

# Enough is Enough: Applying the OFL's Action Plan in Toronto and York Region



4 January 2023

Last January, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council declared that 2023 would be the year of the union. Twelve months later, it could not be more clear: we were right. In 2023, workers set the new standard for what a fighting, militant labour movement can look like. In particular, strike activity was higher in 2023 than it has been so far this century. The strike is back.

The reasons why are obvious. Workers are struggling with a cost-of-living crisis while the rich keep getting richer:

- The world's richest one percent own nearly half of the world's wealth — with 47 people controlling \$270 billion in total wealth in Canada alone;
- At the same time, the ability of workers to recover from the pandemic and the recession is diminishing;
- Corporate profits are capturing more economic growth than in any previous post-recession recovery period over the past 50 years

The net result is a historic realignment of who benefits from economic growth in Canada. This is not an inevitability however. It is a political choice. A political choice which is made every day by right-wing politicians in government at all levels to keep their rich friends ahead, and leave the rest of us behind.

But, in 2023, working people said enough is enough, and they fought back. Building on the energy of the historic education workers strike the previous Fall, working people across the region were inspired to stand up, and take back what is rightfully theirs.

The stakes in this fight couldn't be higher. It's not just the Ford government we're facing down, but every right-wing populist who is trying to exploit the pain and anger of working-class communities, including Poilievre. We're fighting an agenda that pits workers against each other, attacks all democratic institutions, and advances a vision of the world made for the rich, not for working people.

In an attempt to distract workers from the real architects of this crisis – corporations – the right increasingly tries to drive working people apart, and increase political polarization in this region and across the country. One alarming sign is the rise of hate: against immigrants and refugees; against racialized communities and religious groups; and against Trans kids and the 2SLGBTQIA+ community at large.

But the rise of hate, and increasing attacks on working people of all backgrounds, did not scare workers in 2023. Instead, they were galvanized to strike back, fighting the right wing, their corporate friends, and the hate they peddle to keep working people down.

In Toronto and York Region, that meant working people took action, organized, and won. In contract fights from grocery stores, to government agencies; in mobilizations against hate, and

to protect Trans kids, and all members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community; and in the fight to protect our environment and our future and save the Greenbelt – we won.

These struggles must set the tone in 2024 and inspire us about the possibility of defeating the right's agenda – not just when the next election is scheduled, but well before that, just like we did with Bill 28, the Greenbelt, and more.

To achieve our goals and ensure 2024 continues to build labour's strength, we must:

- Continue to build labour's capacity to mobilize both union and non-union workers all over Toronto and York Region, with an emphasis on organizing workers in their workplaces, bringing new workers into unions, and developing them into grassroots leaders;
- Deepen our ties to our community partners, to build a robust, durable, community-labour movement ready to fight for a fair and equitable Toronto and York Region for everyone;
- Commit to an organizing and mobilizing strategy that sees the strike not as a tactic of last resort, but as the most powerful weapon in the labour movement's arsenal, which we're not afraid to use, and that aims to coordinate and support strike activity among affiliates;
- Prepare for another "Bill 28 moment," when labour will have to confront Ford, or Poilievre, again, but with the goal of being ready to go beyond the threat of a general strike, should it be required, and actually carry it out until we win our demands;
- Lay the foundation for defeating Ford in June 2026, which means building support for labour's demands well before the election and for overall progressive politics, and continue working towards more progressive governments at the municipal and school board levels.

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