



March 28, 2019

Resistance Building to Ford Government's Anti-Social Offensive in Ontario

All Out for the April 4 Walkout and April 6 Rally!



- **Students and Educators Take Up Their Social Responsibility**
- **Petition from Ontario High School Students**
- **Working People Reject Ford's Campaign to Make Ontario Education Open for Business Profit - K.C. Adams**
- **Teachers and Students Resist the Ford Government's Anti-Social Offensive - Enver Villamizar**
- **Anti-Democratic Nature of Government Attacks on Education**
- **Government Proposed Changes in K-12 Education**

Resistance Building to Ford Government's Anti-Social Offensive in Ontario

Students and Educators Take Up Their Social Responsibility

The working people and youth and students of Ontario are showing what they are made of in rising as one to reject the Ford government's latest assault on public education, and on those who provide it and the students who rely on it for a bright future.



University of Windsor student walkout, March 20, 2019.

Students to Walkout En Masse

On April 4, high school students across Ontario will hold walkouts to say No! to the Ford government's attacks on public education, which the government claims are in the name of students and designed to make them more "resilient." Students have set up a central Facebook page for coordinating their activities and listing their events [here](#).

They have also launched a petition to make their views known, which is gaining thousands of signatures (see below).

Mass Rally at Ontario Legislature

On April 6, all the education unions in the K-12 sector have joined together to organize a mass rally at Queen's Park to defend public education. Everyone is encouraged to mark their calendars and go all out to bring all those concerned about the future of public education to the rally. See Facebook events page [here](#).

College and University Students Hold Walkouts

University and college students already held walkouts and rallies across Ontario on March 20, to reject the Ford government's assault on post-secondary education and the students' unions ability to exist and organize.

University of Windsor



University of Toronto



K-12 Teachers and Education Workers Launch Sustained Acts of Solidarity



OSSTF District 20 wear black shirts, March 18, 2019.

Since March 15 when the Ford government laid out its latest assault on public education, teachers and education workers have made it clear that they intend to fight for their rights and those of their students.

An announcement for educators and K-12 students was made on Friday, March 15, when many schools were on March Break. The following Monday, March 18, many educators came back to school wearing black to stand in solidarity. Then on the following Friday the Elementary Teachers, Catholic Teachers and Secondary School Teachers' federations called for their members to wear Red

for Education, or Red for Ed on all Fridays going forward. This takes up similar regular actions called by teachers and education workers across the U.S., who have made red the symbol of their defence of public education.

High Park Toronto



Peel Region



CUPE 1238; Halton Region



Sarnia; Merlin



Political Protests at PC Party Activities



Protest in Essex, March 22, 2019.

A large protest was held by unions representing teachers and education workers and other workers outside a political event being held at the Walter Baker Centre in Nepean, Ontario on March 22. Premier Doug Ford as well as Education Minister Lisa MacLeod and other Ottawa area MPPs were hosting a dinner and had to face the lines of educators making their stands against the attacks on public education very clear.

In Essex, District 9 of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation and the Greater Essex local of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario organized a spirited protest outside a local golf and country club to defend public education. The Essex PC Riding Association was holding an "Essex Open for Business" Dinner with Minister of Economic Development Todd Smith and MPPs Rick Nicholls (Chatham-Kent-Leamington), Randy Pettapiece (Perth-Wellington), and Donna Skelly (Flamborough-Glanbrook).

On the same day Premier Ford made a provocative remark while in Nepean warning teachers and education workers that they had better think twice about protesting the government's attacks on education alleging this would "harm students." This shows clearly that in the name of protecting students the Ford government is seeking to prepare the ground to criminalize the political opposition of teachers and education workers as well as students in the name of "protecting students." The ongoing actions of students themselves to these attacks are exposing the Ford government as unfit to govern.



Petition from Ontario High School Students

High school students in Ontario are circulating the following petition. It is directed at Premier Doug Ford as well as the leaders of the opposition parties in the Ontario Legislature. The petition is part of their actions in preparation for mass walkouts on April 4 to make their No! to the attacks on public education clear to the government and the other parties in the Legislature.

Stop Ford Changes to Ontario Education!!

