

Lesson plan for fighting Ford

By Nora Gallagher



With *L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens* (AEFO), Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), Ontario School Board Council of Unions (CUPE-OSBCU), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO), and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU/SEFPO) all bargaining with the Ford government at the same time, there is a huge opportunity

to win the kind of public education that students in Ontario deserve.

255,000 education workers are a force that can stop the Ford government's defunding agenda, but to do so we have to think strategically.

Here is a four-point lesson plan for fighting Ford.

1) Solidarity is key

The joint notice to bargain and the collaboration that started a few

months back is a huge step forward from previous rounds of bargaining. The lawn signs featuring all the union logos and the joint canvassing that has taken place all over the province this summer are exactly the type of activity we need.

Past governments have tried to bargain with education unions in isolation to divide them and have them working against each other. The antidote to that is solidarity and as much collaboration as possible.

The common goals of smaller class sizes and demand for classroom complexity and composition will be important for maintaining that unity.

2) Bargain for the common good

Similarly, the demands for smaller class sizes and improvements to special education funding directly make the connection between student learning conditions and educator working conditions. It will be essential to forge links between education workers and the communities they serve. Good jobs, clean and safe schools, open libraries, fully funded special education and guidance services, physical and arts education are things that benefit everyone.

With Ford's popularity at an all-time low, the possibility to unite the public around protecting quality education is high. Making connections with parent councils and community groups like the

Ontario Education Coalition will be important.

3) Unity is built from the bottom up

While the stated unity from union leaders is a welcome development, that unity is not guaranteed. To maintain that unity, we need active and organized rank-and-file education workers. There will be many opportunities to involve coworkers in bargaining updates, solidarity actions, canvassing the public, calling their MPPs, and even rallies and protests. We have to be activists at our work sites, looking for ways to involve the uninvolved and finding ways to coordinate with other bargaining units at our work sites.

By forging unity in practice, we can develop the confidence and connectedness to force our union leaders to maintain their unity in the face of Ford's divisive tactics.

4) Expect the unexpected

We have to be prepared for unexpected turns in the bargaining process. We have already seen the government delaying the start of bargaining by insisting on bringing local items to the provincial table. This may pause our momentum, but also could give us more time to prepare.

We have to be ready to answer tough questions; what do we do if one union settles before others? What will we do if another union in our building goes on strike before us? How can we build solidarity between different locals? Can we organize support for parents struggling with childcare during a strike? What if our leadership tries to get us to accept an unsatisfactory deal? Thinking through these problems before it is too late will have us better poised to win the kind of education system we need. ★



Paint the province purple! Lessons from the 2022 Education workers strike

By Peter Hogarth



In November 2022, Ontario workers delivered a spectacular blow to Doug Ford's government.

As Ontario's 55,000 education workers prepared to go on strike, then-Education Minister Stephen Lecce introduced Bill 28, the so-called *Keeping Students in Class Act*.

Besides imposing a concessionary contract on the lowest-paid workers in Ontario's education system, it stripped them of their right to strike and invoked Section 33 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (the notwithstanding clause) to prevent

any challenge to the bill, to criminalize all strike activity, and to override rights protected in Ontario's *Labour Relations Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*.

But just four days later on November 7, Ford appeared in a hastily-called press conference to announce Bill 28's full repeal.

Ford claimed it was a good-faith gesture to kick-start negotiations with Ontario's 55,000 education workers, who had entered their second day of an "illegal" strike, but his actions the previous week painted a very different picture:

that of a government hell-bent on stripping workers of their right to strike and free collective bargaining, all on the pretext of keeping students in class.

The reality is that Ford and his government were spooked by the rapid (and unexpected) escalation of Ontario's unions in response to Bill 28, which included a plan to launch an indefinite general strike a week later on November 14.

Ford's stunning reversal wiped out his government's ambitions to legislate away workers' rights in the province. So what led to all this?

Education workers

Above everything else, education workers themselves deserve the bulk of the credit for leading Ontario's labour movement to this victory and, in the process, setting in motion its potential transformation. Represented by CUPE's Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU), education workers set the stage for the confrontation months before they even had a strike vote.

Their systematic approach using member-to-member engagement to organize and mobilize their members produced a record-breaking strike mandate vote in early October 2022: 96.5% in favour with an 83% turnout.

Outside the union, Justice for Workers (J4W) launched an impressive solidarity campaign, including numerous calls to "paint the province purple," which created opportunities for union and non-union workers alike to build support for education workers in their workplaces and communities.

In the same spirit, the Ontario Parent Action Network (OPAN) began to organize supportive parents and pushed back on then-Education Minister Stephen Lecce's attempts to pit students and their families against education workers.

