

MEDIA RELEASE

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"Welcome Back Doug" Protest Party Announced

New Coalition Announces Coordinated Response to Ford Government

TORONTO, ON — Today, a broad-based coalition of organizations advocating for Indigenous communities, the environment, democracy, and public healthcare, education, and other public services released the following statement:

“Together, we stand united against Doug Ford and his government’s anti-democratic, anti-environment, anti-worker, and pro-sprawl agenda.

Since Ford took office in 2018, we have witnessed an assault on Ontario’s most critical public services, on our democratic rights, the rights of Indigenous peoples, and on the environment. We cannot sit by as the future of this province is threatened by this government’s anti-democratic actions.

Ford has purposely undermined and underfunded Ontario’s public health care and education systems, creating staffing shortages and a lack of access to critical services that Ontarians rely on. Bill 124 is unconstitutional and has significantly contributed to the chaos now seen in Ontario’s healthcare system. At the same time, Ford has increased privatization and corporate control in our healthcare and education systems, allowing more and more public funds to be siphoned off for corporate profit.

Ford has also launched an assault on the environment, enacting several measures to weaken the regulatory powers of conservation authorities and even the ability of citizens to oppose planned developments in their own communities through the passing of Bill 23. These measures undermine our democratic rights and serve to enrich wealthy developers at the expense of our province’s future.

The Ford government has also failed numerous times to consult with Indigenous peoples on significant issues and developments that directly affect their lands and Treaty rights.

And the most vulnerable in Ontario, especially those receiving supports from the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), continue to be failed by this government. At a time when the cost-of-living is skyrocketing, they have still failed to launch a much-needed anti-poverty strategy.

On Saturday, February 25, we will come together for a “*Welcome Back Doug*” protest party on the grounds of Queen’s Park, from 11 AM to 1 PM, to announce a multi-faceted action plan for Ontario to fight back against these attacks on Indigenous rights, healthcare, education, the environment, democracy, and to have the government immediately repeal Bills 23 and 124.

While serious in intent, it will be a fun and informative family-friendly event, featuring music, dancing, and singing. You can visit welcomebackdoug.com for more information. We welcome all concerned citizens to join us. Together, we are fighting for a better day.”

QUOTES

“The current government of Ontario has made it clear: corporate profits and privatization are their priorities – the climate crisis, food security, sustainable development, affordable housing, meaningful Indigenous consultation, and even democracy itself do not rank as the critical factors they are. By enacting omnibus legislation like Bills 23 and 39, among others, this government promotes the continuation of unbridled suburban sprawl, threatening farmland, wetlands, and green spaces. That is why we are organizing a coordinated, sustained resistance: to protect the land from this government's pro-development agenda.”

- *Kim Bradshaw, Co-Founder, Greenbelt Guardians and Stop Sprawl Halton*

“What the Ford Conservatives are doing strikes at the heart of what's important to Ontarians. Bill 23 is an assault on the environment, on regulations that are meant to keep us safe, and a funding blow to municipal public services that people rely on and that CUPE members deliver. People across the province, in grassroots organizations, in indigenous communities, labour, environmentalists -- all are joining forces like never before. CUPE Ontario is proud to take its place in this coalition and to protect what we value in our province.”

- *Fred Hahn, President, CUPE Ontario*

“The Ford government is undermining and attacking Ontario's most important and precious assets; our environment, our schools and students, our health care system, and even our democracy. We are seeing the effects across society: closed emergency rooms, chronic burnout among workers and severe staffing shortages, disrespect towards Indigenous communities, and public lands being sold off to Ford's wealthy developer friends. We cannot stand by as our collective future is threatened by the Ford government's pro-privatization, anti-democratic actions.”

- *Karen Littlewood, President, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation*

“The Ford government has zero mandate to undermine our public hospital system and privatize it – this is the destruction of our health care, not an innovation.”

- *Natalie Mehra, Executive Director, Ontario Health Coalition*

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