folks in the process.

They have undermined our working conditions and the democracy of our workplaces.

They have attacked our high-quality public services and weakened our social safety net.

They have restricted our access to justice and failed to recognize our lived experiences.

They have endangered the health and safety of our workplaces and our communities.

**We, on the other hand, will continue to rise to the challenge.**

These fights, however, extend beyond the electoral cycle. They are bigger than Doug Ford. They are bigger than Andrew Scheer and Maxime Bernier.

These fights are rooted in working class struggles – including rising economic inequality, diminishing democracy, and increasing hate – that are sweeping the globe. They will build, define, and redefine social justice movements for generations to come.

We must therefore reimagine new ways to reconnect with the working class through meaningful narratives and bold policies that reflect the hopes and aspirations for a just world. People want to be given something to fight for – something that inspires them, something that spurs active participation in their communities and workplaces.

**Ultimately, people want to feel like they are part of something that is bigger than themselves.**

The OFL's **Power of Many (POM)** campaign aims to do just that – placing progressive values at the core of its vision in realizing an Ontario for all. It is our intent to unapologetically and decisively help spur a people-led movement for social, economic, racial, and environmental justice. We will bring together progressive minds and coalitions from across labour, community, and the New Democratic Party, plugging in various social justice movements that are currently building and strengthening working class unity.

**THIS VISION DOCUMENT  
IS MEANT TO RAISE  
EXPECTATIONS OF  
WHAT IS POSSIBLE.**

This campaign is built upon four pillars: decent work for all, public services for all, justice for all, and healthy and safe workplaces and communities for all. Together, they are reflective of a collective and progressive vision that will deliver an Ontario for all.

**THAT HAS ALWAYS  
BEEN OUR WORK, AND  
IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE.**

**This vision document is meant to raise expectations of what is possible.**

**That has always been our work, and it will continue to be.**

# DECENT WORK FOR ALL



**UNIONS ARE A POWERFUL COUNTER TO SOCIOECONOMIC INEQUALITY – WHETHER BY DIRECTLY LIFTING THE INCOMES AND WORKING CONDITIONS OF UNIONIZED WORKERS AT THE LOWER END OF THE INCOME DISTRIBUTION OR BY RAISING THE BARGAINING POWER OF LOW-INCOME WORKERS OVERALL.**

Unions are a powerful counter to socioeconomic inequality – whether by directly lifting the incomes and working conditions of unionized workers at the lower end of the income distribution or by raising the bargaining power of low-income workers overall. The reality is that as union membership has decreased, the share of income going to the top 10 per cent has steadily increased.

In fact, union membership in the US fell to 11.1 per cent in 2014, while the share of income at the top end of the distribution hit 47.2 per cent that same year. Contrastingly, when US union membership was at its peak in 1945 at 33.4 per cent, the share of income concentrated within the top 10 per cent was 32.6 per cent.

The decline in trade union density has not been accidental. The right has explicitly targeted workers' rights with several regressive policies, including here in Ontario.

On more than one occasion, the Ford government has introduced back-to-work legislation for workers on strike – a blatant attack on their constitutional freedom to associate for common workplace goals and their fight for decent work.

Last year, they systematically dismantled decent work laws with the Making Ontario Open for Business Act, including repealing the scheduled \$15 minimum wage, removing two paid sick days, eliminating equal pay for equal work, and reverting to laws that made it harder to access union protection. The Ford government has also put a pause on laws that would have helped bridge the wage gap – all measures which disproportionately affect women workers, workers of colour, and other equity seeking workers.

In January, the Ford government announced the Student Choice Initiative, which will allow post-secondary students to opt out of paying their union fees. This will severely limit the ability of student unions to provide the services and spaces that their members need.

As of 2019, the government has mandated that provincial agencies will need to obtain approval of their bargaining mandates and the ratification of their collective agreements. They have also signalled that they are looking to expand collective bargaining oversight to other areas of the broader public sector.

And in November, the Ontario government passed legislation that will limit total compensation increases – including salary increases – at one per cent per year for the next three years. Given that the cost of living in 2018 for Ontario was 2.4 per cent, this is a real wage cut for public sector workers and infringes on their right to free collective bargaining.