These initiatives, coupled with the union's success in bargaining for the public good, produced a wave of support for education workers that swept the province. By the time they went on strike on November 4, the public was firmly in their corner.

Bill 28

But the fuse that lit the tinder-box of Ontario's labour movement was Ford and Lecce's introduction of Bill 28.

Special 5:00 am sessions were scheduled to force the bill through in record time. Tory Caucus members laughed, back-slapped each other, and mocked the Opposition throughout the proceedings. Their mouthpieces in the media predicted that parents would reward them for being so decisive.

Without a doubt, they thought they would face no opposition from labour. After all, the pundits said, Ford had managed to secure the backing of several unions during the June provincial election that took place five months earlier.

But they were dead wrong.

From backlash to escalation

The backlash was immediate. Within hours of Bill 28's introduction on October 31, the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) launched its "Hands Off Workers' Rights" campaign and called an emergency rally for the next day at the Ministry of Labour in downtown Toronto. Almost 4,000 people turned up, giving confidence to labour's most progressive leaders to push for an escalation. The rally marched to Queen's Park where thousands chanted for Ford and Lecce to resign.

The ONDP Caucus joined the rally and march, gave speeches at the Ministry and at Queen's Park (from the back of a pick-up truck), and fuelled protesters' demands. The next day, they called Ford a liar in

Question Period and, one by one, were kicked out of the Assembly.

Throughout the week, thousands joined online and in-person events to support education workers: almost 600 people participated in a Justice for Workers phone action; tens of thousands sent emails to Tory MPPs (over 75,000 on CUPE's "Don't Be a Bully" campaign alone); and hundreds of parents and students rallied outside a downtown Toronto hotel on the eve of the strike.

On Thursday, November 3, Ford's Bill 28 passed, although Ford was conspicuously absent for the vote.

A divided caucus

From the moment of the Bill's introduction, reports were leaking from Queen's Park about a deep division in Ford's Caucus. One faction, led by Labour Minister Monte McNaughton, opposed Lecce's "nuclear option"—leading to heated confrontations between the two ministers in Caucus meetings.

McNaughton was under intense pressure from the unions he had courted in the lead-up to the election, all of which called and emailed him to denounce Bill 28's attack on the right to strike.

Despite Ford and Lecce's attempt to intimidate and threaten education workers, their walk-out on Friday, November 4 was massive: 126 active picket lines, including over 10,000 people at Queen's Park and tens of thousands in dozens of communities across the province. Parents, students, teachers, and other trade unionists flooded the lines throughout the day.

OPSEU—the largest public sector union in Ontario—sent a letter to

its 8,000 members in the education sector, encouraging them to walk off the job and join CUPE's pickets: "Your union will have your back. You will not have to pay any fines. And you will have the full force of [the union] behind you should your employer attempt to enact any discipline."

Thousands of OPSEU members wildcatted in support of CUPE Education workers. This action by OPSEU members led to the closure of schools that initially tried to stay open despite the strike.

General strike

The groundswell of support was growing rapidly, both among the wider public and within Ontario's unions, where rank-and-file members were calling on their leaders to join the strike. The pressure was so intense that the OFL Executive Board (its main decision-making body) held an emergency meeting on Saturday, November 5 where it voted unanimously to call a mass protest at Queen's Park on November 12 and to launch an indefinite general strike on November 14.

In the 48 hours that followed that decision, Ontario was hurtling towards the biggest labour protests since the Days of Action under the Mike Harris regime in the 1990s.

These threats were real. Immediately after the vote, labour leaders rushed to "Solidarity Saturday" actions, including one at Sankofa Square (then named Yonge-Dundas Square) in downtown Toronto where

hundreds of protesters occupied the intersection.

CUPE Ontario's then-president Fred Hahn hinted at labour's escalation in his speech: "We were delayed in joining because we were meeting with other heads of unions."

#GeneralStrikeON was trending upwards all day.

Wildcats

On November 6, OFL affiliates, including the teachers' unions, began calling emergency meetings to discuss or vote on joining the strike.

Hundreds of CUPE staff representatives joined a conference call to prepare locals—in every sector of the union, not just school boards—to discuss the possibility of walk-outs on Monday, November 7. The leadership assured members that the union would protect them from any fines. Commitments to strike immediately came from large locals in the post-secondary and municipal sectors.

By noon, Unifor made public a letter it sent to Ford's office, hinting at wildcats by its own members in the auto sector to protest Bill 28: "We issue this notice that Unifor's Auto and Independent Parts Supplier Councils, in coordination with affiliate local unions, will be exploring all options in

the coming days to respond to these actions. We stand in solidarity with CUPE members."

