



## **An important message to all CUPE university workers in Ontario:**

University workers across the province are under attack by the Ford government. Your OUIWCC leadership is working closely with CUPE Ontario and CUPE National to defend good jobs and quality post-secondary education.

Knowledge is power. That is why we are providing you with an update so every CUPE university worker has information about where we are right now, and what steps we are taking to support you, and what steps you can take to push back against the Ford attack.

## **Where are we right now?**

The Ford government has moved on a number of fronts to attack universities. Below is a list of the key issues that have arisen as a result of the Ford government.

**A real reduction in budgets**—The Ford government announced a ten per cent reduction in tuition fees. 'Unfunded' means universities were not provided with additional funding to offset this loss of revenue, resulting in an average four per cent cut to university operating budgets—over \$400 million province-wide. Layoffs of contract faculty and staff reductions have already begun.

**Bill 124—interfering in collective bargaining**—Bill 124, *The Protecting a Sustainable Public Service for Future Generations Act, 2019*, was tabled in the Provincial Legislature on June 5. If passed, the bill would impose three-year 'moderation periods' on unionized and non-unionized workplaces, capping wage increases and overall compensation by one per cent per year, and apply to a broad range of employees, employers and unions in Ontario, including universities and colleges.

**Marketization of the university funding formula**—Changes to the university funding formula have been announced that will link funding to flawed labour market measures and commercialization activities, undermining the basic research and reducing funding for smaller departments that teach critical thinking skills. These changes will have far-reaching effects on budget decisions made by university administrators and cause further downward pressure on wages.

**Defunding student unions and democratic services**—The Student Choice Initiative announced by the Ford government eliminated stable per-student dues (similar to union Rand Formula funding) for student unions and the national student movement through cuts to the Canadian Federation of Students. At the same time, democratic student levies for services were made voluntary. Together, this has resulted in the defunding of Pride Centres, Women's Centres, campus radio, campus newspapers, and the Public Interest Research Groups (PIRGs). Cuts to funding has resulted in major job losses at CUPE 1281, which represents many staff providing these services.

**Attack on free speech on campus**—The Ford government has mandated that all universities put in place policies that limit freedom of speech and action on campus. The reactionary nature of these policies will provide cover for alt-right, racist and other extremist groups to have full access to speak and hold events on campus, while prohibiting counter-demonstrations against such viewpoints. Universities which do not establish such codes could face further losses of provincial funding.

**Cuts to student financial assistance**—The Ford government has made regressive changes to Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), eliminated grants and forced all students to take on student debt before accessing grants. This is undermining access to post-secondary education, increasing unsustainable debt burdens for students from marginalized communities, and most students will see an increase in overall cost to their education in spite of the ten per cent tuition fee reduction.

**Attack on retirement security**—The Ford government has announced that it seeks to gut collective agreements for workers who continue to receive pay for the work they do after a certain age. The attacks on the right to receive pay for work done are focused on faculty, but it is possible blue-collar workers will be impacted. The expectation is that the government's ageist policy will push older workers out of their university employment if they are able to receive retirement.

## **What happens now?**

Together with CUPE Ontario and CUPE National, OUWCC is preparing to fight back against the Ford government. CUPE Ontario has scheduled regional meetings for both leadership and members to update them and to discuss our plans to defend good jobs and public services across the province.

You can learn about when and where meetings are taking place by visiting the CUPE Ontario website at [cupe.on.ca](http://cupe.on.ca).

For briefings, articles and upcoming actions and campaigns specific to post-secondary education, visit our partners at [campuscoalition.org](http://campuscoalition.org).

If your local union is currently in bargaining, it is important to continue bargaining and preparing—both as a union and personally—as if Bill 124 wasn't there. At this point, Bill 124 has only received first reading and is not yet law. Even if it does pass, it may be amended. If Bill 124 *does* become law, then we will fight it with every means at our disposal.

Finally, it is imperative that you stay connected with your Local Union and let both the government and your employer know that you are standing strong, in solidarity with your leadership.

Together, we will push back Doug Ford's attack on good jobs and quality post-secondary education.