It is undisputable that unions are a formidable force, resisting and correcting the inherent power imbalance between workers and employers. As a result of regressive anti-worker policies over the years, however, working class unity has been fractured.

**IT IS TIME  
TO RECLAIM  
OUR POWER.**

It is time to reclaim our power.

**We will champion decent working conditions for all. That means ...**

- // Introducing at least a \$15 minimum wage immediately with no exceptions
- // Providing job-protected paid leave for all workers to access in the event of sickness and/or personal emergency
- // Establishing equal pay for equal work standards, greater enforcement, and no loopholes
- // Ensuring fairer scheduling laws
- // Creating job-protected paid leave for survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence
- // Strengthening protections for temporary agency workers and migrant workers
- // Guaranteeing that every worker is covered under the Employment Standards Act (ESA) and the Labour Relations Act (LRA)
- // Recognizing that the collective bargaining process no longer only occurs between one union and one employer within an individual workplace
- // 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 when the employer has contravened the LRA
- // Providing automatic access to first contract arbitration in all cases
- // Extending successor rights to all contracted services
- // Guaranteeing the right of employees to return to work following a lawful strike or lockout
- // Standing up against interference in the collective bargaining process like back-to-work legislation, the use of 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

# PUBLIC SERVICES FOR ALL



## INEQUALITY IS NOT INEVITABLE. IT IS A POLITICAL CHOICE.

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.

The world's richest 1 per cent own 45 per cent of the world's wealth.

Inequality, however, is not inevitable. It is a political choice.

Decades of a neoliberal economic program in Ontario, for example, have resulted in the province having the highest income inequality in Canada.

And the Ford government continues to perpetuate that divide. Their first budget cut or froze spending in nearly every ministry by taking from the vulnerable and giving to the wealthy.

The reality is that Conservative governments are often singularly focused on slashing program spending – not increasing revenues.

Ontario already has the lowest program spending per person of any province in Canada.

While vulnerable communities bear the brunt of public service cuts, businesses in Ontario will receive \$3.8 billion in corporate tax relief over the next six years. Further, the Ford government cancelled a small tax increase for high income earners. This means at least \$275 million in lost revenues per year for the government.

Their regressive tax policies place Ontario families further and further behind – in more ways than one. Such policies undermine the value of what taxes fund for workers and everyone else: public services.

In addition to massively underfunding our health care system, including our hospitals, the Ford government has made one of the biggest structural changes to Ontario's health care system. They have dissolved numerous specialized and regional health care providers to create a singular super agency. The government now has extraordinary powers to privatize our health care system; to order mega-mergers and transfers of important health care services; and to undermine unionized workers' rights.

They have also cut half a billion dollars from our provincial health insurance plan, leaving important tests and procedures uncovered.

The Ford government is undoing our universal health care system.

This government is also attempting to undermine the quality of our education system.

Per student funding has decreased. Average class sizes, however, are increasing for grades four through 12 – with some classes seeing more than 40 students in a room. This will undoubtedly jeopardize students' learning environments; eliminate tens of thousands of education workers – including teachers – across the province; as well as reduce access to after-school programs and elective courses, endangering post-secondary aspirations.

Ford's first attack on post-secondary education was threatening institutions with funding cuts if they did not allow all speech, including racist and discriminatory remarks, on campus.

They also made a series of changes in January 2019. Grants for low-income students have been turned into loans even on a retroactive basis. The government also cancelled the six-month interest-free period on student loans – all measures that negatively impact access to post-secondary education. While the Ford government did cut 10 per cent of tuition fees, they failed to supplement that change with additional funding.

Ontario is home to the most expensive child care in the country, across all age groups.

Instead of building spaces that are affordable, high-quality, and publicly delivered, they have increased the capacity of the private sector to deliver child care – lifting the cap on the amount of public funding that can be allocated towards for-profit child care. The government also passed laws that relax restrictions around the number of children home child care providers – both regulated and unregulated – can care for at any given time. It is important to understand that these restrictions were introduced years ago after several infant deaths in Ontario's private child care sector.

The Ford government also planned to cut \$1 billion from social and community services over the next three years. This was largely a result of their regressive social assistance reforms, which essentially refashioned the system to limit access for folks with disabilities and force recipients into low-paying and exploitative jobs. In October 2019, they paused their actions.