Beyond Ontario's unions, the wider public was preparing to join the lines on November 7, including non-union workers who were planning their own workplace walk-outs. The Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario



More will come on that, friends, but let me tell you this, a sneak peek: yesterday was the beginning. It is not the end."

Hours later, a strike planning committee met to organize actions over the next two weeks. Word of the vote was already leaking on Twitter and Reddit and

was issuing calls to its locals to join the lines.

Support was also building outside the province: at its representatives' assembly, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation voted to donate \$1 million to the education workers' strike.

Things were moving incredibly fast, with major developments coming every hour.

Growing resistance

In the early afternoon on November 6, CUPE National issued an advisory for a press conference on November 7 at 10:00 am where national and provincial labour leaders would discuss "the growing fightback against the Ford government's Bill 28." Later that day, Abacus released the findings of its Ontario-wide poll about the strike: half of respondents supported more unions joining the picket lines, and 71% wanted Ford to change his approach and give education workers a fair deal.

By evening, the *Toronto Star* was the first mainstream publication to break the news about labour's plans to escalate, including launching a province-wide general strike on November 14. The *Star* repeated its general strike reporting early on Monday, November 7.

On Monday morning, CUPE's lines were even bigger than Friday's. Spirits were high and members could feel the momentum. Everyone was waiting for labour's 10:00 am announcement.

It felt like a tsunami was building. The only question was when it would break.

Curve-ball

The first sign of a curve-ball came around 7:30 am when Ford's office

announced he would speak at 9:00 am—one hour before labour's presser.

Word was leaking from Queen's Park that Ford was going to announce the repeal of Bill 28. Rumours were flying in the lobby and hospitality suites of the Sheraton Toronto Centre Hotel, where hundreds of labour leaders and staffers were camped out for negotiations the previous week. Labour leaders from across the country were arriving for labour's big announcement at 10:00 am, now postponed till 11:00 am.

By the time Ford spoke, it was clear he had been disciplined. He spoke slowly and deliberately. His tone was conciliatory, despite taking cheap shots at CUPE and education workers. He said Bill 28 would be repealed, but only if education workers called off their strike.

Ford's defeat

At first, the magnitude of Ford's defeat was not obvious. Many were anxious to announce the escalation and turn their attention to building it. But as Ford's announcement began to sink in, and as education workers started celebrating on the lines (and online), the scale of labour's success came into view.

What happened between Ford's announcement and labour's press conference nearly two hours later requires an article all its own. Suffice it to say that many labour leaders were no longer confident their members could sustain what was about to be set in motion now that Bill 28 was effectively dead (or would be dead soon enough).

Bill 28 turned out to be a gift from Ford: an existential threat that helped unite the leadership of Ontario's unions and stiffen their

resolve to take dramatic action. But with the bill gone, the sense of urgency among some leaders started to fade.

The debate within CUPE was whether to keep the lines up or take them down in response to Ford's announcement—a debate that continued among their members (and in the wider movement) despite the decision to collapse the pickets and return to work the next day.

While this was a difficult decision, it was ultimately a tactical mistake: workers should not give up their leverage with this government, or any government or employer, until a deal is in hand. And the leverage that all Ontario workers held at that moment was truly unprecedented.

As this debate continued, there were many "what if" questions, but whatever disappointment we felt (about what might have happened or could have been) could not overshadow the huge victory that education workers made possible. It was a massive defeat for Ford, and one we should not soon forget, especially as education workers and teachers are heading towards another potential strike.

Once CUPE made its decision to take down the lines, labour's media conference finally got underway. The hotel ballroom where it took place, and the corridor leading to it, was packed with media and labour leaders and staff. As then-president of the OSBCU Laura Walton made her way to the ballroom, huge cheers went up and the crowd started singing "Solidarity Forever" and applauding wildly.

Solidarity

Nearly 30 national and provincial labour leaders joined Walton and

CUPE National president Mark Hancock on stage, an impressive display of solidarity of public and private sector unions (including those currently outside the house of labour). The leaders who spoke noted the historic and unprecedented nature of Bill 28's defeat at the hands of Ontario workers, as well as the urgency of "standing by, not standing down" to get a good deal for education workers.

Walton paid tribute to her members, acknowledging all of them as leaders, and made clear they would not hesitate to return to the lines if necessary.

The most militant allies on the platform were Unifor's Lana Payne and OPSEU's JP Hornick: both emphasized the power of Ontario's labour movement and the need for more united action, including province-wide strikes, to win other looming and ongoing fights.

