

FORD LEADS CHARGE AGAINST DEMOCRACY

At the Service of His Corporate Friends, Not Workers!



June 5, 2025

Ontario's Premier Doug Ford has the highest popularity ratings of any premier in Canada, according to a recent survey. Taking aim at Trump's tariffs soon after they were threatened, Ford convinced Ontario electors that he deserved another chance to run this province. He was re-elected in the unnecessary provincial election he called in February.

Ford won by donning the Captain Canada cape and he hasn't looked back. But let's be clear: he is *not* fighting for Canadians or Ontarians' wellbeing. Instead, like Trump, he continues to prioritize his own pet projects and his developer and wealthy corporate pals. Just take a look at Bill 5, the so-called "Protect Ontario by Unleashing our Economy Act." It continues a real turn to the right.

This legislation – introduced by private-school educated Energy Minister Stephen Lecce – introduces policies that were not mentioned in the Conservative party's platform nor were they mentioned by any of the Conservative candidates during the election campaign.

Among the wide-ranging powers included in Bill 5, the Ford government could create "special economic zones" anywhere in the province. Within these zones, Ford, through secretive Cabinet-deliberations, can override all existing laws and regulations around labour conditions, employment standards, worker health and safety, and environmental protections, as well as municipal regulations. While the expectation is that Bill 5 has to do with the "Ring of Fire", the reference to Ontario Place makes it clear the government intends to impose "special economic zones" anywhere it's convenient for them. There are no remedies and no legal rights for anyone who is negatively affected.

Bill 5's other Schedules undermine Indigenous rights, environmental standards and climate action, public health, and local and province-wide democracy. These include shortening approval times for mining projects and slashing endangered species legislation.

These powers allow Ford and his Conservative Cabinet Ministers to operate above the law, purportedly to advance unregulated industrialization in the face of a trade war and economic uncertainty. We have seen what happens with unregulated and unbridled industrialization. In the late 19th century, the "Robber Barons" of the times amassed enormous profits while establishing monopolies, exploiting workers, destroying natural resources, and displacing Indigenous communities. We can expect that if Bill 5 proceeds, there will be a small number of winners and a large number of those who suffer from the consequences.

Like then, this means slashing away science and evidence-informed decision making in consultation with experts. This means leaving aside the input and interests of the public, some of whom voted for Ford and his MPPs, and whose taxes will pay for whatever may happen. It means the absence of meaningful consultation with Indigenous peoples. It means that local democracy would be run over by Cabinet decisions with no clarity about who would benefit. The result: private profit at public expense.

Bill 5 is being rushed through despite articulate critiques of all aspects of the legislation. It won't take long for scandals to emerge. We witnessed this with the Greenbelt corruption, the chaos with pandemic-era MZOs, and the boondoggle happening with Ford's private spa Therme at Ontario Place.

Doug Ford's justification for his controversial Bill 5 is to protect Ontario's economy against the threats posed by U.S. President Donald Trump by reducing red tape and speeding up approvals of major projects. According to them, "we need to get rid of unnecessary red tape, make it easier for companies to invest, to hire and to grow,

and that's exactly what Bill 5 is going to do." Bill 5 is not worth the cost. If worker power is unleashed, it is Ontario's 8.7 million workers who will do the work to ensure a productive economy, not Ford's friends. The Labour Council and the rest of the labour movement have identified the priorities for governments to deal productively with the trade war, including using government procurement, building strong public services, and prioritizing "made in Canada."

With the hasty and careless passage of Bill 5, we must collectively defend Indigenous sovereignty, advance public alternatives that genuinely create good jobs, and stand firm in protecting the rights and standards our members and communities rely on.

Bill 5 follows an alarming trend developing in Canada at the federal, provincial, and municipal level. In other provincial legislation, the Minister of Education has the power to sell off publicly owned properties, including those held by school boards. Federally, we have a Liberal government, similarly swept to power under the shadow of Trump, which is likewise saying "Build Baby Build," which they plan to accomplish by ramming through more pipelines, and cutting workplace and environmental standards in the name of "removing internal trade barriers." In Toronto and many York Region municipalities, we have seen the passage of several protest "bubble zone" by-laws, to stifle dissent in the cities - with Carney threatening to pass federal legislation banning protests as too.

One by one, they are attacking workers' rights, public services, the environment, and our democracy.

With these attacks, they say they are friends of workers with concerns about affordability, but what they offer will deliver only austerity. And scapegoating will be austerity's constant companion, in order to deflect the real causes.

Let's lift the cover off of these turns-to-the-right cloaked in vague words, and claims of friendship and protection!

The Labour Council resolves to:

1. Work with affiliates to continue organizing unionized workers against wealthy corporations and their political friends through the Fight For A Better Future Campaign
2. Work with education affiliates and allies to continue the Fund Our Schools campaign, which fights provincial underfunding of schools
3. Urge the federal government to implement the seven priorities for workers outlined in the pre-election actions
4. Join allies challenging Toronto's protest "bubble zone" bylaw and resist any efforts to bring in similar national legislation
5. Stand with Indigenous land defenders who are resisting development legislation by provincial and federal governments that go counter to the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and who are demanding meaningful consultations

Toronto & York Region Labour Council

895 Don Mills Road
Tower Two, Ste. 730
Don Mills, ON
M3C 1W3

COPE 343



(416) 441-3663



(416) 445-8405



labourcouncil.ca



@labourcouncil