



PLAYING FROM THE HANDBOOK

Naomi Klein's well-known book *The Shock Doctrine* exposes "disaster capitalism," a pattern of corporate-friendly governments achieving change by imposing economic shock therapy. A striking example was in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, where residents discovered that their public housing and hospitals will never re-open and that public education had been turned over to charter schools.

Here in Ontario, Ernst & Young Canada and discredited former BC Premier Gordon Campbell have given Ford's Conservative government cover to make drastic changes in Ontario that will only benefit the wealthy. Campbell "discovered" that Ontario has a \$15 billion deficit, and Ernst & Young has the prescription for how to deal with it. Having loudly trumpeted that there is a crisis, the Conservatives will play from the Shock Doctrine handbook to collude with corporations in stripping more wealth from Ontarians. Ernst & Young's prescription includes selling off Crown assets, consolidating health and other arm's-length agencies while introducing means-testing for programs, providing fewer services and charging more for them. Basically this means privatize, privatize, privatize.

Ernst & Young likes privatization so much they literally wrote the book in 1994 – *Privatization: Investing in State-Owned Enterprises Around the World*. Ernst & Young is an example of neo-Liberalism's gluttony: a company that advises governments to sell off public assets and then consults with corporations to help them capitalize on those assets, making money off both ends, always looking for private profit at public expense. Their advice to the government about collective bargaining for any employer that receives public funding? The Conservative government could simply set central wage level rules for ALL such workplaces instead of allowing them to be bargained freely.

Ontario's Mike Harris was an early Shock Doctrine adherent. In just a couple of years in the 1990s his Conservatives cut billions from hospitals and schools; eliminated transit funding; gutted labour law and employment equity; slashed welfare rates; froze minimum wage; slashed the Environment Ministry; eliminated "red tape" that ultimately resulted in tainted water deaths in Walkerton; cut tax rates repeatedly; downloaded services to municipalities; wiped out affordable housing; cancelled subways and laid the foundation for privatizing.

It doesn't need to be like this in 2018 – there is actually NO spending crisis. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives points out that public expenditures have not kept up with economic growth, so Ontario is spending a smaller percentage of our overall earnings on public services than we did in the past. Fair taxes and other progressive economic policies would help to bring in the money we need to deliver quality public services.

We know what the Ford government's handbook is. Let's bring our own handbook to the game. Labour Council's achieving a "State of Readiness" prepares local unions for powerful campaigns to take on aggressive employers, governments and global corporate interests. Along with the Campaign Planning Handbook, we can see how to lay out steps for successful strategic planning, developing an alliance policy, and engaging members.

Let's get ready for the big fights to come. Ford and his Conservative MPPs will try to gut workers' rights - we need to protect them. The government will attack public services of all kinds. We'll have to step up and protect education, health care and municipal programs, along with other important services. In the coming months we hope to call a major gathering similar to the Stewards Assembly of 2009. Even if we don't win every fight, we have to take them on. Along the way, we'll win some battles and retain our dignity. Our recent statements "The Next Four Years" and "Work for Justice" have identified the tasks in front of us. Let's work together with our allies and a united labour movement, fighting strategically and with discipline to defeat the mean-spirited agenda of the Ford Conservatives.

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