"When you come for one of us, you come for all of us," said Hornick in their remarks. "The Ford government may not know what it started, but I know that, as trade unionists, we will finish it. I know that workers united will shut this province down whenever we need to."

Their words resonated deeply in the room, and on the picket lines and in the wider movements outside it.

Later that day, the Ministry returned to the bargaining table and negotiations with OSBCU resumed. Fourteen solidarity actions were planned at Tory MPP offices for November 12 demanding a fair deal for education workers.

In the wake of Ford's defeat, a battle of interpretation was underway about what happened,

how workers won, what could have been different, and what should happen next.

Without a doubt, trade unionists across the country were energized about this victory and already discussing what they could do to replicate it. The momentum held the potential to build labour's power everywhere.

Lessons from the struggle

For socialists, rank-and-file activists, and decent work campaigners, there are some lessons to generalize even four years later. Here are five to consider.

First, rank-and-file activity matters more than anything else. What education workers did themselves—in their workplaces and at the local level months and years ahead of time—laid a solid foundation for a powerful strike. It also prepared them well in advance for the difficult scenarios that would eventually emerge, especially defying legislation and engaging in "illegal" political protest.

This approach produced an army of organizers and leaders who helped generate support for the union's demands both inside and outside the union—especially with rank-and-file members of other unions who, in turn, created massive upward pressure on their own leaders to act. It also created a culture of democracy, accountability, and transparency throughout the OSBCU.

The question of leadership at the union-wide level is, without a doubt, important, but even the best leaders need a strong base to back them and insulate them from external or right-wing pressures.

An engaged and mobilized base becomes even more urgent when labour leaders are reluctant to act or oppose escalation; indeed, the near unanimity of Ontario's labour leadership about calling a general strike speaks to the pressure that education workers generated in the wider public and that their own members generated from below.

Second, the kind of solidarity we build must be easy, visible, and everywhere. If we want a strike (or any struggle) to win, or a general strike to happen, we can't sit back and simply wait. We have to build solidarity actively, and understand the purpose of it: to build the confidence of other workers to take action themselves.

That's why our solidarity actions have to be easy to participate in (we want lots of people to join us); why they need to be highly visible (so people can find out about them and get a sense of the momentum; we also want the visibility to demoralize and demobilize our opponents); and why they need to be everywhere in the province (anyone can take action no matter where they live in Ontario, and regardless of whether they're part of a union or community group).

The appetite for solidarity exists in every community, but it needs to be organized and made visible. That should be our central task. This helps explain the fantastic success of the Justice for Workers "paint the province purple" campaign, which got underway the day after the OSBCU's strike mandate vote results were announced and continued right through the strike, the repeal of Bill 28, and negotiations. People anywhere could join in—and they did.



World on fire:

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Third, we don't have to wait for an election to take on Ford or to defeat him. A section of the labour leadership pins their hopes for change on getting the ONDP elected, and ends up focusing most of their time and attention on that task—to the exclusion of building a fight-back in between elections.

This victory shows that we can win big and impose defeats on Ford (or on any government) long before an election happens. This one came just five months after Ford's re-election on June 2, 2022 and exposed the deep contradictions of that election result: record-low voter turnout coupled with

simmering anger at Ford and his policies.

When the labour movement seriously mobilizes well in advance of an election, the work it does on the ground with its own members and the wider public has the long-term effect of shaping the terms of debate by the time an election rolls around—including pushing the NDP to adopt what workers are demanding—and better positions us to win them.

Fourth, the path to a general strike is shorter than we think. Even in some corners of the left, where the demand for a general strike has become a routine thing (although

often abstract), there is sometimes the sense that months or even years of preparation are required before it could be called.

But the rapid escalation that took place from Bill 28's introduction on Monday, October 31 to its defeat just one week later on Monday, November, 7 shows that labour is actually capable of harnessing its resources and energy on extremely short notice. In this case, it had no choice: the pressure from education workers, rank-and-file members in other unions, and the wider public pushed the leadership into action. The existential threat of Bill 28 tipped the balance.

Even what was set in motion from the moment the labour leadership voted on November 5, 2022 for a general strike to Ford's announcement 48 hours later to repeal Bill 28 was impressive: the threat was a real one and labour was pulling out all the stops to execute it.

The point here is not that we should be calling for a general strike all the time, regardless of the circumstances.

In this case, the conditions were ripe for it: a well organized strike, plus massive public support built weeks before the strike, coupled with wider class anger and a willingness from rank-and-file members in other unions to take militant action.

