

WHERE DOES THE LABOUR MOVEMENT GO FROM HERE?

Early Reflections on the 2025 Federal and Ontario Elections



May 1, 2025

We have just come through two back-to-back elections in Ontario, and there is a lot to do and think about.

On April 28, we elected Mark Carney – a Liberal corporate banker – to oversee a minority government as Prime Minister of Canada. On February 27, we re-elected Doug Ford – a Conservative multi-millionaire business owner – as Premier of Ontario.

Both election outcomes were largely motivated by concerns about Donald Trump, his trade war, his romance with tech oligarchs and fossil fuel champions, and his disrespectful musings about Canada. Fearing undue U.S. influence in Canada, workers voted in near-record numbers federally.

Carney and Ford's elections were also influenced by fears of what would happen if Trump's ideas flourished in Canada, as some Canadian politicians were promoting.

In the end, 10 federal NDP seats fell to the Conservatives and seven to the Liberals in the federal election, so we lost representatives who brought us dental care, pharmacare, \$10 a day childcare, anti-scab legislation, and more. (Our archaic first-past-the-post system keeps us closer to a two-party system, and "strategic voting" reinforces that.) However, we have held the federal Liberals to a minority government, which is a small but important outcome.

Many workers voted Liberal because they feared what Poilievre would attack or cut or they voted for the Conservatives because they believed Poilievre would address their frustration over affordability and the housing crisis. It is clear the NDP has some soul-searching to do regarding how to connect with workers on the issues of concern to them.

While we are relying on Carney and Ford to defend our sovereignty and stand up to Trump, we insist they act quickly to protect workers and communities against the effects of the trade war. At the same time, we oppose the "free market," anti-immigrant, and anti-union policies we hear regularly. Instead, we call on political leaders to address the *real* issues working people were already struggling with *before* Trump. The Prime Minister and the Premier must address the affordability crisis, move forward the work of the NDP which expanded medicare for the first time in decades, challenge scapegoating, and take real action to address climate change.

Last Fall, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council kicked off our Fight For A Better Future campaign. It aimed to help union members to grapple with right-wing political parties that were deceitfully targeting workers. The goals were to stop wealthy corporations from putting profits ahead of people, and stop their political friends from making it easy for them to do that. When early elections were called this year, the campaign shifted to talk more specifically about politics. In April 2025, we held a Heads of Unions Summit, Labour Vs. Trump, the Trade War, and Right-Wing Politicians, where we shared and learned lessons about organizing for the future.

History shows us that if we keep organizing, we can build our power and rebuild representation by truly worker-supportive politicians. Over the next few months, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council will collaborate with our affiliates, other labour bodies, and our community allies to outline ways to do the following:

- Ensure solidarity across the labour movement
- Continue to address the root causes of working peoples' anxieties (e.g., affordability, the housing crisis) so that workers do not feel they need to turn to politicians who stoke their fears

- Fight to defend and expand strong public services
- Strategize how to avoid Canada turning into a two-party country, like the United States, including capitalizing on minority and opposition political opportunities
- Create a plan to educate workers to resist “strategic voting” and push for proportional representation

The Labour Council resolves to:

1. Reshape the Labour Council’s Fight For A Better Future campaign to address the new political realities, and include updated priorities for action, lessons learned, and new action and discussion guides
2. Urge affiliates to participate in the Fight For A Better Future campaign as it is rolled out

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