***MPP Name***

***Constituency Office Address***

***Date***

Topic: URGENT: Bill 124 and its effect on post-secondary workers

Dear [MPP],

I am writing to you to express my dismay regarding the government’s Bill 124, Protecting a Sustainable Public Sector for Future Generations Act, 2019. This proposed legislation is just another example of the many irresponsible and careless post-secondary education reforms proposed by the Ford Conservatives. I am writing to you as a member of CUPE 3902, a (insert job) [and a student], at the University of Toronto. I am writing to let you know that, if passed, Bill 124 will be detrimental to my work, my education and my ability to sustain myself financially.

I am a member of the future generations referred to by this Bill, and instead of protected, I am being disadvantaged by this proposed legislation. I am an educator, a public sector worker, skilled in my field, and I barely make a living wage. Under Bill 124, my wage rate will not even keep up with yearly inflation and the rising cost of living in Ontario. Under Bill 124, my Union will not be able to effectively advocate for my needs and negotiate for the good of its 9,500 members.

Members of CUPE 3902 are teaching assistants, writing instructors, sessional lecturers, post-doctoral fellows, professional musicians, and

Under Bill 124, a teaching assistant who takes in $17,500 yearly will make $70 more in 2020 than they did in 2019. Under Bill 124, a post-doctoral fellow who spends 40 hours each week developing cutting edge research, who balances lab work with family life, who can barely afford to live in Toronto, will make $400 more in 2020 than they did in 2019. Under Bill 124, a contract lecturer who does not even have a guaranteed teaching load from year to year, who educates hundreds of students each semester, who is an expert in their field, will make $300 more in 2020 than they did in 2019 (if they’re even lucky enough to secure work next year).

Let’s put this into perspective:

Our wages can go up a maximum of 1% per year under Bill 124.

Our rent will go up 2% in these same years.

Our food costs have gone up 1.5-3% this year alone.

Our public transportation costs went up 3.5% in 2019.

Our childcare costs are already incredibly high - $72/month/child - and are now rising thanks to the government’s cancellation of a childcare centre support fund.

Let’s put this into perspective:

Bill 124 does not help workers, families, or anyone other than your out-of-touch government.

Bill 124 cannot be separated from other Ford Conservative attacks on the public education sector. Institutional funding cuts and changes to the OSAP program, together with Bill 124, spell disaster for higher education in Ontario. The changes will have a negative impact on all workers on campus, especially those in the teaching and service roles. What we will see as a result of the devastating funding cuts to post-secondary budgets are increased class sizes with no compensatory teaching hires. We will see a diminished ability to protect worker and student health and safety. We will see job losses as organizations and departments are forced to let go those with the lowest seniority and security. We will see dirty campuses, overcrowded classrooms, and unengaged students. How can post-secondary Employers bargain fairly and freely with labour Unions when the current government has effectively slashed their budgets?

Likewise, the changes to O.S.A.P. are despicable. They are short sighted, inconsiderate and leave students vulnerable to an intense amount of debt following graduation. Eliminating the O.S.A.P. tuition grants for low-income students will make post-secondary education even less accessible to under-privileged members of our society. Eliminating the six-month interest-free grace period for student loans will increase the student debt burden and make post-secondary study still less accessible to low-income students. This means many student loan holders will be forced to take on extra work in addition to their studies. This means economically underprivileged students will be scrambling to find part-time, short-term, precarious employment as Ontario’s economy shows no signs of increasing the number of full-time stable jobs. This means that the moment we walk out of University, degree in hand, we will incur interest on our loans despite not being in a suitable financial position to pay back our loans. The 6 month grace period allowed students to gather their resources, calm their heads, and plan for the future without being put at a significant financial disadvantage. You have taken that away. You have created a structure that advantages those already in economically stable environments and increases the divide between wealthy and poor undergraduate and graduate student and workers.

As a member of CUPE 3902, it is our collective priority to push back against these cuts however we can, as they have a negative impact on all our fellow members, students, and allied organizations. We demand Bill 124 be withdrawn and that our right to free collective bargaining be respected.

All residents of Ontario will be feeling these cuts to the post-secondary sector, and more public sector cuts just keep coming. These changes do not bode well for a more equitable, prosperous and healthy Ontario.

As a result of these changes, I cannot, in good conscience, vote for you or your party in the next election, unless you and your party take an active role in reversing these devastating changes to post-secondary sector.

Regards,

***Your Name***

***Designation (e.g. Teaching Assistant, Sessional Lecturer, Post-Doctoral Fellow, Graduate Student)***

***Address***

***University/College campus***