This fall, more than 255,000 teachers and education workers will see their contracts expire.

On June 3, every education-sector union filed notice to bargain in a joint news conference. These unions include: L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO),

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), Ontario School Board Council of Unions (CUPE-OSBCU), and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO).

The question now, as we prepare for the coming fight is this: **What can we do now, to prepare the ground for the possibility of a strike in the education sector involving more than a quarter of a million workers?** What conversations need to take place now to build the solidarity necessary for education workers to win?

What can union and non-union workers do now and in the weeks ahead to build working-class solidarity for education workers? How can we prepare education workers for the possibility of strikes, and the potential for defying anti-strike legislation? What steps will organized labour prepare for solidarity strikes? And what can we do to support communities that will be affected by strikes across the education sector?

Make no mistake. A win for education workers would be a huge win for students, as well as for teachers and education staff.

But it would also be a win for the rest of us, putting this government on the back foot and building the confidence of the rest of us to keep fighting for better wages and better services.

If you are reading this article, ask yourself this: What can you do now

to build support for education workers and lay the basis for the possibility of a general strike to win, not just on the education front, but also for better wages, health care, child care, public transit, and so much more.

In November 2022, just five months after an election with the lowest voter turn-out in Ontario's history, we got a glimpse of a mass movement ready to take off.

Workers who were angry at Ford in the lead-up to the election had so little faith in the system they declined to vote. But their anger hadn't gone anywhere. And when education workers showed they were prepared to fight seriously, solidarity poured in from everywhere.

For a few days that November, it appeared as if that anger was going to find its way to supporting education workers and possibly a general strike. When workers have

a place to express their anger, they're more than willing to act.

The 2022 strike by education workers showed what's possible: 2026 could see a repeat of 2022. But with all education workers standing together, our side has more unity, more clarity, and more preparation time. Our job is to deepen that solidarity among *all* rank-and-file workers, and prepare for action.

Cost-of-living crisis

The cost-of-living and housing crises are more acute today than in 2022. We need to raise working-class demands that challenge the priorities of Big Business, the banks, the chambers of commerce, and their backers like Ford and his government. Four years after the last one, there is real potential to build another mass movement that could escalate to defeat Ford and his agenda, once and for all. ★

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Militarism will not bring prosperity

By David Arruda



Mark Carney has risen in popularity by taking on the role of Canada's white knight: the one who protects Canada from the US threat.

This has afforded him the leverage to increase military spending drastically. Wrapped in an anti-Trump narrative, Carney is looking to stimulate an economy

negatively affected by tariffs and the fallout from the war with Iran through military spending. Not only will this not provide the protection that Canadians pine for, but it will also fail to buoy the Canadian economy.

Carney is an establishment figure who represents elite institutions and central banks, so it is no surprise that he has put forward

strategies used in the United Kingdom and France.

Military spending

This is clear with his prioritization of military spending.

In 2024, both the United Kingdom and France increased their military budgets by 2.8% and 6.1%, respectively.



This equated to just over 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP): 2.3% for the British and 2.1% for the French. Similar numbers were observed among the other leaders in military spending, with Saudi Arabia and India increasing budgets by the smallest margins, just shy of 2%, and Israel increasing its military budget by 65%. This trend has only increased as of 2026. For the British, the total military budget is now 2.5% of GDP, around \$85 billion. Macron's government increased its military expenditure to reach 2.2% of GDP, for a total of \$69.5 billion.

In both cases, this equates to approximately 5% increase compared to the prior year. Carney has more aspirations, as Canada's military spending was lower than both countries and is now set to 5% of GDP in the coming years.

The excuses for this increased expenditure vary across the political spectrum: from being the result of global tensions to the positive effect that defence spending has on technological innovation.

Obviously, these factors play a role. Yet, these arguments dilute the positive effect that increased military spending has on the economy and the survival of capitalism.

Military spending and growth

Military strength is fundamental to the growth of capitalism. It is easier to understand how, in the earlier stages of capitalism, this was a primary tool for accumulation.

Yet this also applies to navigating crises by stinting the falling rate of profit.

Chris Harman explained how increased military spending affected several national economies in the aftermath of WWII.

In essence, the state can take over the use of surplus value and invest it in military expenditures, primarily arms production. The Canadian Global Affairs Institute explained that every dollar spent on defence multiplied capital expenditures twice over. This benefits both the state and capitalists by allowing operations to continue without interruption while injecting funds into the national economy.

Mariana Mazzucato provides a worthwhile example of what Chris Harman explains: public spending, such as research and development, results in touchscreen technology and the development of global positioning technology, used for GPS.

