



January 31, 2020

SUPPORT ONTARIO'S TEACHERS IN TAKING ON THE FORD GOVERNMENT

Teachers in Ontario are taking job action in an effort to negotiate back conditions that the Ford Conservative government cut by legislation.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) has been on a work-to-rule campaign and is using an escalating series of rotating strikes. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation has withdrawn some services and has begun one-day walkouts. Ontario's English Catholic Education Teachers (OECTA) are planning their second province-wide strike for February 4, 2020. The Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO) started the second phase of their work-to-rule campaign this week. CUPE education workers reached an agreement with the provincial government last October. However, even though CUPE negotiated funding for the restoration of jobs and services, they have seen little to no progress on implementation.

The Ford Conservatives changed class sizes, forced online learning onto high school students, and legislated a public-sector wage cap before entering negotiations with the teachers' unions. Teachers and other unions are challenging the public-sector wage cap in court, but are at the bargaining table in the meantime.

Teachers are demanding the government reverse its cuts, restore class sizes and drop the mandatory online learning. They are also demanding inflation-level wage increases, but the legislated cap is 1% – shrinking wages that the Ford Conservatives are trying to sell as an increase.

Most CUPW members are public-sector workers, and we can imagine our reaction if the government legislated a wage cap and other working conditions to set us back at the bargaining table before even getting started.

When rotating strike action became imminent, the province offered financial support to parents seeking childcare arrangements on the strike days. Many see this as a cynical move to buy parents' support, and it seems to have backfired. When teachers are standing up for our public education system, the high ground is not for sale.

Many Ontario parents are responding with resounding support for the teachers and condemnation of the government's tactics. Time and again, when a government is eroding the standard of public education, the teachers become the best advocates for their students.

Parents and public-service workers in other provinces have a lot at stake in this fight. Other premiers are watching.

There's hope that the government will come back to the bargaining table with a new awareness of how unpopular their measures have been. Your support for the teachers' unions can help.

CUPW condemns the Ford government's attempts to hold our children's future for ransom. Learn more and take action on etfo.ca, osstf.on.ca, <http://www.catholicteachers.ca>, and <https://aefo.on.ca/fr/english>.

In Solidarity,

Jan Simpson
National President

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