Education is meant to prepare students for their life beyond school; it helps to create a skilled economy and ultimately levels the playing field for all people. The proposed Ontario education cuts would target arts courses and programs, cut approximately 5000 teacher jobs, increase average class sizes, make E-learning mandatory, cut funding by 20%, and essentially strip away extracurricular activities including sports from schools. The Ford government has set out to "balance the budget," and in the short term they will, but the myopic policies entirely disregard the fact that students are not numbers. Teachers are not numbers. Our communities are not numbers. We as a generation have inherited problems that no other generation has faced before. Issues such as climate change, income polarization, and mounting social tensions, and without a good education, we won't have the skills required to solve them. We are asking the Ford government to reconsider their proposal and think about the implications of their policies.

E-Learning is an innovative alternative to conventional classrooms, but it is not a substitute. Every student learns differently and making E-Learning mandatory is not an effort to modernize education, but rather only works to help the bottom line. Research by the Centre for Public Education has shown that the ideal class size is between 13-17, but the Ford government once again is compromising students learning experience in favour of cheaper alternatives. Education is an investment whose value is unquantifiable.

With the Ford plan for education reform, the people who will suffer most are those with disabilities and we who are too young to have a vote. We have a voice. That's why we need to come together as students to save our education system, for our communities, for ourselves, and for future generations who will suffer the repercussions. It's not left or right, it's forward. Forward together. By signing this petition we are fighting to protect our education system, our teachers, and the students within. On April 4th at 1:15 pm we encourage you to participate in the provincial walk out.

#cutshurtkids #StudentVoice #StudentssayNO #April4th

To sign the petition, [click here](#).



Working People Reject Ford's Campaign to Make Ontario Education Open for Business Profit

- K.C. Adams -

The ruling class in power in Canada is pursuing its assault on public education as part of its broad campaign to Open Canada for Business. This means handing over public education to narrow

private interests from which they can expropriate profit. In Ontario, the Ford government wants public education open for business for enterprise profit for private education, interest profit from private money lending to the public treasury, and business profit for contractors and suppliers such as E-education equipment from Microsoft, Apple and other monopolies.



In opposition, the working people uphold the modern definition that education is a right for all at the highest possible level. They want governments to assume with honour their social responsibility to organize the productive forces to guarantee the right of all to the highest quality education.

The Ford government's attacks on public education, on teachers' right to decide their working conditions and on students' right to conduct their own affairs are an abdication of its social responsibility and expose it as unfit to govern. Instead of increasing investments in public education and giving the teachers a say and control over the direction of the sector and the right to say No! the government is determined to make

Ontario education open for business and a target for private profit.

The open for business mantra leads to finding all possible ways for private interests to profit from educating the youth. For private enterprise to expropriate profit directly, public education is debased so that those who can afford private education for their children will do so. Governments guarantee an expansion of the sale of education supplies from the global monopolies with public and individual purchase of high tech equipment necessary for e-education. The refusal to recognize and exchange the social value of the capacity to work of educated youth with the big companies that consume it means that general tax revenue must be used for investment in education and when that is insufficient governments continue the discredited and outmoded practice of borrowing from private moneylenders.

Apart from directly profiting from education being open for business, the anti-social offensive seeks to divert public funds that have been or could be invested in public education into the hands of the financial oligarchy through pay-the-rich schemes of subsidies, grants, guaranteed contracts and prices, tax exemptions and other handouts to big business. Paying the rich has become a standard component of being open for business.

The education sector is more worker intensive than most. This presents two problems for the ruling elite in terms of enabling their anti-social offensive and making Ontario education open for business profit. They seek to reduce the quantity of teachers in relation to the number of students and they seek to eliminate any resistance from the human factor to their anti-social program.



The human factor however is essential to the quality of education. To lower the ratio of teachers to students necessarily lowers the quality of the relation between teachers and students. Anyone who has done any teaching would attest to the fact that once the number of students in a K-12 class exceeds 20 the quality of the relation between the teacher and students begins to deteriorate. The deterioration does not build "resilience" in students but simply reduces the education quality regardless of how hard the teacher may work. Private schools are a testament to this as they consistently offer smaller class numbers. To expropriate their enterprise profit, the private schools charge large tuition fees, demand subsidies from the public treasury and put enormous pressure on teachers to reduce their claim on the value they create.

