

April 17, 2020

Doug Ford, Premier
Province of Ontario
dougfordco@pc.ola.org



Dear Premier Ford:

On behalf of 150 affiliated local unions and our 220,000 members, Toronto & York Region Labour Council would like to thank Ontario MPPs and Party Leaders for the steps you have taken to fight this momentous health crisis. While there are still a number of issues to be addressed, the general direction has been positive and responsible. When leaders focus on the public good, we see the improved outcomes that result.

Our Labour Council calls on all our political representatives to show utmost care for workers and communities, maintain social solidarity with the goal that no one is left behind, and recognize that Ontarians started from different places when COVID hit. On our website, you can read our priorities for dealing with this crisis - labourcouncil.ca/priority_responses_to_covid-19.

There is much more that must be done immediately to achieve the best outcomes. At the provincial level, there are four urgent priorities.

First, the crisis in long-term care must be resolved. Warning signs were long ignored, to the peril of so many. Accountability for public funding, improved wages and working conditions for employees, and better regulation are key to protecting vulnerable populations. The failure of many private operators to ensure safety of residents and decent working standards for those entrusted with patient care is a clear signal that sector should transition to public delivery.

Second, to ensure the health and safety of all workers, particularly frontline workers:

- Respect essential health and safety teachings: Stop COVID19 at the source, prevent its spread, and provide necessary individual protection
- Recognize key elements of health and safety: the right to refuse unsafe work, right to WSIB benefits, importance of good mental health
- Provide stabilization funding for non-profits that are on the front lines

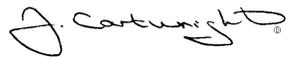
Third, Canadians have broadened our ideas about what type of work is essential and agree that essential workers deserve to have decent work. Employment laws must be improved.

- Keep sick workers at home – rather than at work infecting others because they must work in order to pay their bills – by legislating paid emergency leave days for all
- Do away with poverty wages, starting with a higher minimum wage
- Improve and enforce workers' rights
- Prohibit employers from creating precarious jobs. Companies that use temporary agencies as part of their business model leave these workers at greater health and economic risk, and the trend to part-time work forces employees to hold multiple jobs

Finally, Ontario must take steps to protect people from precipitous changes such as bankruptcy or homelessness by using provincial authority to protect housing, incomes and financial security. Stop predatory pay day lenders from gouging marginalized Ontarians. Do not claw back the CERB amount paid to those on ODSP and Ontario Works. Freeze rents for 2020.

The Toronto & York Region Labour Council calls on each of you to continue your leadership and ensure our society is more equal – not less – coming out of COVID-19. We will be in touch again in the near future to provide practical advice regarding next steps.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Cartwright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a small registered trademark symbol (®) at the end.

John Cartwright
President

c.c. Patty Coates, President, Ontario Federation of Labour

cope 343