These potential changes are in addition to the fact that the government slashed in half a scheduled three per cent increase to social assistance rates as well as 50 per cent of funding from the Poverty Reduction Strategy. Instead of working towards eradicating poverty in our lifetime, they are plummeting more individuals into greater depths of uncertainty.

Unsurprisingly, the Ford government is trying to manufacture a crisis in just about every sector and community across Ontario.

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This is to chronically underfund our public services.

This is to set the stage for further privatization and greater contracting out.

This is to order more restructures and mergers within different public sectors and agencies – or to eliminate them altogether.

This is to move towards individual or private funding models.

This is to download greater responsibilities to municipalities without providing them with the needed funding.

This is to shift away from universality to means testing for access to programs and services.

**Undoubtedly, their goal is to ultimately dismantle our social safety net piece by piece.**

**We will, however, fight back.**

**We will demand public services for all. That means ...**

- // Ensuring that big corporations and the wealthy contribute their fair share of taxes
- // Establishing, investing in, and strengthening access to publicly delivered universal services and programs – such as health care, mental health care, pharma care, dental care, child care, housing, elementary and secondary education, post-secondary education, social and community services, and public pensions – for all residents
- // Stopping the privatization of our public services and assets, including crown corporations as well as our health care, education, child care, and infrastructure systems
- // Guaranteeing professional-level wages for all public sector workers
- // Increasing hospital funding by at least 5.3 per cent each year to protect service levels and rebuild capacity
- // Legislating at least four hours of hands-on care per resident per day in long-term care facilities
- // Creating a comprehensive provincial social housing program that treats housing as a public utility
- // Building non-profit, affordable child care spaces as well as putting an end to end to licensing new for-profit child care centres
- // Eliminating tuition fees for all post-secondary students and removing interest on existing student loans
- // Increasing social assistance rates to well above the poverty line
- // Expanding access to social assistance for all persons regardless of their immigration status and providing supports with dignity

# JUSTICE FOR ALL



## **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, transphobia.

Underlying the growing divide between the richest 1 per cent and the rest of us are several intersectional layers, including its disproportionate impact on women, Indigenous and racialized peoples, immigrants, 2SLGBTQI+ people, young people, and people requiring accommodations. These injustices are reflected in numerous avenues, including in the exploitation of workers and precarious working conditions; in the adverse impact of privatized public services; and in the barriers to accessing healthy and safe communities.

Instead of creating an environment of togetherness, the one per cent is capitalizing on the existing divisions among the working class. They are actively trying to fracture working class unity by implicating other equity-seeking groups in the process. This division is becoming heightened with much more precision and fervor as their self-interest – be it social, economic, political, and cultural – drives discriminatory policies that benefit that self-interest.

## **The Ford government is not for the working class. They have failed to adequately redress structural and systemic injustices. In fact, they have pushed back on years of progress.**

Ontario has the highest number of hate crimes reported across the country. Hate crimes have swelled against Muslim people by 207 per cent, against Black people by 84 per cent, and against Jewish people by 41 per cent in a one-year period. It is also important to note that in Canada, 53 per cent of hate crimes that are motivated by hatred of the victim's sexual orientation are violent crimes.

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

## **We cannot let hate be normalized.**

The Ford government, however, 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.

One of the government's earliest steps included withdrawing cooperation to help fund the resettlement of asylum seekers. In the 2019 budget, they once again targeted immigrants and refugees, stating that Legal Aid Ontario can no longer use provincial funds on these cases. In other words, the Ford government eliminated two thirds of funding for refugee and immigration cases.

As a result of this funding cut, several legal aid clinics have been forced to lay off staff, stop accepting new cases, and discontinue certain services. Justice through the courts has also been delayed with longer hearings, greater postponements and adjournments, additional missed deadlines at the Immigration and Refugee Board, and unfilled adjudicator positions at the Human Rights Tribunal. These actions are undermining cases and discouraging vulnerable people from seeking relief.

In July 2018, the Ford government halted curriculum development on Indigenous culture, history, and contributions that was to be taught in elementary and secondary schools across the province (i.e., #62 of the Truth and Reconciliation call to actions). Further, they continue to make no movement towards ensuring access to clean drinking water for Indigenous communities.

