



Canadian Federation of Students–Ontario
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MEDIA RELEASE

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Back-to-work legislation rewards York’s bad behavior

TORONTO – Students are frustrated with the Ford government’s decision to impose back-to-work legislation on the 3,000 striking education workers of local 3903 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE).

Members of CUPE 3903 had been on strike for five months over issues of job security for contract faculty, protection for teaching assistants, equitable hiring practices and the reversal of a decision made by York University to cut more than 800 unionized graduate assistant jobs.

“Throughout the entire strike process, the administration at York University never bargained in good faith.” said Nour Alideeb, Chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario. “Forcing the members of CUPE 3903 to go back to work before the University makes an effort to engage in meaningful dialogue about the issues undermines the collective bargaining process.”

“Rather than encourage the administration of York University to engage their workers in a meaningful bargaining process, the premier and the minister have used their authority to take away these workers’ rights to strike.” said Alideeb. “This move sends a clear message to employers that they do not have to listen to the issues brought forward by their workers. It also signals to students and academic workers that this is a government for employers and administrations.”

Back-to-work legislations are a dangerous precedent that rob workers of their biggest bargaining chip; the right to legally strike when the employer negotiates in bad faith. Premier Ford’s back-to-work legislation for CUPE 3903 means that the issues that members of the local were fighting for will continue to go unaddressed, thus impacting the quality of education at York University. By forcing CUPE 3903 members back to work, Premier Ford has not only jeopardized the working condition of 3,000 workers, but also the learning conditions of over 50,000 students at York University.

The issues protested by CUPE 3903 are not unique to York University. Over the past decade, cuts in funding have led to an unprecedented increase in the reliance of precariously employed contract teaching faculty, rather than full-time faculty, to conduct the bulk of teaching at colleges and universities across the province. Similar issues were raised in by striking faculty at colleges across Ontario in 2017, which also resulted in back-to-work legislation under former Premier Kathleen Wynne.

“There are no winners in this dispute. By undermining the legitimate efforts of the members of CUPE 3903 to protest their working conditions and supporting the administration at York University in ignoring their obligation to engage in bargaining, this government has made it harder for faculty and students to raise concerns about challenges in the system.”



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The Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario is the largest and oldest student organization in Ontario, representing more than 350,000 college and university students in all regions of the province.

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