Teachers and other education workers are in the best position to formulate a path forward to guarantee a quality education as a right for all. Instead they are being attacked with their voices silenced and their rights abused. As a modern society this is unacceptable. The Ford government in its anti-social offensive to make Ontario education open for business profit and to attack the human factor in education is proving itself unfit to govern. It has shown in practice a refusal to assume its social responsibility to mobilize the productive forces to guarantee the right of all to education at the highest level and to mobilize the human factor in education as the greatest resource and voice for opening a path forward to assure a bright future for all our youth.

Stand with Teachers and Students in Opposition to the Ford Government's Anti-social Offensive on Education!



Teachers and Students Resist the Ford Government's Anti-Social Offensive

- Enver Villamizar -

The Ford government believes it can divide teachers and education workers by specifically targeting secondary teachers and education workers at this time. The attack is spearheaded with restructuring of class sizes and imposing new minimum on-line learning requirements for students in high school.

In doing so, the ruling class is attacking all teachers, education workers, the entire working people and youth of Ontario. The working conditions of teachers and education workers at all levels are their students' learning conditions. Teachers have adopted the action of wearing Red for Education as a sign of resistance and solidarity showing the common cause amongst the teachers and education workers to defend their rights and the right to education for all at the highest level society has attained.



Since the neo-liberal assaults began on public education in the 1990s by the Bob Rae NDP, followed by the Harris and Eves PCs, McGuinty and Wynne Liberals and now the Ford PCs, teachers and education workers have led the resistance in defence of their rights and those of their students. Teachers know from experience that privatization and destruction of public education are attacks on the right to education for all. In leading this resistance they know they are defending their students. The same is the case today with the resistance to the Ford government's anti-social offensive.

In Ontario, the NDP government of Bob Rae ripped up the post-war labour relations regime by imposing neo-liberal contracts on teachers and other education workers to extract money from public education to pay the rich, without the agreement or consent of those who provide the education. This was not accepted by the working people who felt betrayed by the NDP and refused to re-elect them.

The Harris PC government that came to power followed suit using its legislative majority to ram through massive attacks on education and those who provide it, while criminalizing any resistance to their agenda. This too was met with resistance including Days of Action in which the working class shut down major economic centres of the province from Windsor to Sudbury to affirm their power, rights and demands for a new direction.

In 2003, the McGuinty Liberals were brought in to achieve labour peace until the ruling class decided it could once again proceed with its anti-social offensive. Their mantra was to establish a more fair way to impose the theft of public funds to pay the rich by spreading the attacks around and trying to get the people's consent to this anti-social direction.

The Liberals, joined by the Hudak PCs, launched a new all-out assault with Bill 115. At that time however, neither party had a legislative majority and each wanted to lead the march to austerity. At each step the ruling class was faced with the resistance of the people and especially teachers and education workers. This came to a head when the Liberal Party of McGuinty was brought to its knees in the Kitchener-Waterloo by-election after attacking education workers.

Neither McGuinty nor Hudak could gain a majority from which to criminalize the movement for education and workers' rights that had emerged. The ruling class selected Wynne to lead the Liberal Party to buy another period of peace until they could sort out how to achieve what they could not with Bill 115. They brought in provincial bargaining and prepared the ground for what was to come next, the Ford government. The ruling class now believe they have the bull in the China shop, which can follow through on their threats to make Ontario education open for business profit.



The ruling elite have refused to accept the widely held public opinion which calls for increased investments in education to ensure the right to education for all, and to meet the demand of a modern economy for educated workers who can then work to guarantee the well-being of all, including themselves, and open a path forward for society.

Public opinion for increased investments in public education in defence of education as a right for all and that workers' rights must be respected is well entrenched. Public opinion holds that education and health care should not be sectors open for business profit. The frustration of the ruling elite with this reality can be heard in the threats of Premier Ford against teachers and education workers telling them they dare not protest his attacks on their rights and those of their students.

He is defying the teachers to resist, which they are already doing, so that he can invoke emergency powers to once again impose contracts and force teachers to give up their resistance to his anti-social offensive. Ford's provocative words show that the ruling class want a confrontation, which they believe they can win by using their police powers. They have no political or moral arguments to

justify their actions, yet they have the power to do so according to the cartel party system of governance, which has given the PCs a majority of seats in the Legislature. It is medieval and undemocratic and the working people refuse to accept this dictate.

The working people including teachers and education workers have great experience in how to mobilize public opinion. The fact that the resistance to Ford's anti-social measures has been immediate and widespread including the movement of the youth and students themselves walking out of classes in political protests shows that the anti-social offensive will not be accepted.



