

## THE REAL COST OF DOUG FORD'S "OPEN FOR BUSINESS" ONTARIO

May 5<sup>th</sup> 2022



To see why the Conservatives deserve to be decisively voted out of office on June 2nd, take a look at what Labour Council Delegates have said about this government during its four years in power. Each statement accurately predicted the results of Ford's decisions – the real costs.

July 2018 – Our statement, *Moving to a state of Readiness*, reminds us that the Conservatives immediately cut the scheduled minimum wage increase of \$15 an hour, even though their campaign slogan had been “For the People”. (They also withdrew from climate action commitments, instituted hiring freezes, eliminated key equity ministries, etc., etc., etc.).

- The statement said, “We should expect [Conservatives'] actions to enrich the wealthy at the expense of most of the people, while undermining social justice.”
- The result? In just one example, companies like Loblaws made record profits while retracting the temporary premium pay for at-risk frontline workers during the pandemic. Check ✓

August 2018 – Our statement, *The Abuse of Power Begins*, covered Bill 5, an attack on democracy which hijacked Toronto's elections and slashed Toronto City Council from 47 seats to 25 mid-election. Ford even threatened to use the notwithstanding clause to get his way when the courts ruled his action unconstitutional.

- The result? A significantly less diverse, representative, and progressive Toronto City Council. Since then, City Council has been timid and tepid, normalizing austerity budgets, allowing homelessness to shift to permanent crisis, while wealthy investors make a killing off real estate. Check ✓

Statement after statement lays out what Ford's government was doing during its time in office: its attacks on workers, health and long-term care, public education, the environment, communities, low-income and vulnerable members of our society, LGBTQ, racialized and Indigenous people.

Statements also clearly identified who would benefit – the wealthy, the 1%, Doug Ford's buddies – while workers and communities pay the price.

Other Labour Council Statements from October 2018 to November 2021

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| ✓ Cities Need Help  | ✓ Zero Tolerance for Racism at Work   |
| ✓ Don't Steal Our Subway  | ✓ Take Profit Out of Long-Term Care   |
| ✓ Playing From the Handbook (Ernst and Young plans to sell off public assets) | ✓ Legislate Paid Sick Time!   |
| ✓ The 1% Agenda   | ✓ Rise Up For a Just Recovery   |
| ✓ Defend Good Jobs  | ✓ Make Gig Work Decent Work   |
| ✓ Lessons of Year One – Organize, Educate, Resist!                            | ✓ Violent Encampment Evictions and the Affordable Housing Crisis – Two Sides of the Same Coin |
| ✓ Immorality and Corporate Greed  | ✓ Climate Justice is Union Business   |
| ✓ Two Years of Turmoil  |   |
| ✓ #Safe September (Fighting for a safe return to school)                      | On and on and on...   |

January 2022 – Our statement, *The Ford Government Just Doesn't Work for Workers*, pointed out that the government was pretending to be a friend to workers while actually reducing workers' rights or offering too little, too late.

- The statement said, "Ford wants to look like he's helping workers and COVID-struck employers, in a desperate bid for re-election in June. But he's actually helping workers as little as possible while rewarding bosses who injure their workers or deny their status as employees."
- The result? Bill 27 passed, giving billions in WSIB premiums back to employers instead of paying injured workers who can't work. Gig workers' second-class status was enshrined in legislation. The minimum wage increased to \$15 an hour three years late, leaving workers out of pocket by \$3,000, putting it instead into corporate profits. Bill 124 stayed in place. Check ✓

April 2022 – Our statement, *Mr. Ford Gets it Wrong Again: Workers Vote for Good Jobs and Public Services, Not Free License Stickers*, called out the Ford government's backpedaling on hiring targets for Black and other racialized workers previously negotiated through Community Benefits Agreements.

- The statement said "After four years of a Ford government, no one is surprised at the backpedaling on transit policy while sacrificing the very real day-to-day needs of marginalized communities for equitable access to transit and to the jobs that build public transit in the first place."
- The result? Instead of ensuring sufficient funding for public transit and good jobs for equity-seeking communities, the Conservatives are reducing provincial coffers by over one billion dollars, shamelessly trying to buy votes for the June 2nd election by refunding license plate sticker payments. Check ✓

We see how badly this government treats key public services like education, health care and long-term care. Especially during the pandemic, Doug Ford abandoned his responsibilities and neglected the people who give and receive the services. Instead of the promised "iron ring" around long-term care in the first COVID wave, there was a horrific "ring of death", particularly at for-profit homes, while Ford criticized LTC inspectors while letting profits mount. Now he promises more for-profit LTC institutions will be built and supported by our tax dollars.

His government legislated larger class sizes and mandatory virtual course credits before COVID (he was forced to step back by labour and community organizing), and then refused to take steps to keep schools safe during the pandemic. Along with adequate ventilation, one key step would have been smaller class sizes to allow social distancing in classrooms. But Ford and Lecce absolutely refused. It's not just a question of cost or availability of teachers for this temporary measure; it's that if parents saw the positive effects of smaller classes on student success, they would demand permanently smaller classes. This would have wrecked Conservative plans to favour private schools, undermine public education, and commodify education services. Instead students, education workers, and families had to get sick, stressed, or just stay home, reducing student success and burning out workers.

We saw the effect of COVID waves on hospitals. Here in Ontario, reaching maximum ICU capacity became the measure of how well the government was doing at balancing rules and "re-opening". Many remember Ford's Solicitor General Sylvia Jones saying, "We wanted to make sure that the modelling was actually showing up in our hospitals." Wanting to be "open for business," Ford and his government went ahead and removed all mandates in order to appease

his business friends. Ontarians' disgust with this negligence was amplified by the effects of Bill 124, which – like a slap in the face – sent nurses reeling from hospital jobs en masse.

And now, Ford's government has pulled a billion or more dollars from Ontario revenues to pay drivers back for license stickers. Something is going to be cut from the budget eventually in order to balance off that billion. What will it be?

If re-elected, the Ford government will do worse. We need to vote this government out! Then we can turn our attention to building the Ontario we want to live in, rather than putting our energy into fighting against what we don't want. Instead of being "open for business," we can have good jobs, climate justice and an equitable world for our children.

Between now and June 2<sup>nd</sup>, we ask affiliates and delegates to talk with your union members about how important it is to vote in this election. On June 2<sup>nd</sup>, we urge all working people to vote OUT-OF-POWER the Ford Conservative government!