

April 2, 2021 - No. 24

**Ontario Government's 2021 Budget**

**Urgent Need Is for a Pro-Social  
Direction for the Economy**



**Unions Denounce 2021 Budget**

- Ontario Federation of Labour
- Service Employees International Union -- Health Care
- Ontario Nurses' Association
- Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Ontario
- CUPE Ontario's University Workers' Chair
- Joint Statement of Unions Representing Education Workers
- Unifor

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**Ontario Government's 2021 Budget**

**Urgent Need Is for a Pro-Social Direction  
for the Economy**

The Ontario government presented a budget on March 24 that refuses to address the pressing need for increased investments in social programs. Working people through their unions are denouncing the budget and pursuing a public campaign for respect and security. They are demanding budgets

from both the Ontario and federal governments that increase investments in social programs and stop paying the rich.

The pandemic has exposed the dire consequences arising from the refusal of the ruling elite to change the direction of the economy away from the incessant demands of the rich for maximum private profit. Working people want respect, security and the right to live and work in dignity.

How can residents in long-term care homes, patients in hospitals, others requiring medical assistance, and students in elementary, high school and post-secondary institutions be guaranteed their needs will be met if governments refuse to meet and guarantee the needs and rights of the workers delivering those necessary social services? Respect and security for people of all ages needing social services begins with respect and security for the people delivering the services!



- Widespread deaths of the elderly in long-term care homes have occurred from the refusal of governments to invest in their care, and from enterprises that view the care of seniors as an opportunity to make big profits.

- The Ontario budget does not include any provision for paid sick days, which is a widespread demand of Ontario workers, that has the support of doctors and other public health experts.

- Over twenty thousand Ontario health care workers have been infected with COVID-19, resulting in twenty deaths.

- Governments have so starved Laurentian University in Sudbury of needed investment that private creditors have forced it into bankruptcy protection and possible collapse.

- The Ontario budget even fails to keep education spending in line with the rate of inflation and enrolment growth, which highlights the socially irresponsible refusal of governments to guarantee the right to education for all and to allow education workers to organize a safe learning environment.



These facts cover the Ontario and federal governments with shame. They are an indictment of the neglect and refusal of the ruling elite to do their duty to increase investments in social programs and stop paying the rich. Those in control are proving themselves in practice as nation-wreckers not nation-builders.

The facts expose the oligarchs in control of blocking the people from organizing a human-centred direction for the economy. They point to the necessity for working people to organize themselves into an unstoppable force that demands and brings into being a new direction for the economy and political affairs that serves the people and meets their needs and that of society.

The sweet words and policy objectives of cartel political parties are not enough! They do not bring respect,

dignity and security to working people nor meet the needs of the people and society. Deeds are necessary!

***Stop Paying the Rich!  
Increase Investments in Social Programs Now!***

(Photos: WF, MissSardinha)

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**Unions Denounce 2021 Budget  
Ontario Federation of Labour**

(extract)



**April 30, 2019. Queen's Park rally for health care**

The 2021 Ontario Budget misses the mark on leading Ontarians out of this year-long public health crisis and towards a just recovery. The Budget lacks meaningful investments into the public services that people rely on. Budget 2021 is missing paid sick day provisions for Ontario workers and there is no commitment to wage increases for PSWs and care sector workers beyond June 30, 2021.

There is no commitment to reinstate comprehensive Resident Quality Inspections in long-term care homes and no commitment to phase out "for profit" long-term care. Budget 2021 also fails to ensure safe schools across Ontario, leaving education workers, children and families at continued and unnecessary risk.

"The COVID-19 pandemic exposed what happens when public services are chronically underfunded," said Patty Coates, Ontario Federation of Labour President, "public health crises hit harder, and the province is less prepared to keep people healthy and safe. Now is the time to fix those mistakes, equip Ontario to recover, and prepare for the future -- this budget does not deliver."

The Budget fails to even keep education spending in line with the rate of inflation. [...]

Today's childcare tax credit announcement ignores what is needed most: universally accessible, affordable, and publicly funded childcare across the province.

"Ontario needs sustainable solutions that address years of chronically underfunded public services," said Coates. Workers are reiterating the need to urgently fix staffing levels in long-term care, implement guaranteed paid sick days, raise wages for health care workers, ensure access to



sufficient and reliable PPE, reduce class sizes, address the impacts of inaccessible childcare, and invest in post-secondary education. [...]

(Photo: OFL)

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## Service Employees International Union

- *Sharleen Stewart, President of SEIU Healthcare* -

### *Budget Fails Healthcare Workers and the Vulnerable Residents and Patients They Serve*

The women and men serving on the frontline of our health care system are experiencing an economic and emotional depression, yet today's budget fails to deliver the supports required to stabilize the workforce.

Healthcare workers have been calling on Premier Ford to make the initial \$4 per hour 'pandemic pay' available to all frontline heroes fighting COVID and to make it permanent, yet his budget ignores their demand for respect and economic security.