These derivatives are sold at a profit by companies like Apple. This has proliferated further with financial capital. Now, simple speculation can help the economy by boosting the stock market and improving stock valuations, resulting from positive speculation driven by capital expenditure.

As further crises have arisen, many nations have prioritized financial capital. This has resulted in a greater reliance on direct transfers to private military companies.

Although this problem is not isolated to military expenditures,

it creates our current scenario where companies and their shareholders are benefiting from taxpayers, without direct benefit to the working class.

This is the key distinction that leaders today either do not acknowledge or choose not to. Defence spending was greater in the post-war years, as a percentage of GDP, yet this was also the same time when those same nations increased spending on the tentpoles of the social safety net.

This is no longer the case. Although social spending is higher now, it is either stagnant or in decline. Where it could once be said that military spending was increasing in line with other programs, the current moment is one in which governments look to the International Monetary Fund

(IMF) model: restructure debt by offering to offset increased military spending through cuts to the social safety net.

Oh, Canada, we stand on guard for thee

When it came time to announce his first budget in November 2025, the key takeaways were that the federal government would increase the military budget to 2% of GDP, with an increase to \$81.8 Billion within five years.

This does not include the plan to increase the budget to 5% of GDP by 2035. In the months following the announcement, Carney has been quick to announce several strategic priorities, stemming from the budget document Canada: Build Strong.



These priorities include allocating \$30 Billion to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), creating the Defence Investment Agency, and investing in the Defence Industrial Strategy (DIS). Carney's plan is edified in thinking framed by a bygone era.

The issues with this plan are both economic and political. First, the government's objective is to increase its fighting capacity by increasing its paid military personnel by 15,000 and its reserve forces to 100,000. Included is the hope of adding 300,000 volunteers.

At the time of writing, the CAF has 68,000 active personnel and 27,500 reserves, with no sign of a large swath of recruits. The lack of recruiting has led to talks of implementing a volunteer brigade to improve these numbers. Considering so many funds were allocated to the CAF, it seems odd to rely so heavily on volunteers.

Relying on citizens to partake in defence can be dependable; Cuba provides an important example. However, this does not require greater investment in military spending—certainly not with the ambition Carney has displayed. Rather, Cuba's military budget has remained stagnant, approximately 2.9% of GDP, since 2017, despite increased US economic aggression since Trump's first term.

Second, the \$82 Billion allocated to the military will not improve the situation for working-class Canadians. Even in cases where it could be argued that funds will circulate into the economy, like the \$40 Billion allocated to expanding

northern defence capabilities, this will be offset by cutting 40,000 federal jobs, along with all the jobs lost due to additional consequences.

There is also no guarantee that these jobs will benefit Canadian workers. Moreover, Canada's present arms manufacturing capabilities rely heavily on the US. This is evident in the recent contract with Colt Canada. Over the next three years, this is supposed to cost \$307 million in contracts.



However, this can all be undone by US interference, given that Colt Canada relies on American licenses. It seems that if the objective is to move away from the United States and stimulate the economy, why not focus on industries that are less dependent on the US?

There will undoubtedly be some benefits from this allocation of funds, but Canadian workers will not see these benefits. Carney's budget demonstrated a focus on private investment.

This priority is emphasized in the military strategy as well. With this, financial capital is the primary focus. This will infect the economy

more generally, but in ways that advantage those with diversified stock portfolios rather than those who rely primarily on their income to get by.

This is evidenced by Colt Canada's stock performance as of March 17, 2026, which rose by approximately \$9 per share the day after the announcement. AI offers another premium example.

Both the November budget and Carney's military spending priorities focus heavily on

“modernization”, which means a greater reliance on AI to provide general services. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives reported on the nexus between data centres and US military bases.

This might be a troubling thought to most, yet Carney's plan shows that his only objection is that

the data centres be Canadian military bases. Military economies do not trickle down in the ways that Carney is promoting.

This is not the same model that William Lyon Mackenzie King inherited following WWII. That was only possible because of the global impact of that war, shaking capitalism out of the crisis that led to the Great Depression.

Without a war of that magnitude, this is likely to fail, leaving people in the unenviable position of relying on a cataclysmic war to keep capitalism moving. An anti-war option is necessary and possible to avoid this deterioration. ★

On August 29, fight Ford and fight for public education

By Larry Allen



Monthly anti-Ford protest rallies across Ontario have been ongoing since February 2026.

The province-wide actions, originally started after Ford changed freedom of information laws to protect his phone records, have rallied outside MPP offices and in public squares decrying the Ford government's corruption, cuts to OSAP and public services, shady business deals and lack of transparency.

