



## MOVING TO A STATE OF READINESS

Days after the election of a Conservative majority to Queen's Park, Labour Council Delegates adopted a statement that projected a four year plan of action for the labour movement in greater Toronto. The plan contains six elements: reaching out, communicating, building coalitions, defending workers rights including the \$15 minimum wage, overcoming divisions, and a long-term goal of electoral reform. While it is too soon to predict all of the initiatives of Premier Ford, early signs point to many areas of potential conflict. Already he has recruited some of the worst ideologues of the Harper regime, and with the Janus decision stripping union security in the United States, we can take nothing for granted. Therefore, the first priority of our movement is to prepare for the battles ahead.

Labour Council has an excellent resource for this task – “Achieving a State of Readiness” written by Rob Fairley. To be powerful, any organization must develop a strategic plan; engage members; and build deep alliances. This document assists unions in following through with that crucial work, building on our past experience defeating the threat of Right to Work. As we did with the Hudak fight, our movement will need a core of mobilizers working in every union. It is essential to engage our members who live in areas that voted Conservative in a focused organizing effort in those communities. That should be combined with good research on the new MPP's in the GTA to determine what they and their voters expect from the new government.

Many working-class voters who supported Ford did not realize that workers' rights will be under attack and important benefits from Bill 148 rolled back. The cancellation of \$15/hour for over a million workers scheduled for January 1<sup>st</sup> has to be the focus of an intense campaign by all of labour alongside our community allies. In this work we will need to communicate in many languages and across all media platforms, with an emphasis on suburban residents and youth. The Conservatives ran on the slogan “*For the People*”. The counter narrative should expose how their actions will enrich the wealthy at the expense of most of *the people*, while undermining social justice. We can best impact on their popularity by asking difficult questions and continuously reminding people of the real cost of decisions - such as ending programs that tackle climate change or selling off public assets.

Elected leaders of municipalities and school boards will play a big role in this difficult time. Elections in October will be crucial. There needs to be many more progressive candidates elected to these bodies to resist against future downloading and privatization. Cuts to programs are inevitable as Ford trims his budget while slashing provincial revenue.

We speak of the Labour Council *Working for Justice Since 1871* – and have framed that as including economic, social, gender, racial and climate justice. Those goals will define our efforts in the next four years. There will be setbacks during that time, but the damage can be limited if we are ready from the start to resist – combined with proposing solutions that build for the future.

The Executive recommends that Labour Council:

- Work with affiliates, the OFL, CLC and other Labour Councils to bring the labour movement into an immediate “State of Readiness”, and undertake a tour of union membership meetings to support this goal
- Launch a multi-faceted communications effort under the slogan #Work4Justice, and highlight the real costs of the Ford government’s decisions
- Build a massive effort to oppose cancelling the \$15 Minimum Wage
- Protest any attack on workers’ rights including reversing Bill 148 gains, or limiting the right to strike or labour’s engagement in political activity

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