



THE ABUSE OF POWER BEGINS

Premier Ford's bombshell announcement that he will hijack the Toronto election and unilaterally slash Council representation is a deeply disturbing indication of how Ontario will be run over the next four years. With no notice and no consultation, Doug Ford has decided to cut the Council to 25 seats from the current number of 47. If he applied the same formula of one Councillor per provincial riding elsewhere, city councils would be obliterated. But these deep cuts are only aimed at Toronto. In York Region, Peel, Niagara and Muskoka, he is cancelling the direct elections of the Council Chairs – the most powerful politician in each Region.

A politician interfering in elections that are already underway is unprecedented in Canadian history. It shows the same contempt for democracy that marked the Mike Harris regime the last time Conservatives ran the province. This move is driven not by a pursuit of savings. It is about restoring backroom deals by wealthy powerbrokers - reducing accountability so they can profit from the resources of our cities. Behind it will be a drive to privatize services and sell off public assets.

And so the abuse of power begins. Nobody should believe that the Conservatives will stop at Bill 5 – and no one knows who will be the next target. Within hours they announced cuts to social assistance rates and an abrupt end to the pilot project on minimum income. We are seeing how a Trump-style leadership would operate – with complete disregard for justice. Whether it is around schools, healthcare, pensions or labour rights - it is guaranteed that in the next four years all of us will find ourselves in a fight, defending things we have assumed were secure and fair.

The people of Toronto saw nothing but chaos and global ridicule when the Fords ran City Hall. They scrapped transit plans and cut services, outsourced jobs and targeted libraries for closure. We now see how that same chaos will be imposed from Doug Ford at Queen's Park. Ford ran and lost his bid to be Mayor. For many this surprise attack smacks of a revenge agenda on Toronto progressives as well as key opponents like Patrick Brown. Without malice as the

motive, any politician acting with integrity would take time to consult the people and change the boundaries for the next election.

Last time the Conservatives took over this province they dumped billions of costs on the property taxpayers. It took years to recover – in fact we are still paying for those destructive decisions that were masked by simple slogans and mean-spirited ideology. Crumbling schools, cancelled transit lines, increased poverty and boarded up housing are the legacy of that experience. We cannot afford four more years of chaos in Toronto or Ontario.

The Executive Recommends that Labour Council:

- Work with affiliates, community allies, and elected representatives to forge a mass movement to oppose Bill 5 and any other attack on democracy or public institutions by the Ford Conservatives
- Build a powerful commitment across the labour movement to a collective resistance to the Conservative agenda over the next four years
- Help support legal challenges to this blatant affront to justice and due process
- Continue to work on electing progressive candidates across Toronto and York Region under the current system, and prepare for possible elections under new boundaries if Bill 5 is upheld

August 2018

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