Workers Struggles: The Americas

Bus drivers strike in two Argentine cities; Alberta practical nurses vote to strike

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Buenos Aires bus drivers strike

Transit bus drivers employed by four companies in Metropolitan Buenos Aires launched a strike on November 7. The issue is the payment of back wages they are owed. No end-date for the strike has been set. About one dozen lines are involved, some of which connect with downtown Buenos Aires. On Saturday November 8 striking drivers rallied at one of the terminals (Moqsa. Inc).

The drivers are owed wages, and raises, that should have been paid on the second week of October.

Tucuman transit workers protest strike

The Bus Drivers Union initiated a protest strike in the northwestern Argentina city of Tucuman on Wednesday November 4 against the layoff of 154 drivers by a transit conglomerate. The strike continues and has shut down 18 out of the city's 19 bus lines.

The group of companies that form the bus cartel AETAT claim that the layoffs were a response to a financial crisis, as an alternative to raising fares or asking for subsidies from the government. The strikers reject those excuses, claiming that the real reason for the layoffs is to pressure for government subsidies. In addition, bus tickets are being constantly raised across the country, often above the rate of inflation. In at least 18 cities fares have increased 2,000 percent since 2022, relative to a rate of inflation of 870 percent during the same period. In Tucuman, fares increased 1,362 percent during the same period. The companies want more.

Durango, Mexico teachers, parents and students protest firings

On November 3 dozens of students, parents, teachers, and residents of Lerdo, Durango State marched through the streets of the city in support of five "dissident" professors fired by the Institute of Normal [teaching] Schools [IESEN], demanding that they be rehired. They also demanded the immediate firing of the school's director, whom the demonstrators accuse of corruption and authoritarianism, including her appropriation of wages owed to a teacher that recently passed away.

Protesters began their march at the IESEN building and rallied at the Plaza de Armas square in downtown Lerdo.

Absent from the protest were representatives of the trade union that represents the teachers (SNTE local 35), demonstrating its complicity with management.

Nurses at Ironwood, Michigan hospital authorize strike

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Nurses at the Aspirus Ironwood Hospital in Michigan's Upper Peninsula voted unanimously November 5 to grant strike authorization as hospital management seeks to eliminate the current wage structure for one that contains step increases. Members of the Michigan Nurses Association (MNA) voted unanimously back on October 15 to reject Aspirus' contract offer that seeks to impose a "market-based" wage structure.

The MNA says that Aspirus' wage proposal would result in lower wages for nearly half of its nurses compared to the union's proposal. In a statement, management declared, "The outdated 'step schedule' the MNA insists on handcuffs Aspirus..."

Nurses are also opposed to management's cost-cutting that has resulted in a decision to close the hospital's child delivery unit at the end of 2025. The last negotiating session occurred October 29. The two sides will meet again November 14.

Negotiations began back on March 6 and the old agreement expired August 2.

Alberta practical nurses vote to strike

Some 16,000 licensed practical nurses (LPNs), members of the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees, voted by 98 percent last week for strike action should the provincial government's Alberta Health Services and the union fail to conclude a contract agreement in the coming weeks. The nurses will now enter mediation. The earliest that they can give notice to strike is November 17.

Should a strike occur, an essential services agreement will require a portion of the LPNs to continue to staff medical facilities. However, due to the employer's severe understaffing of medical facilities, there already are vacancy rates of up to 12 percent which put current staffing levels in some areas lower than what the essential services agreement prescribes.

Union officials have speculated that due to the essential service agreement that is already in place, the right-wing government of Premier Danielle Smith will not see the need to impose another strike-breaking edict as was done two weeks ago against the striking provincial teachers. In that strike, Smith used the Canadian constitution's "notwithstanding clause" to ride roughshod over the teachers' legal right to strike.

The practical nurses are demanding a significant wage increase. Last year, the 33,000 registered nurses in the province agreed to a contract settlement that provided for a 20 percent wage rise spread over four years. The LPNs, however, have been offered only a 12 percent increase over the same four-year period.

Toronto public housing workers vote to strike

Some 900 front-line public housing workers employed by the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC) and the Toronto Seniors Housing Corporation (TSHC) have voted overwhelmingly to strike in pursuit of a significant wage increase and management action to increase staffing levels to address unsafe working conditions that arise from escalating physical attacks on workers in the impoverished and socially distressed housing complexes.

The TCHC houses over 100,000 tenants in Toronto, while the TSHC provides social housing for 15,000 low-income seniors.

The workers have been without a contract since December 2024. Their union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, has filed the required "no-board report" with the provincial Ministry of Labour that signals an impasse in negotiations. Once the no-board report is processed over the next few days, workers will be in a legal strike position by the end of November.

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