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June 7 Election

Ontario Election Called

On May 8, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne announced that Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, had accepted the Premier’s advice to sign a Proclamation dissolving the 41st Parliament of the Province of Ontario, effective as of 2:00 pm.

Consequently, the Lieutenant Governor called on Ontario's Chief Electoral Officer to issue the writs for the general election on Wednesday, May 9, and officially set Thursday, June 7 as the date of Ontario's next general election.

(Version française de cet article)

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Platforms, Programs and Promises

Information provided in the public domain on the platforms, programs and promises of Ontario's "major" parties is disconcerting to say the least. Synonyms for disconcerting include unsettling, unnerving, discomfiting, disturbing, perturbing, troubling, upsetting, worrying, alarming, distracting, off-putting, and there are more. Why do we say this? Because Ontarians are supposed to pick the next government by choosing one of these parties based on these platforms, programs and promises. This means electors are to ignore their own direct experience with the parties in the Legislature and how they operate once in power.

A related matter that bears investigation is the April 25 announcement by Ontario's Auditor General that the Liberal government is fudging the books by including the surplus of public pension plans as a government asset. The so-called major parties have costed their programs based on estimates provided in the Liberal budget. The Auditor General estimates that the real deficit is about $6 billion per year more than what is stated in budget documents. History has shown that a newly elected party often claims it cannot implement its electoral promises using the excuse that circumstances have changed and there is less money than they thought.

The promotion of party platforms, programs and promises is one of the real frauds that are an integral part of what are called free and fair elections. It is high time Ontario workers put this fairy tale to rest. In fact, no one in their right mind really believes that platforms of the "major parties" are serious indicators of what they will do if elected. Any serious look at what they say reveals that they are usually vague enough to mean anything to anyone.

In this election the working people do have the choice of discussing amongst their peers what they can do to make their rejection of these cynical politics known. One way they can do this is by
organizing in their ridings, places of work, educational institutions and other places to bring people together to discuss casting their ballot for an independent or small party candidate and making it clear what that vote represents.

(Version française de cet article)

Pre-Election Debate Underscores Fraud that Election Is "Free and Fair"

- Anna Di Carlo -

On Monday, May 7, City TV televised an Ontario leaders' debate featuring the leaders of the Progressive Conservatives, the NDP and the ruling Liberal Party. The debate was aired before the election was officially called on Wednesday, May 9. It was aired before any of the leaders were officially registered as candidates and to the exclusion of the other political parties that are running in the June 7 general election.

The media scrambled to tell the electors who came out ahead, while Pollara Strategic Insights and Maclean's magazine released what they described as their "first poll" on the standings of the parties. The two will collaborate throughout the campaign "to measure voter support for each party ... and help understand the reasons behind that support and any shifts in voter allegiance as the campaign progresses."

The decision of City TV to air a leaders' debate before the official launch of the election campaign and the agreement of Kathleen Wynne, Andrea Horvath and Doug Ford to participate in it illustrates their contempt for the election law and its purported aim of ensuring "free and fair" elections.

The election laws in Ontario, as is the case elsewhere in the country, are based on a legal fiction, according to which all candidates and all political parties presenting themselves for election must compete within a strictly controlled regulatory regime. Candidates are not supposed to incur any expenses, nor accept any contributions, until the day they are officially registered. They can face prosecution if they put out lawn signs before they are officially registered or if they accept even a $100 contribution too early. Third parties, comprised of individuals and organizations other than registered political parties and registered candidates, are also strictly regulated.

Media corporations and polling companies, however, are not considered "third parties" and in the name of freedom of the press are allowed to do whatever election-related activities they want. They provide hundreds of thousands of dollars in free promotion for the cartel parties and try to influence public opinion in a manner that aims to prevent the people from having peace of mind to think or consider what the society needs.
The holding of the City TV debate on the eve of the launch of the June 7 general election is an indication of the extent to which the fundamental and universally recognized democratic principles are trampled in the mud under the corrupt cartel-party dominated electoral system.

(Version française de cet article)

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**Ontario Workers Affirm Rights**

**Queen's Park Rally to Keep Transit Public**

Public transit workers, organized in the Amalgamated Transit Union Canada, supporters and others rallied in front of the Ontario Legislature on May 8 to affirm the need for public transit and to oppose any attempts by the Wynne Liberals, or Ford PCs should they form the next government, to privatize transit at the expense of workers, riders and all Ontarians.

(Version française de cet article)
York University education workers, members of CUPE Local 3903, along with many of their students and other supporters rallied at Queen's Park on May 8 for their just demands and to oppose the Wynne Liberals' desperate attempt to impose back-to-work legislation prior to the dropping of the writ and dissolution of the Legislature. Wynne failed to get the all-party support required to railroad legislation through the Legislature. The NDP and at least one Conservative refused to give consent and the 10-week long strike against York's concessionary demands continues. The working conditions of the education workers at York University are notoriously difficult. All out to support the workers to win their just demands!

