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**EDITORIAL**

# With his law on the gig economy, Doug Ford is wooing working class voters

As Ontario's election draws near, Premier Doug Ford is offering blue collar voters a political home.

By **Star Editorial Board**

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With the June 2 Ontario election less than 100 days away, Premier Doug Ford was out again this week wooing working-class voters.

His recent transformation in this regard raises something of a dilemma. Is a political leader to be cheered or disdained if he's doing praiseworthy things primarily for reasons of self-interest?

On the face of it, who could gainsay the Ford government's proposed legislation to set a minimum wage of \$15 an hour for workers in the so-called gig economy, to establish clarity of hours, protect against arbitrary dismissal, and safeguard tips?

[As the Star's Sara Mojtehdzadeh has diligently reported](#), workers in the growing gig sector have been sorely treated and inadequately compensated for their labours.

Working for app companies, deemed independent contractors rather than employees, such workers have lacked job security, benefits, and in many cases even reliable work schedules.

While the law introduced by Ford's labour minister, Monte McNaughton would not address the employment status of gig workers, and applies only to hours spent "actively" driving customers or products, [it does aim to establish a set of foundational rights](#), [Mojtehdzadeh reported](#).

Still, the Ford government's apparent conversion leaves labour economists, among others, more than a little suspicious.

In 2018, the government rolled back planned minimum-wage increases, eliminated paid sick days and equal pay for equal work.

That was then. Now, Ford has appointed himself champion of working men and women.

On Monday, he reviewed some of the pocketbook measures he has recently announced. [He's cutting the \\$120 licence sticker fee](#). He's cutting tolls on Highways 412 and 418. Earlier, to the applause of union leaders, he raised the minimum wage to \$15.

"Our government listens to workers," he crowed. "We aren't leaving any workers behind, absolutely no one."

All of this prompted one reporter to ask this week if Ford had somehow found his inner liberal.

Well, the premier replied, "my kids call me a bleeding heart."

Perhaps. But on an initiative so driven by timing, the premier's may have been less than ideal.

David Doorey, an industrial relations professor at York University, said a decision issued by a labour ministry employment standards officer just days before Ford's announcement [may have actually blown it out of the water](#).

The decision, which found Uber Eats had violated the Employment Standards Act, deemed a Toronto Uber Eats driver an “employee” for the purposes of the act and said its protections apply.

Moreover, the decision said that “deemed working hours include time spent waiting or holding oneself ready to work.”

If that’s the case, Doorey argued, the proposed Ontario law would actually *reduce* protections for gig workers, not improve them.

Uber has said it plans to appeal the decision to the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

Ford, of course, is playing to a different market and timeline as his government nears election day.

As a political tactic, it is an understandable move.

The strategy goes back 40 years or so to the suburban fringe around Detroit, when the phenomenon of “Reagan Democrats” was first identified in Michigan’s Macomb County.

Blue-collar workers were — in large part for social and cultural reasons — voting Republican, feeling the Democrats they had traditionally supported had abandoned them.

That trend has continued in various ways across North America. And the premier is offering them a home in his Progressive Conservative party.

Even if he likely wouldn’t have known Woody Guthrie from Sam Walton.

**Read more about: [Doug Ford](#)**

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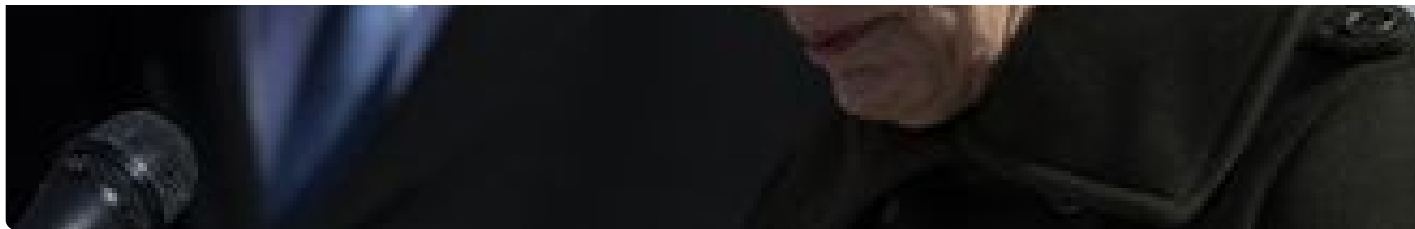


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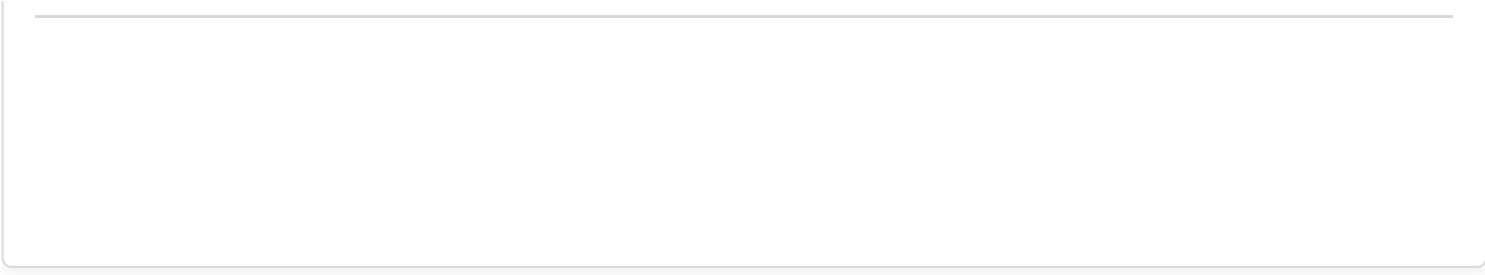
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