

Almost 200,000 teachers prepare job actions against Ontario government

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

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The *World Socialist Web Site* invites workers and other readers to contribute to this regular feature.

### Almost 200,000 teachers prepare job actions against Ontario government

Some 83,000 members of the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario announced last week that they will step up their work-to-rule campaign and, in addition, begin a series of one-day rotating strikes on January 20 if the provincial government does not address the issues at the bargaining table. Also beginning this week, 45,000 members of the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association will embark on a work-to-rule campaign and announced a one-day provincewide strike to take place on January 21.

These job actions follow on from a work-to-rule initiative combined with a series of weekly regional rotating one-day strikes by 60,000 Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) members. This Wednesday will see strikes in Hamilton, Oshawa, Ottawa and a number of central and northern Ontario towns.

The OSSTF strikes, which began with the first province-wide full walkout by Ontario high school teachers in 22 years, is indicative of teachers' determination to resist increased class sizes, the slashing of support staff, the introduction of mandatory e-learning courses as well as real wage cuts.

The OSSTF and three other teacher unions (representing elementary, Catholic and French school members) announced last month that they will also launch a challenge to the Conservative government's wage suppression legislation in court. The government of Premier Doug Ford has passed legislation limiting all provincial public sector workers to a 1 percent per year wage rise. The unions are seeking a 2 percent per year increase to keep pace with inflation. The teachers' court challenge stipulates that the government's wage cap legislation is a violation of their constitutional right to free and unhindered collective bargaining.

### Argentine municipal workers strike for overdue pay

Municipal workers in the city of San José del Rincón, a city in Argentina's Santa Fe province, went on a 24-hour strike January 9. The 260 city workers are members of the Municipal Workers Syndical Association (Asoem).

The city government claims that it depends on the provincial government to provide the funds to pay the workers every month, but that the latter failed to deposit the pay for January. The municipality has made two different offers to pay the money in installments. Asoem rejected both. The union said that it would hold assemblies January 13 to decide a course of action if the workers were not paid before then.

### Public workers in Argentina march, strike for unpaid inflation adjustment

State workers, including educators and health professionals, marched on January 8 to the Independence Plaza in San Miguel Tucumán, capital of Tucumán province, Argentina. The march was a protest against the governor's unilateral decree suspending a trigger clause agreed to last April, in which pay was to be pegged to inflation. Since October, when the decree went into effect, the inflation rate has reached 14 percent.

A number of unions, including the Self-Organized Health Workers Syndicate (SiTAS) and the SADOP and ADIUNT teachers' unions, called the march. The next day, hospital and clinic workers struck, though they maintained emergency services.

### Chilean pre-university workers protest wave of firings

Workers and supporters held protests January 9 at offices of the Pre-university of Chile, or Cpech, one of the nation's largest college preparation schools. The protesters denounced a wave of firings across the system. At one campus, in Concepción, about

180 workers were recently terminated.

Cpech is highly profitable, while it maintains a system of short-term contracted personnel. A union official had this to say about the institution and the workers' situation: "They work amplifying content with stratospheric profits, but we workers are subjected to constant instability."

### **Brazil: Police teargas and arrest protesters opposing hikes in public transportation fares**

A large protest was held on January 10 on main streets in São Paulo against the most recent increase in public transportation fares. Police launched teargas to disperse the protesters. Two protesters were arrested as well. The Free Fare Movement organized the action.

### **Bolivian university workers strike for unpaid wages**

The University Workers Syndicate at Sucre, Bolivia's San Francisco Xavier University, called an indefinite strike January 11 to demand the payment of their wages. A recent decision arrived through arbitration decreed that the university had to pay salaries on the 10th of every month, but the funds were not deposited by then.

Workers at clinics and the university's television station were instructed to only work with emergency crews.

The union called for a meeting on January 13 to determine if the teachers, who have just returned from their yearend break, would continue the strike.

### **Belizean nurses' union task force criticizes conditions and policies**

A press release by the Nurses Association of Belize's Nurses Task Force shed light on the dire condition of the nursing profession in the northeastern Central American country. In recent interviews, the president of the union, Darrell Spencer, discussed outstanding issues mentioned in the document.

Spencer mentioned several demands including: filling of posts in the health services, retention of the acting deputy director of health services, inclusion of a nurse in the selection and recruitment panel, shortages of materials and equipment, and a nursing shortage "that is negatively impacting the delivery of quality healthcare services to the people of Belize."

Regarding the shortage of nurses, Spencer called their pay scale "ridiculous" and the lowest salary of the professions requiring bachelor's degrees. For that reason, many nurses leave the country

for more gainful employment in Europe and Canada.

The task force accused the health and public services ministries of not acting in good faith as fruitless discussions have dragged on since September, and it "calls on the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Public Service to respond in writing to all correspondences previously sent by the Nursing Task Force within the next five days to avoid escalation of tension within the nursing community."

In response to a question about what the Nurses Association, which has at least a thousand members, will do if the ministries continue to ignore the nurses' complaints, amandala.com noted, "Spencer explained that they are relying on the public to help them bring pressure to bear on the authorities."

### **Siskiyou County, California, workers in five-day strike**

Workers in Siskiyou County in the far north of California launched a five-day strike January 5 to protest poverty-level wages. The walkout involved some 300 members of the Organized Employees of Siskiyou County who say they are among the lowest paid public workers in the state.

The workers are from a variety of departments and include hourly employees up to middle management. Workers took a pay cut in 2011. Some report they are receiving public assistance.

The county offered a 2 percent raise on ratification and a 2.75 percent raise the following year, a proposal workers deem inadequate. The OESC has called for a 3 percent raise retroactive to 2019 and another 3 percent, a pathetic increase that would do nothing to address workers' needs.

In addition, the county is demanding a \$500 monthly cut in what it pays for family medical insurance. Workers carried signs reading "More Work, Less Pay, NO WAY," "We Believe in Contract Fairness" and "Kickin' ass for the Working Class."

### **Minnesota snowplow drivers vote down contract**

Public service workers in St. Louis County, Minnesota, members of Teamsters Local 320, roundly rejected management's latest contract offer by a 117 to 8 vote. The snowplow drivers say the major unresolved issue is sick leave accruals.

A 10-day "cooling off" period ends January 14, but the union has not set a strike deadline.



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