

Labour's response to the Conservative agenda

5 step guide for local union leaders

Protect public services • Protect jobs • Protect our unions

Alarm bells are ringing right across Ontario

The first months of Ontario's Conservative government were relatively quiet. Many people felt reassured by Doug Ford's election promises that no front line jobs would be eliminated and that funding cuts would be achieved through efficiencies, not cuts to services.

Slowly the true nature of this government has emerged. Ford cut \$1 per hour from the pay raise of minimum wage earners. He responded to GM's plans to cut thousands of jobs with nothing but words. He is trying to turn back the clock on equity. He has made shocking moves to centralize power.

The attack on public education is a bombshell! Ford plans to cut thousands of teachers across Ontario—these are obviously front line positions. And, he plans to significantly increase class sizes—a major cut, NOT an efficiency. This attack signals what Ford is planning for health care and all public services.

GOOD NEWS:

When he's under major pressure Ford has backed down—more than once.

Doug Ford has backed down on development in the Greenbelt, Francophone services and even aspects of sex-ed. Public outrage stopped Ron Taverner from being appointed OPP Commissioner. Parents of autistic children forced a change in attitude.

Lesson from the Harris era: It is possible to wage successful campaigns against a majority government!

In the 1990s, the Harris Conservatives set out to slash public education and health care, cut benefits to people living in poverty, privatize Ontario Hydro and the LCBO and drive the labour movement off the playing field. With the notable exception of their attack on people in poverty the Conservatives fell short of their objectives. We owe this success to decisive on-the-ground campaigns on many issues throughout the Harris era, and to the Days of Action which shut down 11 Ontario cities.

The Conservatives are extremely vulnerable on the most important issue of our time—the environmental crisis.

Ford and his MPPs should be vigorously challenged on this issue wherever they show their faces. The global uprising of youth in defense of the planet will make itself felt in a big way here in Ontario.

LET'S MOUNT A POWERFUL MOVEMENT TO DEFEAT CONSERVATIVE ATTACKS



Even if you are ***sick*** of politics, pay attention  to what's happening at Queen's Park!

Doug Ford claimed he's a "friend of the little guy". Then he cut \$1 per hour from minimum wage earners. And "buck a beer" was just a gimmick.



The Conservatives promised not to eliminate "front line" jobs or cut public services. Now they're slashing thousands of teaching positions and increasing class size!

Their idea of "efficiencies" in education tells us what's coming in health care.

Step 1

Reflect on the threat and consider our strategic options.

- Come to terms with the extreme danger this government poses—it is already doing major harm.
- Engage everyone in the discussion: leaders, stewards, activists, staff, retirees and members.
- Face the fact that a "right-to-work" attack is *possible* and prepare for it by vigorously fighting *known* attacks now.
- Adopt a resistance strategy that builds hope and power with doable actions that fit our current capacity.

Step 2

Make a personal commitment.

- Some of us are union veterans, others are new to conflict on this scale.
- Together we must protect the gains of previous generations and the unions they have left in our hands.
- Face the challenge:
 - Am I ready to do the tough work of talking with members in the workplace about what's coming over the hill at us?
 - Am I ready to join campaign actions, including actions which are not directly connected to my immediate interests? This is what it takes to build a strong movement which can protect us all.



Step 3

Work to engage your union at all levels.

- Our unions' political activists alone cannot defeat this government's agenda.
- What can you do to fully engage the power and resources of your union? Are regional and local leaders, stewards, staff and members involved, or just the activists?
- Reduce time spent on day-to-day union tasks—so that this campaign is a top priority of everyone who cares about the union's future.
- Engage the Local Executive Board or similar body in planning an internal campaign.
- Be ready to patiently overcome denial.

Step 4

Take the campaign into the workplace. Engage members.

- It was the internal member-to-member campaign which defeated “right-to-work” in 2014.
- Start by discussing the campaign with members who are already alert to the issues.
- Overcome barriers that may have excluded some members from participation in the past. Look for diverse new leaders and activists.
- Get campaign materials from your union, Labour Council and/or the OFL.
- Give campaign issues a high profile on websites, in union communications and at all membership meetings, training sessions and conferences.
- Encourage members to participate in campaign actions with you.

Step 5

Strengthen ties with community coalitions.

- Our workplace campaign is one-on-one with members. Our public campaign is focused on our ongoing organizing with community allies to advance our equity agenda, fight poverty and racism, demand good jobs, protect public services and protect the environment.
- Lay the groundwork to ensure defeat of the Conservative government.
- Join the Rapid Response Networks which will be an important part of the campaign.
- **Together we can create a better world for the next generation.**



ACTION NOW!

While working through the steps in this Guide, make **ACTION** part of your process. We cannot protect our public services, our jobs and our unions without action on the ground. Visit labourcouncil.ca, your union's website and powerofmany.ca for details of campaign actions in your area!

We cannot afford to wait for the next election—our resistance movement has important tasks NOW

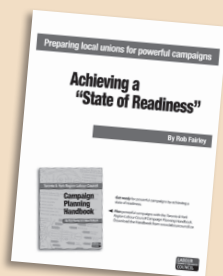
A **resistance strategy** fits our current situation because we do not yet have the power or the opportunity to defeat the Ford government. It builds hope by affirming that the modest actions which we are capable of mounting are important. It encourages people to participate and builds power incrementally. It constantly seeks openings for bolder tactics and larger actions.

A resistance strategy can achieve important goals *before* the next election. Together we can:

- Establish through action that the policies of the Conservative government are strongly opposed by much of the population.
- Discredit the government by relentlessly exposing the damage it is causing and by challenging its false messages.
- Turn public opinion into people power directed at local MPPs.
- Defeat the government's efforts to create a new normal in which cuts are entrenched, equity is driven back and unions are seriously weakened.
- Wage campaigns which convince the government that it must back off on its plans or face certain defeat.
- Strengthen our unions and social movements so that over time we can build a better future.

Campaign Planning

Lessons of successful campaigns are summarized in booklets available at labourcouncil.ca: *Achieving a State of Readiness* and *Campaign Planning Handbook*.



Immediate challenges within our unions:

- Overcome denial about the seriousness of the attack. Overcome the belief that our “silos” are safe places to hide.
- Remind members that the Conservatives have a history of union-busting. We cannot rule out another so-called right-to-work attack.
- Devote adequate attention and resources to the campaign.
- Engage members one-on-one in a well-organized workplace campaign.
- Affirm the importance of joining fightback actions—no matter how small. With community allies, build toward larger more powerful actions.

We know how to do this! In 2014, the intensive member-to-member campaign defeated the Conservatives' effort to impose “right-to-work” legislation. We forced Hudak to ditch that campaign plank weeks before election day!



THE POLITICS OF HATE

There is another urgent reason to fight the Ford Conservatives.

Conservative movements and parties are providing a breeding ground for racist extremists around the world. We ignore this threat at our peril. Extremist groups are out to build a working class base—including union members. When progressive organizations fail to give voice to workers' grievances, right-wing populists use racism to turn their anger against other workers instead of the wealthy 1%. They want to destroy progressive organizations of all kinds—including labour unions.

Contact the campaign

For details of campaign actions in your area and to download campaign materials, visit labourcouncil.ca, your union's website and powerofmany.ca