(Version française de cet article)

Workers Speak on Their Concerns

The Injustice Faced by General Electric Workers in Peterborough

- Interview, Sue James, Chair, GE Occupational Health Advisory Committee -

*Ontario Political Forum:* Your committee is fighting for recognition of workers who were exposed
to toxic chemicals at the GE Peterborough plant over the years and for compensation for themselves and their survivors. Can you tell us more about how this exposure took place?

Sue James: The GE Peterborough plant was producing motors of all sizes and generators. I myself started at the plant in 1974 and retired in 2014. I grew up here in Peterborough. My father worked at the plant as well from 1947 to 1983. People from all parts of the city and surrounding areas worked there. It was a fairly tight knit little community. We knew each other at the plant. When I started in 1974 there were about 5,000 people that worked in that plant.

While working there, throughout the years, starting back in about 1977, we noticed that people were dying young and a lot of them had cancer. We used asbestos on a regular basis, 500 pounds of asbestos a week, and there were also about 40 known carcinogens that were used in that plant. Then there was a movement within the joint health and safety committee at the plant and we noticed that people were passing away. Some were dying at ages as young as 55, 50, even 39 years old. Lots of people have died from all kinds of cancers, not to mention heart disease.

Around 1978 we tried to bring that to light and asked questions; "Why? Why are we losing so many people at young ages to cancer?" Every time we questioned what we saw, we were pushed aside, getting answers like "Everybody gets cancer, we can't relate it to the work place," "Are you a smoker?" etc.

Just recently there has been a really big push and a group of us got together, about 75 workers, trying to record what processes were going on at any given time at the plant. We put together our
advisory report based on peoples' testimony on what chemicals they worked with at the plant. With the help of Unifor, we had researchers Bob and Dale DeMatteo help us publish it.[1] We submitted it to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) in Ontario. There is also another group working on this issue, the Occupational and Environmental Health Coalition of Peterborough.

Meanwhile we have been having meetings with the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. (OHCOW), the Office of the Worker Adviser (OWA) as well as with the Minister of Labour. We have stated that the current workers' compensation board is broken, it is not set up to handle complex issues like we are presenting to them. In September 2017, the WSIB said that they would review 250 previously denied claims. There was new scientific evidence, so they said they would look at our report. So far, 60 of the 250 previously rejected cases have been accepted and a further 66 had their rejections upheld. It has been a real struggle because there is no transparency. We asked to have the numbers, because for confidentiality reasons we can't get names. We are trying to get them listed by cancers so that we will have an idea of how they are going through the process. And the new claims coming through, what is that going to mean for them? They basically shut us down. They do not want us to know. We all knew one another. They do not want us to be able to connect the dots. Most of the workers have passed away now. A lot of the people that we are helping navigate this very complex system are widows or adult children of workers. Meanwhile there are 119 new claims that are going through, more people that have gotten ill. In the community we are saying if you have a disease that you believe is occupational you need to get a claim started. That is where our advocacy team has come into play, to help people to present a claim.

The government has recently put out an announcement that they are appointing Dr. Paul Demers, who sits on the Occupational Cancer Research Centre here in Ontario, to do an overall look at occupational disease in Ontario. I am sceptical about that. Why did they not look at this in the first place a long time ago? We have an election coming up in June. There are a lot of questions around it. What happens if the Minister who is appointing this doctor does not get back in, then what? With the election coming up I feel that we wasted some really valuable time trusting that the Minister would do something about it.

We have had a lot of curve balls thrown at us. Also now we have the announcement that the GE plant is closing in September. With the plant closing, why are they not being held accountable, not only to clean up but for the deaths of those people? It is like they can just wipe their hands and say we are just closing and we are out of here.

**OPF:** In this situation, what is that you want to achieve? What are your demands?

**SJ:** We want to achieve fairness, a fair system that looks at occupational disease for all injured workers across Canada. People are living precariously because they have no say. It is abuse of power as far as I am concerned. These workers went out every day, they paid their taxes and contributed to their community, but it is like their lives were worthless.

We want them to recognize occupational disease, that it happened there. We want people to be able to come forward and get justice and have closure. It is not just the compensation, for most of them it is the acknowledgement. They need that closure and they need for justice to prevail.

We had our first public meeting on April 18. It was well attended, about 140 people. Our Advisory Committee meets regularly to discuss what is new, what is going on. We also want to join with Ontario Network of Injured Workers’ Groups, with all the injured workers groups, start a bigger noise. At our public meeting we put out a questionnaire to people asking them to write down what
problems they have had when they contacted the WSIB, whether the Board got back to them, were there delays, and so on. Some of these claims have been going on for 23 years. We want to collect information about the problems people have and put it all in a collective letter on their behalf, to the WSIB, to the Minister of Labour, showing that these things are happening, the systemic issues. We are trying to get a public inquiry into the WSIB.