In Autumn 2018, the Ford government disbanded expert committees that were tasked with developing comprehensive frameworks around ending violence against women and combatting Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Indigenous, and anti-Black racism. They have also failed to act on Justice Tulloch's Independent Street Checks Review recommendations – namely, eliminating carding in its entirety.

Shortly after disbanding the committees, the government refused to flow the promised funding increases of \$14.8 million to sexual assault centres – which was meant to increase the capacity of current centres as well as to open new centres in communities where none currently exist. They have also not corrected barriers and delays in receiving access to abortion services.

In November 2018, the Progressive Conservatives passed a transphobic policy resolution at their convention that called on the government to remove gender identity references from the sexual education curriculum. The government has now delayed introducing curriculum on gender identity and gender expression for two years.

**These kinds of actions are unacceptable.**

In the face of such injustices, we must reaffirm our openness, our love for each other, and our determination to build a better future together.

**None of us are free until all of us are free.**

**We will advocate justice for all. That means ...**

- // Promoting justice and equity by repairing historic, discontinuing current, and preventing future oppression of Indigenous communities, communities of colour, migrant communities, deindustrialized communities, depopulated rural communities as well as other affected communities

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- // Agitating for a whole-of-government approach that is equity focused and intersectional (e.g., anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, anti-racist, feminist, anti-ableist, and 2SLGBTQI+ inclusive)
- // Challenging fascism, white supremacy, colonialism, racism, bigotry, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, and transphobia in all its forms
- // Eliminating systemic anti-Indigenous and anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia, including from government services like policing institutions, school boards, children's aid societies, the workforce as well as decision-making bodies
- // Strengthening and expanding the scope and mandate of the Anti-Racism Directorate
- // Abolishing the discriminatory practice of racial profiling (e.g., carding)
- // Adopting the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations
- // Demanding immediate action on prosperity for all Indigenous peoples including, but not limited to, access to clean water, shelter, and food security
- // Ensuring that the national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls reflects and supports the needs of Indigenous communities
- // 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 that have been deported and treated negatively 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 programs and services (e.g., 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 integrating persons with disabilities into every aspect of the workplace and society
- // Establishing the Disability Rights Secretariat
- // Eliminating homophobia and transphobia so every person feels safe to live authentically
- // Ensuring that 2SLGBTQI+ people have access to appropriate and timely health care options that are friendly, competent, and meet their respective needs
- // Terminating the prevalence of suicide attempts among 2SLGBTQI+ youth through increased supports, like mental health services and housing
- // Ending violence against Trans peoples, particularly those that identify through an intersectional lens

# HEALTHY AND SAFE WORKPLACES AND COMMUNITIES FOR ALL



**Every worker must feel safe and empowered in the work that they do. It only takes a split second for a worker to become injured, permanently disabled, and/or ill from work.**

Not every worker, however, is covered by the workers' compensation system.

Many physical and mental injuries are denied, go unreported, or unattributed to their working conditions. For those who do have coverage, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) is focused on reducing its own costs on the backs of injured workers. In September 2018, the WSIB announced an across-the-board average premium reduction for employers of nearly 30 per cent – in addition to the 10 per cent rate reduction gifted over the last few years. And in September 2019, premiums were reduced by another 17 per cent. This means that the WSIB has eliminated its unfunded liability largely at the expense of providing benefits to injured workers and ensuring workplace health and safety.

Not every worker, however, makes it back home.

In 2018, 228 people died from a work-related injury or illness in Ontario.

This year marks the 10-year anniversary of the OFL's *Kill A Worker, Go to Jail* campaign – one that has seen historic wins with an employer receiving Ontario's first prison sentence for negligence in causing the death of a worker.

Unfortunately, the Ford government has taken several steps backwards in protecting workers, including by opening the door for non-unionized companies in the construction trades to bid on and build public infrastructure projects. Unionized construction trades are leaders in health and safety. This government has not only placed worker and public safety at great risk, but they have also trampled collective bargaining agreements in the process. In addition, they have frozen proactive workplace inspections, shifted all in-person ESA-related inspections online, and are transitioning in-person health and safety training online.