Anti-Democratic Nature of Government Attacks on Education

Ontario Minister of Education, Lisa Thomson released the government's "vision" for elementary and secondary education on March 15. The vision was delivered in the form of a number of government press releases with bullet points about the various parts of the vision, the Minister's remarks and a memorandum to school boards from Deputy Minister Nancy Naylor.

One issue of significance is the undemocratic way the government is operating. Its election platform did not present its vision for education. Instead, it focussed on emphasizing the following:

- changing the way math was taught and requiring new teachers to take math courses as part of their bachelor of education;
- rescinding the sections of the physical and health curriculum dealing with sexual education;
- initiating a moratorium on school closures and reform of the process for school closures;
- increasing funding for children with autism;
- and "fixing" the current standardized testing regime overseen by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO).

Now that the PCs are in power they have issued their vision of what should be done. They claim they have a mandate to do as they please since being elected. They did not put forward these proposals during the election because they clearly knew their vision would not be acceptable to Ontarians. This itself shows the extent to which the cartel political parties have ceased to function as mechanisms for the people to participate in political affairs and put forward a vision for the society around which they find acceptable and can organize.

Instead, these parties employ marketing and consulting agencies whose only purpose is to ensure they take power and once in power serve the biggest financial interests. Of note in this respect is that the PCs do not claim a mandate for their proposals but instead for a "mandate to govern." In other words, having a mandate to govern is not related to what the cartel parties are putting forward for the society but simply a matter of gaining the power to do as the government pleases irrespective of the public opinion that exists amongst the people.

This shows the serious crisis in which what are called the democratic institutions in Canada are mired as governments are elected without any popular mandate and then use their police powers to impose measures that harm the people and the programs they rely on.



Government Proposed Changes in K-12 Education



Teachers, education workers, parents and students demonstrate outside Conservative Party fundraiser, Etobicoke, February 27, 2019.

The Ontario government claims that all its changes are aimed at "modernizing" Ontario classrooms. The mantra of modernization hides the overall direction in which it wants to take Ontario. The government proposes to remove billions from the public education system through increasing class sizes and attacking the working conditions of teachers and education workers, while permanently handing over portions of the education of the youth to private interests on a centralized basis.

Class Size

The government announced that changes would be coming to average class sizes in Ontario. Average class sizes do not actually determine how big classes are or must be, but rather determine the funding a school board will receive for teachers and support staff. Thus, going from an average class size of 22 to 28 in grades 9 to 12 for example, means that for every 28 (instead of 22) students the school board will obtain funding for one teacher. The board then allocates teachers to ensure the overall average across the entire school board is at or below the average set by the government. (TML Weekly will deal further with how education is funded in Ontario and the relationship between average class sizes and class composition in future articles.)

As for class sizes, the government announced that the limit for the number of students in full-day junior and senior kindergarten will remain at 29 students. However, the funding for early childhood educators (ECEs) who work alongside teachers in these classes when they have more than 16 students will be reduced from 1.14 to 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE). This will result in greater pressure on school boards to attack the number of ECEs and/or their working conditions. In addition, in January, the government made it clear that full-day kindergarten is guaranteed for only one more year.

Average class sizes for students in grades 4 to 8 will be increased from a school board-wide average of 23.84 to 24.5 students.

As noted above, the government intends to increase average class sizes in grades 9 to 12 from a school board-wide average of 22 to 28 students. The average will be calculated across the entire school board and all grades of that assigned average (grades 4 to 8 or grades 9 to 12). The Minister

of Education has self-servingly claimed increasing class sizes in this manner is "evidence-based" and will better prepare students for work and university and even build "resilience." This is equivalent to an abuser claiming that their abuse was only to make the victim tougher.

Along with changes to average class sizes, the government is changing the way schools are funded. It is eliminating a number of discretionary funds that previous governments used to fund education. This will result in overall cuts to the supports students require in their schools. These changes include the elimination of the Local Priorities Fund, Cost Adjustment Allocation, and Human Resource Transition Supplement. It will also change "Classroom Loading Factors" to reflect the new class averages it wants to impose, increase Utilities Funding to reflect increased cost, increase and "review" Student Transportation Funding that funds busing and other forms of transportation to schools.

