

Pennsylvania and Ohio teachers set strike dates; city workers in London, Ontario Canada discuss protest over Omicron safety

## Workers Struggles: The Americas

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

Latin America

financial crisis. The Anthoc health providers union has called for government intervention to investigate and fix the hospital administration.

### Partial strike by Argentine judicial workers over labor conditions

Beginning on December 16, judicial workers in San Luis, capital of Argentina's central San Luis province, stopped working at noon and demonstrated to demand changes to working conditions. With no response from management, the judicial workers union, the Puntano Judicial Syndicate (SiJuPu), has said that it will "harden" the measures it will take.

The SiJuPu's complaints include understaffing, overwork, structural modifications of the court, changes in the exam system and requirements to take them, low salaries, poor condition of buildings, lack of dialog with management and schedule changes. The union claims that it has made appeals to ministers of the Superior Court of Justice without a satisfactory response, necessitating the taking of the action to call attention to workers' complaints.

In fact, Superior Court officials have condemned the judicial workers when they demonstrated outside the Superior Court building, calling them "cowardly, violent, defiant, provocative and clearly intimidating," and describing the protest as a "gang action," and have called the strike an "unfounded, unjustified and illegal strike."

SiJuPu convoked a demonstration for December 17 at the city of Villa de Merlo and has broached the possibility of calling a general strike if there is no response to their demands.

### Uruguayan interdepartmental transport workers stop work for 24 hours to demand progress in negotiations

Members of Uruguay's UNOTT transport workers union struck on December 17 to coincide with a meeting at the Labor and Social Security Ministry (MTSS). The workers, who operate routes among the nation's 19 departments, had held a similar 24-hour walkout the week before. At a picket in front of the Tres Cruces bus company entrance that day, police fired rubber bullets and injured at least one protester.

UNOTT claims that the guidelines for raises agreed by the government and businesses are not enough to offset the erosion of earning power due to inflation, which shows no sign of abating. The workers' earning power has fallen 13 percent over the last year, while the government and companies have agreed on a measly 1.3 percent raise for the two-year contract.

Tripartite talks took place at the MTSS during the stoppage. Later, UNOTT director Juan Arellano told reporters, "We possibly arrived at a final accord if the workers endorse it." An assembly was scheduled for this week to discuss and vote on the proposed accord. The holding of another one-day strike planned for December 23 is contingent on the outcome of the assembly.

### Colombian hospital workers strike for unpaid wages

As of December 17, health professionals at the Luruaco Hospital in northern Colombia remain on the strike that they began December 10 over unpaid wages and vacation pay. However, they have continued to perform emergency services and COVID-19 vaccinations.

The workers have not received their salaries for up to four months. In addition, they have not received vacation pay and other benefits.

The workers blame the mismanagement of the manager and the president of the board of directors for dragging the hospital into a

### Bus company workers in Argentine city strike, block roads over attacks on drivers

Following two separate attacks on bus drivers in suburbs of Buenos Aires on the night of December 15, workers from eight urban bus lines stopped work. In the first instance, a rider attacked the driver who had asked him to wear his mask. The rider, who was intoxicated, used a bottle to cut the driver. In the second incident, the driver was cut by a thief who attempted to rob him.

Upon hearing of the attacks, workers for one company, Almafuerte, blocked traffic and marched to the Municipal Palace to demand more

security. The workers agreed to return to work later that morning after the provincial police agreed to have a greater presence along the various routes.

The bus drivers' union called for assemblies to decide on a course of action.

United States

### **Pleasant Valley, Pennsylvania, teachers set February strike date**

The Pleasant Valley Education Association (PVEA) notified the Pleasant Valley, Pennsylvania school district it will strike February 28 unless a new contract is in place. According to the PVEA, the strike authorization was overwhelming.

The union and district have been negotiating for almost a year without progress. The old contract expired June 30, 2021. Teachers are seeking better wages, benefits and working conditions and warning that without these, the district will see its best teachers leave. Negotiators for the district are not entertaining teachers demands, pointing to budget constraints. Superintendent James Konrad responded to the teacher's strike threat, "The board's goal is clear: enter into a contract with the association that is sustainable considering the financial conditions of the district."

Back in 2020, the district threatened to furlough 52 paraprofessionals and 47 teachers and administrative employees due to budget pressures. Negotiations will resume in January with a state mediator.

### **Euclid, Ohio teachers protest stalled contract talks, authorize ten-day strike**

Teachers packed a Euclid, Ohio, school board meeting December 8 to voice their disapproval after 10 months of fruitless bargaining have failed to reach a settlement. Some 400 members of the Euclid Teachers Association (ETA) voted in November to authorize a ten-day strike.

Details of the negotiations were not aired. But Josh Stephens, the ETA spokesperson, told the audience, "We would like the Board to drop their demand for the right to transfer teachers at any time during the school year. We find that this would be highly disruptive to student education and success."

In what was considered a provocation by the board, it took time out to eat cake to honor retiring board members. "We don't even get lunch," protested a teacher. "There's no substitutes. We don't get lunch and you're eating cake in front of us?"

Back in 2019, the district turned its transportation operations over to the giant contractor First Student, costing 19 of the 72 bus drivers their jobs.

### **Omaha city workers demand jobs back after city switches to outside contractor**

City workers for the Omaha Housing Authority (OHA) held a protest outside the agency's board meeting December 16 to demand their jobs back. The 18 workers, members of Nebraska Public Employees Local 251, voted 16-2 to reject a number of concessions and the OHA eliminated them and hired a private contractor to replace them.

The workers objected to wage cuts, a new four-day ten-hour work schedule and management's right to impose last-minute work assignments for Sundays. The OHA also demanded the elimination of overtime for both weekdays and weekends.

Canada

### **London, Ontario municipal workers discussing work refusals as Omicron wave spreads**

Significant discontent amongst city workers in London, Ontario has coalesced into growing threats to refuse work assignments due to the failure of municipal authorities to ensure that employees are fully vaccinated. There are 2,800 workers employed by the city. Although there is a vaccination mandate in most city departments, municipal officials have allowed such a broad and unverifiable vaccine exemption that workers have no knowledge of who amongst their co-workers may be unvaccinated.

As a result, Alastair Bruff, the president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) for city outside workers, told the *London Free Press* last week that vaccinated members of his local union are discussing work refusals.

"We're going to get a snow event shortly, we do live in Canada, and I have no idea what's going to happen that day when snowplows are supposed to go out," said Bruff. "Vaccinated people (are) saying pretty loudly, I'm not going in the truck with them (unvaccinated workers). The union official refrained from backing any such action, complaining that he had to represent the unvaccinated as well as the vaccinated and had not received enough guidance from city management in the matter.

Similar sentiments have been voiced by city firefighters and other workers. The brewing movement comes amidst the beginning of an unprecedented spike in COVID infections in the province and across the country as the new Omicron variant aggressively spreads.

The city's vaccine policy requires workers to provide proof of vaccination unless they claim a medical, personal creed or human rights exemption. Those claiming an exemption must merely sign a private "oath" citing one of the exemptions. No doctor's note or any other substantiation for their refusal to be vaccinated is required. In addition, city officials have not released any information on how many individuals have claimed an exemption. As a result, vaccinated workers are deprived of any knowledge concerning the vaccination status of employees they may be working alongside.



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