

Understanding and Responding to U.S. Tariffs

This resource is intended to help local leaders as they consider and respond to the economic and social impact of U.S. tariffs on ETFO members, students, families, and communities.

Facts About Tariffs

What are Tariffs?

Tariffs are taxes placed by one country on imported goods from another.

What new Tariffs has the U.S. imposed on Canada?

Since taking office, the Trump administration has moved to threaten to impose a wide range of tariffs on Canada, Mexico and most countries around the world. There has been much uncertainty created, as the Trump White House has repeatedly changed its position on the rates, the timeline, and the products affected by tariffs. As of April 17, 2025, the following tariffs have been imposed by the U.S. government on products from Canada:

- 25 per cent tariff on Canadian products that don't comply with the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) except for energy products
- 10 per cent tariff on non-CUSMA compliant potash and energy products
- 25 per cent tariff on aluminum and steel imports
- 25 per cent tariff on all cars and trucks not built in the U.S.

Why is this relevant to ETFO members?

The ongoing trade dispute with the U.S. triggered by the tariffs imposed by the Trump administration is already having a significant impact on Ontario's and Canada's economy. The economic and social impact will increase as the trade dispute continues. Here are some of the impacts that are relevant to ETFO members, their students, families and communities.

- **Economic Impact:** Tariffs will hurt key industries in Ontario leading to job losses that will impact various communities across the province. The automotive industry is already feeling the effect with hundreds of layoffs recently announced by car manufacturers. The impact is expected to grow, with tens of thousands of jobs at risk in the automotive, steel and manufacturing sectors. This will impact some communities especially hard and will have knock on effects in other related industries.

- **Impact on Students and Families:** Many families across Ontario will be directly or indirectly impacted by the job losses across the province. More students and their families will be facing economic hardship, bringing more instability and anxiety. This will increase the need for supports for students, at a time when these supports are already insufficient due to years of chronic underfunding by the provincial government. Vulnerable families will be particularly exposed to further economic hardship.
- **Impact on Education Funding:** The economic slowdown and the expected job losses in key sectors, will result in lower revenues for all levels of government, while at the same time increasing demand on public services and support programs. The decrease in provincial tax revenue will add budgetary pressures that could expose the education sector to misguided and damaging funding cuts. It's important to remember that governments have a responsibility to support workers, students, families and communities through these difficult times and have the fiscal ability to do so.
- **Impact on School Boards and School Budgets:** tariffs and the response from governments that they have triggered, will increase the cost for materials and supplies. This will increase building and maintenance costs for school boards. It will also impact school budgets which are already severely constrained by years of funding cuts by the provincial government.
- **Impact on Communities:** as the economic impacts are felt by people across the province, many communities that depend on trade, manufacturing and other cross-border industries, will be significantly impacted. Job losses will result on lower revenues for municipalities, while at the same time increase the need for public services and public supports.

Take Action

Educators know the effects of world events are felt deeply by the students in our classrooms and their families. We also know that education is key to making sure Ontario's young people can thrive. This economic crisis must not be used to justify more cuts to public education and other public services people rely on.

Instead, investment in public education and public services that support families and communities must be made a priority. ETFO has signed on to the Justice for Workers' ["No One Left Behind"](#) agenda for emergency action, which can also be signed by individuals.

What can ETFO locals do?

- **Discuss** the impact of the ongoing trade dispute on members, students, families, and local communities. This can start at a local executive meeting.
- **Review** current local purchasing and procurement with the aim of supporting local economies.
- **Stay informed** about the ongoing trade dispute and its impacts on public education and on our local communities.
- **Connect** with members to build understanding on how the ongoing trade dispute is impacting them. This can be done in-person, by e-mail, through a survey, or during steward or membership meetings.
- **Advocate** for increased investments in public education, health care and other public services Ontarians rely on, especially during economically uncertain times. This includes at the municipal, provincial and federal level.
- **Raise** the issue of tariffs in discussions with the school board, focusing on the impact on your local communities. Advocate for supports to be put in place to assist students, educators, and their families.
- **Strengthen** partnerships with local community groups to support families impacted by economic hardship. (e.g., local food banks, emergency shelters, etc.)

What can ETFO members do?

- **Stay informed** about the ongoing trade dispute and its impacts on public education and on our local communities.
- **Connect** with parents and families in your school community to build understanding of how the ongoing trade dispute is affecting them, students and the community at large. Where appropriate, provide information about resources available in your local community.
- **Advocate** for protecting public education funding and for increased social spending by all levels of government despite economic challenges. Contact your local city councillor, school board trustee, MPP and/or MP to let them know you expect governments to be there to support people.
- **Seek help and support** when needed. Where available, contact your employment assistant program (EAP) and consult with your health practitioner if your health or well-being are being impacted.
- **Raise awareness** with colleagues, parents, and local communities about the broader impact these tariffs have on schools, families, and students.

Where can I find more information and resources?

Find below some links to additional resources to help guide and support workers and their families during the ongoing trade dispute. This list includes labour and community organizations, community resources, mental health supports, and reliable sources for up-to-date information.

Labour Organizations and Union-made Products

- [Canadian Labour Congress \(CLC\)](#)
- [Ontario Federation of Labour \(OFL\)](#)
- [Directory of Canadian, union-made products](#)

Community Resources and Mental Health Supports

- Feed Ontario: [Find a local foodbank](#)
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): [Mental health and addiction resources](#)
- Government of Ontario: [Find mental health support](#)
- Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA): [Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Starling Minds](#). An online mental wellness program for ETFO members and their families

Information on Tariffs

- Government of Canada: [Canada's response to U.S. tariffs on Canadian goods](#)
- CBC News Primer on Canada-U.S. tariffs: [Everything you want to know about the Canada-U.S. tariffs](#)