This month, organizers are coordinating to focus the protests to align with the education workers' fight for public education.

Fight for education is key battle against Ford

Under the banner of "Fight for Education," the Fight Ford province wide protests are aligning with the Ontario Education Coalition for a coordinated day of action on Saturday, August 29 with 49 local rallies already organized.

The Ontario Education Coalition is aiming to build itself into a province-wide network of educators, parents and community members, working together to strengthen public education.

Led by parents of kids with additional needs who came together around Ontario Parents for Education Support, a Facebook group with 3.4K members focused on fighting educational support staff cuts, Ontario Education Coalition was formed in consultation with other parent activists and public education support groups.

They are in close contact with teacher and education worker unions, and are trying to coordinate with them as best as possible.

ETFO, OECTA, OSSTF and OSBCU have all endorsed the protests and are encouraging their members to participate on August 29. This is a great development in the fight against Ford, focusing resistance to Ford on the fight for quality public education and support for education workers.

On June 15, 2026, Ontario's education unions began bargaining. L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), Ontario School Board Council of Unions (CUPE-OSBCU), the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO), and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU/SEFPO) represent 255,000 workers across school boards in Ontario and a potentially huge challenge to the Doug Ford privatization and underfunding regime.

Bargaining has stalled due to the government and the Council of Ontario Directors of Education's (CODE) continued efforts to move issues and bargaining authority to the provincial level instead of the local level. The outstanding items for ETFO and OSBCU in dispute are being referred to the Ontario Labour Relations Board for arbitration to determine which items will be negotiated provincially and which will be negotiated centrally. This delay means two things. First, more time for education workers to continue to reach out to the public (and other workers) and inform them of

the issues and inoculate them against Ford's anti-worker propaganda. Second, it could potentially slow the momentum and take down the temperature as unions planned to mobilize members for big strike votes early in the new school year.

Building unity through action

In this context, an August 29 Day of Action to Fight for Education will be extremely important. The joint notice to bargain and the collaboration that started a few

RENT TOO HIGH?

BLAME LANDLORDS NOT IMMIGRANTS

- There are over 65,000 vacant apartments in Toronto that no one can afford to live in.
- New housing construction exceeded new population for over ten years – and rents still went up.
- Doug Ford keeps rolling back rent control so that corporate landlords can keep rents high.

- Don't let them distract you with racism -

months back is a huge step forward from previous rounds of bargaining. We have also seen union members across the province take time in the summer to jointly canvas communities to build workers' confidence, while informing the public of the issues at stake.

We might not be exactly where we want to be, but the unity and political activity that we've seen so far inside and outside the unions is far ahead of where the education sector was last time. However, this unity is not guaranteed to continue and it will take pressure from union members and community members alike to maintain it in the face of Ford's divisive tactics.

Ford is currently polling at his lowest numbers ever. His accumulated baggage of scandals, the weak economy, and crumbling public services are contributing to his sagging popularity.

However, we've seen this before: despite fluctuating (and sometimes quite low) approval ratings, he has survived to win three majority governments.

Seize the opportunity to defeat Ford

We need to solidify existing anti-Ford sentiment. Education is a weak point for Ford and his government, and is a potential place where he can be defeated.

Even Conservatives don't think they're doing a great job (for example, the recent editorial in the National Post decrying the province's handling of Special Education) and parents are upset about the very well-publicized job cuts.

There is a need and an opportunity to organize this sentiment.

Education workers should make it a priority to be out on August 29 wearing their red and purple and looking to sign up the public on pledge cards and clipboards to be ready to face a fractious Ford government and secure a deal that invests in education.

At the same time, let's make it clear to those that want to fight Ford that supporting education workers may be the key to defeating him once and for all.

For parents and community members that want to join the fight for public education:

1. Join the [OEC WhatsApp](#)
2. [Sign up as a lead](#) for your community school
3. Brainstorm parents in your personal networks to talk to about the stakes of these bargaining campaigns and ask them to be school leads.
4. Use the regional channels to connect with others in your region who are already in OEC, and help them paint the province purple and red.
5. Generate inspiring activity within the regional channels (photos of poster, leaflet, etc.)
6. Help with phoning and follow up to school leads to help them build activity in their school community.

To find an action near you, visit www.protestdougford.com. ★

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Education workers can create political crisis for Doug Ford

By Larry Allen



As fires ravage North West Ontario and Canada's biggest city chokes under yellow skies and the worst air quality in the world, we are reminded of Doug Ford's agenda for Ontario.