Sixty-seven per cent of our union members report a decline in their take home pay, yet Premier Ford's budget fails to provide low-wage workers, like personal support workers, a living wage of at least \$25 per hour.

Precariously employed health care workers deserve paid sick leave so they are not forced to make the untenable choice between putting food on the table or going to work sick, yet Premier Ford's budget denies them this basic protection.

Good, full-time jobs with fair pay and benefits are essential to the retention of health care workers, yet Premier Ford's budget is absent funding to reverse the trend of part-time work.

Ontario's long-term care homes will be unable to deliver four-hours of care per resident per day without the people required to deliver that care, and because Doug Ford's budget failed to deliver for healthcare workers our most vulnerable seniors will go without the dignified care they deserve.



(Photo: SEIU)

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## Ontario Nurses' Association

### *Provincial Budget Disappoints Nurses Desperate for Hope and Improvements in the Short-Term*

The provincial budget has fallen short in providing hope and the short-term relief that Ontario nurses dearly needed to see, says the Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA).

ONA President Vicki McKenna, RN, says, "(The) 3.4 per cent funding increase falls short of what

is needed for the system to catch up on the backlog of surgeries when the pandemic ends. The budget does not overcome the cuts to public health that this government made just months before the worst public health crisis in a century, nor does it commit to fast-track RN staffing levels in long-term care facilities or improving the quality and frequency of inspections of these homes." [...]



McKenna notes, "Every Ontarian needs and deserves paid sick leave, which would ensure that those who cannot work from home can stay home when ill. We know that Ontario needs to stabilize nurse staffing in our health-care facilities, and the budget is silent on specific measures to do that. And despite receiving federal funds for COVID-19 relief, the government continues to spread that contingency funding over multiple years, when it could be used now to cover the immediate costs of rebuilding capacity in our health-care system."

"There is very little in this budget that provides the immediate relief that our dedicated registered nurses and health-care professionals need," she says. "ONA would like to see more funding going to not-for-profit health care, rather than to for-profit facilities that have proved to be so troubled during COVID-19. Announced funding for more nurses for retirement homes does not address long-term care RN staffing."

"If ever there was a lesson to be learned from COVID-19, it is that starving our health-care system and public health units of funding and staff has real consequences," she says. "Ontarians, our nurses and frontline health care professionals have paid dearly for this during the pandemic. Our home care system has suffered and could have been used to shore up services for seniors. We should have learned the lessons of the past, from SARS, yet there is nothing about implementing the precautionary principle to keep staff or patients, residents and clients safe. There is nothing about hiring more registered nurses to close the gap between Ontario and RN staffing levels compared to the rest of the country. For a budget focused on the health of people, the budget is short on details about caring for nurses who care for Ontarians."

*(Photo: ONA)*

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## **Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Ontario**

(extract)

"After all the people of Ontario have been through this last year, this budget is just classic trickle-down economics and it's the last thing communities need," said Fred Hahn, President of CUPE Ontario. "They'll spin this, but the reality is the budget promises a gush of massive tax cuts and subsidies for big businesses and the wealthiest Ontarians, with just a trickle going to the chronically underfunded public services that have proven to protect our lives and livelihoods."

"There's no recovery plan that does not ensure paid sick days for all, declare Anti-Black racism a public health crisis and back that up with a fully funded plan, and fund a vaccination rollout plan that's accessible to those in our hardest-hit communities. We can't allow investments to merely trickle down while impacts pool across our communities."



"Now is the time for bold action and ideas, not a re-hash of the same old tired strategies that saw us entering this global pandemic in a weakened position to deal with its challenges. Repeating these mistakes will only accelerate the financial pressures on our public services and deepen inequities." [...]

"We've heard countless announcements for long-term care," said Candace Rennick, Secretary-Treasurer of CUPE Ontario. "What we need now is action. We need an expedited timeline for four hours of care, a comprehensive recruitment and training strategy, and the stabilization of the workforce to help retain current workers. We need permanent \$4 per hour pandemic pay for everyone, full-time jobs, and paid sick days."

"We're a year into this pandemic and Ontarians have only gotten clearer about what we need to stay safe and to recover post-COVID-19," said Hahn. "Massive benefits for those at the top and little more than a trickle of investments for the rest of us won't cut it anymore."

(Photo: OCHU)

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## CUPE Ontario's University Workers' Chair

*For a University sector in crisis, Ford Conservatives' 2021 budget a 'shocking dereliction of responsibility'*

The Provincial budget tabled yesterday by Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy represents a "shocking dereliction of responsibility" to Ontario's university sector by the Ford Conservative government, according to David Simao, Chair of the Ontario University Workers' Coordinating Committee (OUWCC) which speaks on behalf of more than 30,000 university workers represented by CUPE across the province.