E-Learning

The government plans to "centralize the delivery of all e-learning courses" and require students in grades 9 to 12 to take a minimum of four e-learning classes to graduate high school with "exemptions for some students on an individual basis." These e-learning classes will have an even higher average number of students per class than the proposed increased average of 35 students to be raised from 28. Currently e-learning courses are delivered by school boards. A central hub for all e-learning courses being offered by boards across the province into which students can register already exists. The government may well seek to hand the delivery and content of e-learning over to a private e-learning company financed by public funds and use this to remove thousands of courses from the requirement of having to be delivered by teachers employed by school boards and represented by unions. No explanation as to how such a direction would benefit the youth was provided. The government's own e-learning site, prior to the announcement, clearly pointed out that e-learning is not beneficial for all students; a claim that was removed after it was pointed out by many on social media.

"Up to the Minute" Curriculum Changes

The Minister of Education announced in her press conference that the government plans to put in place new arrangements to permit itself to change what is taught in schools on an "up to the minute" basis. She presented the measure as a money saving move to save on printing and distribution of new curriculum documents, something that is currently the practice when curriculum is updated so that educators and the public know what is expected to be taught and learned in the classroom. By the next school year, the government plans to "bring in a new digital curriculum platform" where curricula will only be available online and there can be "up to the minute" changes made. The Ontario curricula is already available on the Ontario government's website and is accessible anywhere and downloadable, including onto smart devices.

These measures are very similar to changes made at the Federal level by the then Harper Conservatives to how regulations made by Ministers were promulgated to the public. The Harper government was harmonizing many Canadian regulations with those of the United States and slipped within an omnibus budget bill, including a law that it would no longer have to print new regulations in the *Canada Gazette* when passed. The new regulations were typically sent out to public institutions and legal firms that needed to know the laws under which they were expected to operate.

The Harper government claimed that it was simply making things more efficient and less costly by having it solely on-line. In fact, the aim was to hide from view changes to regulations that were being enacted to serve the biggest North American monopolies. These regulations establish the entire way of life in Canada and the standards that individuals, public institutions and businesses are

expected to uphold. The move to have the government make changes to curricula "up to the minute" will no doubt be part and parcel of efforts to tie what is taught to the short term with the narrow demands of high-tech and other monopolies for trained employees paid for by the public purse. It may also be used to criminalize teachers based on claims that they did not follow the most up-to-date curriculum.

Changes to How Standardized Tests are Used

The Minister of Education announced that the Education and Quality Assurance Office (EQAO) will be given a "stronger, broader mandate." The Board of Directors for the Office has had a new full-time chair imposed on it, replacing its previous part-time chair David Cooke, the former Minister of Education under the Ontario NDP government of Bob Rae. The new chair, Dr. Cameron Montgomery, is being tasked with working to modernize "what and how [EQAO] evaluates."

This is likely linked in part to the government's announcement that it intends to change the way teachers are hired and placed. The government claims that teachers are currently hired and placed based mainly on seniority and this prevents teachers that would be a better "fit" from being selected. This is to fool the gullible, as experience in teaching is a key factor in the quality of how content is delivered. What the government is trying to do is to divide new teachers from more experienced teachers to bring in new regimes of tying teacher promotion and possibly even pay to standardized test scores or what the government calls a measure of "student achievement."

In the name of promoting better teachers, the government hopes to introduce greater competition amongst teachers for jobs and promotion to attack their unity to defend their working conditions, which are students learning conditions. The McGuinty Liberal government too began its assault on teachers and education workers in this manner during the 2011-12 contract negotiation period. The McGuinty government imposed through regulation a system of seniority for hiring teachers for full-time contracts and long-term appointments, while at the same time imposing contracts onto all teachers and education workers in violation of their rights. In both the case of the Liberals then and the PCs now, the aim is not to defend younger teachers but to divert them from defending the teaching profession as a whole from the attacks of narrow private interests.

New Law and Order Measures

The government is prohibiting cell phone use in schools during instructional time by adding it to the provincial code of conduct, "unless teachers use their professional judgement to decide otherwise." What this shows is that the government does not recognize teachers' professional judgement on a whole, but only when it comes to whether or not to criminalize student behaviour. It shows that the government will empower teachers only when it comes to how they will enforce arbitrary rules that they had no say in establishing. These changes do not empower teachers' professional judgement when it comes to the direction of education. In fact, it further reveals the attempts to disempower teachers in the name of affirming their professional judgement only in specific instances.



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