In 2025, Ford's Conservative government decreased the province's budget for emergency forest firefighting from \$177 million to \$135 million, with \$4 million cut from emergency preparedness. This is the same plan he has for

healthcare and education, where investment has poured into private options and spending has not kept pace with inflation.

His government is undemocratic, corrupt and the only way to stop it is with the collective mass action of Ontario's working class.

Mass collective action has the potential to cut against the divide and rule politics dominate right now.

How can we defeat Ford?

The opportunity to do that is right here and now. 255,000 education workers across the province have contracts expiring and begun collective bargaining with the province. That is an incredible potential force that can challenge Ford's plan for Ontario and make the case for robust spending into the kind of public services that Ontario deserves.



A movement of united education workers can stand up to Ford and change the political terrain in the province, including for OPSEU public service workers who have been on strike for more than 8 weeks, holding out for more funding from the provincial government. In 2022, 55,000 education workers represented by CUPE's took illegal strike action that shook the province.

CUPE members engaged in a systematic process of member-to-member organizing that produced a strike vote with 96.5 percent in favour and an 83 percent turnout. Activists in the community adopted worked to build solidarity in the run-up to the strike. Across the province, people were adopting local schools and covering the area with posters of support and purple ribbons to show their support for the education workers. Parents used pick up and drop off to sign up others to pledge their support. These initiatives, coupled with the

union's success in bargaining for the public good, produced a wave of support for education workers that swept the province.

So when the Ford government declared their strike action illegal with the emergency passage of Bill 28, CUPE workers had the confidence to go out anyway. They received solidarity from OPSEU, the largest public sector union in Ontario, who sent a letter to its 8,000 members in the education sector, encouraging them to walk off the job and join CUPE's pickets. OPSEU's move led to the closure of schools that initially tried to stay open despite the strike.

This groundswell of support against an extremely harsh and repressive law, brought the whole labour movement into a near general strike, forcing Doug Ford to back down completely. This new political terrain led to swift and favourable settlements with the CUPE and the other education worker unions.

Education workers can lead the fight

What do these lessons mean for us right now? First of all, they mean that Ford can be challenged outside of an election and united labour action can win. It means that if the education workers unions can work in solidarity, great things are possible for the workers, the education system and the province.

The unions have so far signalled that they are united. They have been holding joint press conferences, holding coordinated public outreach and distributing lawn signs that bear all of their symbols. L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO), Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA), Ontario School Board Council of Unions (CUPE-OSBCU), and Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF/FEESO) have

united around the demands of “smaller class sizes” and “adequate funding for special education needs.”

These get at the heart of the underfunding of education in the province and connect educator working conditions with student learning conditions. More adults in the building improves the quality of education. It is expensive, but there is no shortcut to a good education system. Ontario is a rich province

and should invest in this crucial public service.

The fact is, educators in Ontario are being asked to do more with less. The 2026-2027 budget features a \$56.2 million cut to the Classroom Staffing Fund. The fund supports the majority of in-classroom staffing costs and includes educators such as teachers, Early Childhood Educators, and Educational Assistants. Combined with the shameful 0.1% increase to

Special Education funding, the cut to the Classroom Staffing Fund will put school boards in ever tougher situations as they try to meet student needs in their communities.

These cuts are part of a broader pattern of underfunding by the province: since 2018, the Ontario government has cut \$6.35 billion in education funding when adjusted for inflation and enrollment.



Ford is vulnerable on Education

2022 showed us that community solidarity is important. For education workers to win they need to turn this into a political crisis for the Ford government. Ford is currently polling at his lowest numbers ever. His accumulated baggage of scandals, the weak economy, and crumbling public services are contributing to his sagging popularity.

However, we've seen this before: despite fluctuating (and sometimes quite low) approval ratings, he has survived to win three majority governments. We need to solidify existing anti-Ford sentiment. Education is a weak point for Ford and his government, and is a potential place where he can be defeated.

Even Conservatives don't think they're doing a great job (for example, the recent editorial in the National Post decrying the province's handling of Special Education) and parents are upset about the very well-publicized job cuts.

There is a need and an opportunity to organize this sentiment.

It will be crucial for education workers and activists to use the months ahead to build public awareness of their fight

for better education. A successful strike against the Ford government will require community support; parents organized to care for children out of school, support picket lines, and pressure their MPPs for a quick settlement. ★



I donate to Spring Magazine because it keeps me connected to—and inspired by—workers' struggles and wins.

As a trade unionist and educator, I know how important it is to see the way local labour struggles intersect with larger systemic issues. Grassroots journalism helps amplify these crucial connections.

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— **Liz So**

Secretary-Treasurer, Elementary Teachers of Toronto



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