We want to be the voice of those who are no longer here. We want to get a big group from here to go to Queens' Park on June 1 for Injured Workers' Day. We did so last year. We need to connect with all these groups to have a stronger voice. There is a whole generation that is coming up that needs to be protected.

Note


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**Speaking Out in Northern Ontario**

**CBC Must Serve the People, Not the Privileged**

* - Kaella-Lynn Recollet -

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) has announced its radio broadcast schedule for Ontario election candidates' debates in Northeastern Ontario. Where in previous elections CBC organized a candidates' debate in each of the Northeastern Ontario ridings, in this election, it is organizing a single Northeastern Ontario radio debate. It is inviting "star candidates" to participate in this debate: Vic Fedeli, PC MPP for Nipissing, previously interim PC Party leader; Frances Gelinas, NDP MPP for Nickel Belt and NDP Health Critic; and Glenn Thibeault, Liberal MPP for Sudbury and Minister of Energy in the Wynne government. Green Party candidates, as well as all small party and independent candidates who were not previously included in CBC radio debates, are not being invited to attend.

The action of the CBC is consistent with remarks made by Prime Minister Trudeau on February 1, 2017 when he declared he would not implement his promised electoral reform to make the way votes are counted more representative. Trudeau said that only the opinion gathered in the three "big-tent" parties is legitimate and worthy of being heard. All
other political expression, is "fringe" or "extremist."

Like Trudeau's remarks, the CBC's decision to hold debates including only "star candidates" also fails to uphold basic democratic principles which demand equality of candidates and an informed vote.

Canadians expect the CBC, funded largely from the public purse, to be responsible to all sections of the people by providing information on all candidates and political parties and not only "star" candidates and "big-tent" parties. By publicizing only those political views acceptable to the Canadian establishment it is sadly lacking as a public broadcaster. Canadians want public broadcasting to serve the interests of the working people, not the establishment which is launching an anti-social offensive against them.

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**Coming Events**

**Upcoming Discussions and Meetings**

**Barrie**

Speakout on Matters of Concern in Ontario Election  
**Thursday, May 17 -- 5:00 pm**  
Painswick Branch, Barrie Library -- 48 Dean Ave.  
*Hosted by the Barrie District Injured Workers' Group*

**Windsor**

Discussion on June 7 Ontario Election and Campaign of Independent Candidate Laura Chesnik -- Windsor-Tecumseh  
**Thursday, May 10 -- 5:30-7:00 pm**  
OneTen Park, 110 Park St. W

How to Ensure the Voice of Workers Is Heard in the Ontario Election  
**Round Table Meeting**  
**Sunday, May 27 -- 1:00-4:00 pm**  
547 Victoria Ave.  
*Hosted by OSSTF District 9 Greater Essex*

**Facebook**

**2018 Justice for Injured Workers Bike Ride**

**Elliott Lake**

Seminar -- Occupational Disease in Mining and McIntyre Powder Research  
**Friday, May 25 -- 1:00-4:00 pm**  
Lester B. Pearson Civic Centre Theatre

**Inaugural Reception**  
**Friday, May 25 -- 7:00-9:00 pm**  
Lester B. Pearson Civic Centre Theatre
Massey
Jim Hobbs Memorial Ride & Presentation
Saturday, May 26 -- 7:00 am-3:00 pm
Ride from Elliot Lake Miners’ Memorial Park on Highway 108 North to Massey and District Arena, 455 Government St.

Sudbury
Occupational Disease: The Other Workplace Fatality

Occupational Disease: The Other Workplace Fatality
Join the “Justice For Injured Workers Riders” (JFIW) as they arrive in Sudbury! This is their fourth annual bike ride that highlights the importance of injured workers being treated with justice and dignity.

ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN!

WHEN: Sunday May 27th, 2018 at 4:00 p.m.
WHERE: USW Hall, 66 Brady St. Sudbury (patio)
WHY: Rally in support of the Riders & remember our fallen workers

Please RSVP with Nicole at: n.ayotte@uwcmneo.com or call 705-560-3330 x223.
FREE BBQ will be provided by Miners for Cancer. First come first serve until we run out!

Organized by Ontario Network of Injured Workers’ Groups. For information on all Justice Bike Ride events click here.

June 1 Injured Workers’ Day

Toronto
Overnight Vigil and Cultural Program
Thursday, May 31 -- 11:00 am
Queen's Park
Rally at Queen’s Park and March
Friday, June 1 -- 11:00 am

Candidates Townhall Meeting
Friday, June 1 -- 2:00-4:00 pm
OCAD, Auditorium -- 100 McCaul St., Room 190
Organized by Ontario Network of Injured Workers’ Groups.
Facebook