**Act now:  
Demand public  
funding to secure  
Laurentian's future.**

"Even in a normal year, this budget's complete disdain and indifference towards post-secondary education would have stood out, but in the midst of a once-in-a-century global pandemic that has exposed so many critical needs in every sector of the economy across Ontario, this is a shocking dereliction of responsibility by the Minister responsible for Universities and the entire Ford Conservative caucus," said Simao.

The budget tabled yesterday continues the trend of ongoing cuts in real dollars for Ontario's universities. The base operating grant of \$3.6 billion proposed for Ontario's 21 publicly-funded universities in yesterday's budget document fails to even keep up with inflation, effectively reducing the amount Ontario spends per student has fallen in every single year of the Ford Conservative government.

Additionally, \$700 million in funds announced to expand the province's ranks of Personal Support Workers (PSWs) to support Ontarians receiving home care or living in Long-Term Care (LTC) facilities is not new money; rather the Ford Conservatives have diverted funds intended for the Ontario Student Assistance Plan (OSAP) which provides financial support for Ontario students pursuing post-secondary studies.

"Minister Bethlenfalvy's budget speech yesterday ran for nearly 6,000 words, but two words were conspicuously absent. At no point in the Minister's speech did he utter the words 'university' or 'universities'," said CUPE Ontario President Fred Hahn.

"It's as if a vital pillar of any major industrialized nation's economic and social development doesn't exist in the eyes of the Ford Conservative government's most senior officials. Where does the Cabinet think the doctors, nurses, researchers, scientists, public health experts, and countless other disciplines directly tasked with combating pandemics like COVID-19 are taught and trained?" he added.

Since assuming office early in the summer of 2018, the Ford Conservatives have presided over millions of dollars in cuts to the university sector. Last February, Laurentian University in Sudbury was forced to seek protection from its creditors while the Ford Conservatives stood by and did nothing to keep the Northern Ontario institution solvent.



"A government that can't even say the word 'university' in their budget speech has nothing to offer a sector of the economy that ought to be at the forefront of helping Ontario emerge stronger from this pandemic," said Hahn, who urged "every Ontarian who cares about quality, public post-secondary education to organize and make sure this government understands how you feel."

Simao echoed Hahn's sentiment, saying, "This budget does nothing to help Laurentian, nothing to help students, academic workers, or support staff at Ontario's campuses. It can't even be bothered to offer empty platitudes, so the hard work of advocating on behalf of universities before this government pushes the sector even further into crisis falls to all of us."

(Photos: LUFA, J. Bunett)

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## Joint Statement of Unions Representing Education Workers

As the province enters the third wave of the pandemic, the Ford government is delivering a budget that fails to even keep education spending in line with the rate of inflation and enrolment growth. Obviously, education is not a priority for this government.



The pandemic has had a profound impact on students, education workers and our communities. In addition to health and safety concerns, regular disruptions have resulted in considerable learning loss and widening achievement gaps. With this budget, the Ford government had an opportunity to provide students with the supports they will need in the months and years ahead. Instead, they continue to exaggerate their investments while actually shortchanging Ontario's students and families.



The government's ongoing refusal to invest in measures that would keep schools safe has led to deeply concerning health and well-being impacts for education workers, including hospitalization. Their erratic and inconsistent vaccination plan continues to generate confusion and chaos across the province. And their overall failure to respond to the pandemic has extended the crisis and continues to create uncertainty.

To date, the province has refused to make critical investments in publicly funded education, putting students, education workers and families at risk. The government has disregarded advice from medical experts, refused to enhance safety measures, and looked away as safety concerns and self-isolation requirements result in unprecedented staffing shortages across Ontario.

The education unions call on the Ford government to invest in:

- lower class sizes to keep students safe and to address learning loss incurred during the pandemic;
- enhanced safety measures to ensure infection control;
- mental health supports for students and education workers; and
- supports for students with special education needs.

It's high time Premier Ford and Minister Lecce begin listening to education workers. The Conservative government's abandonment of publicly funded education is callous, and they must be held to account.

*Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens*  
*Canadian Union of Public Employees Ontario*  
*Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario*  
*Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association*  
*Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation*



# Unifor

(extract)

Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy's 2021 provincial budget fails to address Ontario's crisis in long-term care, and leaves questions about the direction and strength of the province's economic recovery says Unifor. [...]

Instead of fixing the long-term care crisis now, this budget invests only 10 per cent of the announced funding, or \$0.5 billion, in 2021-22 to address the mandate of four hours of direct care.

This virus is not slowing down, and we need to speed up our response. The provincial government is delaying implementation of this basic standard that will improve safety and working conditions across our broken long-term care sector," said Naureen Rizvi, Unifor Ontario Regional Director. [...]

The COVID-19 crisis quickly exposed how inequality influences the ability of many communities to be able to withstand this pandemic. [...]

We have said this for more than a year now, that paid sick days are a matter of public health, and are required to protect the most precarious and vulnerable workers from this virus," said Rizvi. "The government's current refusal to introduce this measure speaks volumes, but workers' voices will be louder still.

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