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Ontario Education Unions Condemn the Passage of Bill 124

TORONTO – Four Ontario unions, representing teachers and education workers across Ontario’s publicly-funded education system, strongly condemn the passage of Bill 124 by the Doug Ford government today.

The Association des enseignantes et enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO), the Elementary Teachers’ Federation of Ontario (ETFO), the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association (OECTA), and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (OSSTF/FEESO), all say that the *Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act* tramples on collective bargaining rights and targets public sector workers with unfair austerity measures for the next three years. The legislation ensures that compensation for educators and other public sector workers will continue to fall behind the rate of inflation.

The passage of the legislation comes just one day after the Minister of Finance bragged to Ontarians that the economy is thriving and that the government is more than a billion dollars ahead of its deficit reduction targets.

The unions, all currently in negotiations with the government for new collective agreements, are preparing a court challenge to the legislation, which likely violates the Charter rights of their members. The unions entered into negotiations in good faith, and have been doing everything they can to move the process forward. With the passage of this legislation, the prospects for good faith bargaining have been all but shattered.

Le gouvernement de Ford ne recule devant rien pour s’imposer, même si ce n’est que pour des raisons idéologiques. Sa cible économique toujours changeante lui a enlevé toute crédibilité. Et maintenant, ce gouvernement ignore les droits des travailleuses et des travailleurs et s’ingère dans la négociation collective. La Charte canadienne des droits et libertés nous accorde le droit de négocier une entente gagnant-gagnant, mais Ford et son gouvernement ont choisi d’ignorer ce droit, » a déclaré le président de l’AEFO, Rémi Sabourin.

“Educators are the heart of the education system that shapes the future of every student,” said ETFO President Sam Hammond. “They are highly-trained professionals and deserve to be fairly compensated. The Ford government is trying to balance its budget at the expense of Ontario students and that is completely unacceptable.”

“The bottom line is that, despite its title, Bill 124 has absolutely nothing to do with protecting the public sector, or making it sustainable,” said Liz Stuart, President of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association. “It is, instead, a statement about how the Ford government chooses to undermine public sector workers and our rights.”

“The Ford government has broken everything it has touched,” said OSSTF/FEESO President Harvey Bischof. “Education, climate action, health care, autism services – you name it and this government has made a mess of it. And now they’ve completely undermined the bargaining process at precisely the moment when educators, parents, and students are most counting on that process to work as it was intended.”

The four unions are promising to explore all available avenues and mechanisms, including the courts, to fight the legislation and restore the right to bargain freely.

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