



# TWO YEARS OF TURMOIL

June 2020

Nobody was surprised that Doug Ford and his MPPs promoted an aggressive pro-business agenda after they were elected in June 2018. We knew the Conservatives – and Ford and his allies on Toronto City Council – had a bad track record. But we were shocked by the severity of their attacks: rolling back minimum wage increases, cutting Long Term Care inspections, slashing the size of City Council during the middle of Toronto’s democratic elections, cutting funding to public health and community legal clinics, eliminating Ontario’s climate action plan, tearing up energy deals despite costly penalties, ripping out electric car energy chargers in GO stations ... and the list goes on.

The decision by the Conservatives to attack publicly funded education was a decisive turn. Teachers, education workers, parents and students responded with massive mobilization, taking the issue directly to communities and the public. Education Minister Stephen Lecce attempt to force larger classes and funding cuts met determined resistance, and Ford’s public opinion polls plummeted.

His performance during COVID-19 has resulted in higher polling numbers. When the coronavirus hit, Ford began making relatively sensible pronouncements scripted by others. He did the right thing and declared a state of emergency. He learned a few things, such as his promise to encourage a local supply chain to ensure we have enough PPE for future pandemics, and he called out profiteering businesses.

But the Conservatives have failed to govern in the interests of Ontarians. They have not been able to secure reliable data about the incidence of COVID across the province and failed to provide real leadership on testing, communications and unequal COVID outcomes. They formed a “ring of death” instead of an “iron ring” to protect our vulnerable Long Term Care (LTC) residents. Indeed, Ford attacked inspectors, as though they, rather than Ford and former Premier and Chartwell Board chair Mike Harris, were to blame for thousands of deaths. Conservative MPPs from Toronto and York Region have stood by as silent observers, instead of acting to protect their constituents.

Ford and his MPPs have been focused solely on business interests, ignoring community realities before and during COVID-19. They lied to voters when they promised an end to hallway medicine. Instead they cut health funding and expanded the sale of wine and beer (remember Buck-a-beer?). They rewrote legislation and deregulated, enabling heightened racism and a worse gig economy. The Ontario Federation of Labour’s “Ford Tracker” lists 20 pages of such problems, and each action adds to their disturbing record. What else are they doing while the state of emergency is still in effect? They have brought in legislation and policies to privatize more transit and home care.

Sunday, June 7, is the second anniversary of Ford's Conservative government. Let's make sure that workers understand what these politicians actually stand for. Not governing for the people, but reigning for Conservative cronies and the one percent. Let's make the next two years his last two years and fight for every inch of ground in the meantime.

On June 4 2020, the Labour Council resolved to:

1. Continue working with affiliates and allies to resist the destructive Ford Conservative agenda
2. Educate and seek ongoing solidarity among affiliates around cross-sectoral impacts of Conservative policies on workers and communities
3. Insist that the provincial government pay its share of emergency municipal funding, and commit to long-term operating funding for public transit
4. Fight to restore workers' rights won under Bill 148, and strengthen regulations that protect the public good
5. Call on affiliates to support the Canadian Labour Congress campaign to take profit-taking out of the Long Term Care sector
6. Call for a Green New Deal to rebuild from COVID-19, and promote the principles laid out in the C40 Global Mayors call for a healthy, equitable and sustainable economic recovery to the pandemic