

Ontario Teachers protest Bill 115 (Putting Students First Act)

Timing

September

2012

to:

June

2013

Location and Goals

Country:

Canada

Location City/State/Province:

Toronto, Ontario

Location Description:

Across Ontario

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

The goal of teachers was to convince the Ontario Parliament to repeal Bill 115 (The "Putting Students First Act").

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 001. Public speeches
- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 016. Picketing
- 019. Wearing of symbols>Teachers from Hamilton Highschools all wore black outfits to protest Bill 115
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 060. Suspension of social and sports activities

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 015. Group lobbying
- 016. Picketing
- 060. Suspension of social and sports activities
- 062. Student strike
- 104. Professional strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 060. Suspension of social and sports activities

Methods in 4th segment:

- 060. Suspension of social and sports activities

Methods in 5th segment:

- 060. Suspension of social and sports activities

Methods in 6th segment:

Notes on Methods:

The teachers' unions stopped their refusal to participate in voluntary extracurricular activities on 1 March 2013, after which no nonviolent action took place. However, the Ontario Parliament did not finish addressing the demands of the teachers until June 2013.

Segment Length:

1 month and 20 days

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- Ontario Public School Teachers
- Ontario Students

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

Partners:

Ontario Public School Students, Ontario Labor Unions

External allies:

Not known

Involvement of social elites:

Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario
- Ontario Elementary School Students
- Ontario Labour Unions

- Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation

Groups in 2nd Segment:

- Ontario School Boards
- Ontario Secondary School Students

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Segment Length:

1 month and 20 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

Ontario Parliament

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not known

Campaigner violence:

Not known

Repressive Violence:

Not known

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

6 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

2 points out of 3 points

Total points:

9 out of 10 points

In March 2012, the parliament of the province of Ontario in Canada notified public schoolteachers that they would have a two-year salary freeze. Premier Dalton McGuinty, the head of the provincial government, announced this initiative as a step toward reducing the government's \$14.8 billion deficit. On 11 September, the Ontario Parliament passed Bill 115, called the "Putting Students First Act," which locked all public school teachers into a two-year contract with frozen wages, decreased teachers' sick days, and prohibited teachers from going on strike. McGuinty said that the bill put the needs of public school students first by cutting government spending to prevent increased taxation.

Immediately after the passage of Bill 115, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario threatened that its members would refuse to lead voluntary extracurricular activities to protest the new law. The two major teachers' unions, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers'

Federation, opposed Bill 115 and demanded that the Parliament repeal it. In addition, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario encouraged its teachers to participate in "McGuinty Mondays," during which teachers would not participate in any school-based meetings. That same day, 11 September, Fred Hahn, the Ontario president of the Canadian Union of Public Employees, condemned the Ontario government for penalizing school teachers in order to compensate for tax breaks for the corporate sector. On Wednesday 12 September high school teachers in Hamilton, a port city on Lake Ontario, wore black to protest Bill 115. In addition, the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation asked its members to withdraw from extracurricular activities in protest.

On Friday 21 September the Guelph District Labour Council held a march and rally in support of education workers in Guelph and Wellington Counties in Central Ontario. Roughly 350 marchers met at the Goldie Mills Park and marched to Guelph Provincial Parliamentarian Liz Sandals' Office at 4:00 pm. Representatives from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation District 18, the Upper Grand District School Boards' Elementary Teacher Federation of Ontario, the local United Food and Commercial Workers Union, the local Custodial Workers Union, The Canadian Auto Workers Union, the Guelph Student Mobilization Committee, and the Guelph Transit Union gave speeches by megaphone in front of Sandals' office. Marchers also chanted slogans such as "no bullying," "repeal 1,1,5," "shame," and "negotiate not legislate". On that same day, teachers, educational support staff, and other sector workers held a rally in Waterdown in front of Member of the Provincial Parliamentarian Ted McMeekin's office. In addition to teachers, members of the local Steelworkers Union joined the rally in solidarity with the teachers.

On 2 October 2012, one hundred Grade 7 and 8 students from Calvin Park Public School rallied to protest the conflict between the teachers and the Ontario government, wearing t-shirts carrying the slogan "Figure it out Now!" Student organizer of the rally Ginny Weese said that she was concerned that the fight between the government and the teachers would compromise the educational opportunities of Ontario students. Other students, such as Kaelyn McGinty, explicitly opposed Bill 115, claiming that it punished students by violating teachers' rights.

In November 2012, various school boards lobbied the province of Ontario to repeal Bill 115. The Thames Valley District School Board and the Ontario Public School Boards both passed requests for the province government to repeal Bill 115. On 11 December 2012, hundreds of students from at least 9 high schools across Ontario staged walkouts to protest Bill 115. That same day, the Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario declared that it planned to organize one-day rotating strikes across Ontario beginning that week. The next day, elementary teachers in Niagara went on a one-day strike. Every day of that week, elementary teachers in other cities across Ontario held one-day strikes. On 17 December, roughly 104 schools were closed due to the striking teachers. The striking teachers picketed at major intersections and in front of offices of members of the Provincial Parliament.

The Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario planned a one-day province-wide strike for 11 January 2013 to protest Bill 115. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation planned a similar strike for 16 January. The Ontario Labour Relations Board ruled that these strikes were illegal, and the teachers canceled the strike. The Ontario Parliament repealed Bill 115 on 23 January 2013, after all Ontario public school teachers had been locked into the new contracts designated by the bill. The Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation continued to refuse to participate in voluntary extracurricular activities, while their representatives renegotiated with the Ontario government.

On 1 March 2013 the secondary school teachers ended their boycott of extracurricular activities. On 19 April 2013, the Ontario government revised the terms of the teachers' contracts to improve maternity-leave benefits, and higher payouts for teachers to compensate for unused sick days. On 23 June 2013, the Ontario legislature

passed a Memorandum of Understanding, which would give teachers a 2% salary increase starting in September of 2014. The teachers unions accomplished their goals of repealing Bill 115, and avoiding the terms of their contracts mandated by Bill 115.

Research Notes

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