Ontario's austerity agenda is increasingly making workers more disposable and eroding fairness in the workplace.

**But we will continue to make our voices heard.**

The importance of health and safety extends beyond our workplaces to our communities and our environment.

**ONTARIO'S  
AUSTERITY AGENDA  
IS INCREASINGLY  
MAKING WORKERS  
MORE DISPOSABLE AND  
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**BUT WE WILL  
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**REGRESSIVE ACTIONS  
AND INACTION HAVE  
DICTATED THE AGENDA  
FOR FAR TOO LONG IN  
ONTARIO, IN CANADA,  
AND ACROSS THE GLOBE.**

**WE NEED A HOLISTIC  
RESPONSE TO  
CLIMATE CHANGE  
THAT ADDRESSES  
INJUSTICES AND  
LEAVES NO ONE BEHIND.**

**Time is running out to take steps to keep our planet inhabitable. The United Nations has declared that we are less than 12 years away from irrevocable damage.**

Today's children, and their children, are the ones who will live with the consequences of climate change – with the consequences of our actions. It is a reality that they have inherited.

In Ontario, for example, the Ford government's inaugural move was to eliminate the cap-and-trade program and cancel 758 green energy contracts.

They then unsuccessfully threatened to remove protections that prevented industries from polluting our drinking water – regulations that were introduced in response to the 2000 Walkerton tragedy where contaminated drinking water killed seven Ontarians and made thousands ill. In addition, the government was willing to allow developers – who are also donors to the PC party – to bypass regulations protecting the Greenbelt from urban development.

The Ford government did, however, eradicate obligations for businesses to publicly report on their use of toxic substances, further facilitating the production and pollution of these toxins. In addition, they have slashed flood protection funding in half, eliminated the 50 Million Tree Program, and revealed plans to potentially cancel Ontario's Blue Box recycling program.

Regressive actions and inaction have dictated the agenda for far too long in Ontario, in Canada, and across the globe.

Young people have made their outrage known. In over 150 countries, over 6.6 million people – the vast majority of which were young people – took to the streets to demand climate justice for all in the 2019 global climate strike.

They are the reason that we can still turn it around. We need a holistic response to climate change that addresses injustices and leaves no one behind.

**We will demand healthy and safe workplaces and communities for all. That means ...**

- // Demanding universal workers' compensation for every worker in Ontario
- // Expanding the definition of occupational diseases so workers are treated fairly and without discrimination
- // Ensuring workplace disability prevention initiatives are prioritized and properly funded (e.g., Workers Health and Safety Centre, Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers, and Prevention Link)
- // Abolishing the unfair practice of deeming at the WSIB
- // Requiring employer criminal negligence to become a routine part of every workplace death investigation
- // Holding employers accountable for the health and safety of their workers and jailing negligent employers for killing workers
- // Requiring companies that use temp agencies are financially responsible under the WSIB for workplace deaths and injuries
- // Implementing a zero-tolerance policy for toxic substances, including asbestos, in workplaces and ensuring strong enforcement
- // Introducing the precautionary principle approach for all new substances, processes, or job designs in the workplace

- // Collaborating with workers on a high standard, mandatory health and safety accreditation program
- // Ensuring that health and safety as well as disability prevention training remains delivered by workers for workers in classroom settings
- // Securing for all people clean air and water, climate and community resiliency, healthy food, access to nature, and a sustainable environment
- // Achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers
- // Creating millions of decent, high-wage jobs and ensuring prosperity and economic security for all people
- // Investing in infrastructure and industry to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- // Holding big corporate polluters responsible for their actions

## CONCLUSION

### **NOTHING IS INEVITABLE OR UNCHANGEABLE.**

Nothing is inevitable or unchangeable – not the retraction of decent working conditions; not the loss of middle-class jobs; not the rise in economic inequality; not the underfunding and privatization of our public services; not the prevalence of hate, violence, and discrimination; and not the destruction of our workplaces, communities, and planet.

Our task is to champion issues that have the greatest potential to improve. We must remember that the defeat of the working class lies in the lowering of expectations of what is possible. We cannot let that happen.

**Together, let's aim higher.**

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NOVEMBER 25–29, 2019

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