

# Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada

NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

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401 – 73 Water Street, Vancouver, BC, Canada V6B 1A1

9 May 2025

Hon. Premier Doug Ford  
Legislative Building  
Queen's Park  
Toronto, ON M7A 1A1

via email: [premier@ontario.ca](mailto:premier@ontario.ca)

Dear Premier Ford;

Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada is deeply concerned by recent [public comments](#) you made in response to a court decision with which you disagreed.<sup>1</sup> These remarks risk undermining the independence of the judiciary—a cornerstone of a democratic society governed by the rule of law.

While it is entirely appropriate to disagree with a court decision and pursue an appeal through the proper legal channels, as Premier of Ontario, you are sworn to uphold the rule of law—not to diminish it through public criticism that may weaken trust in our legal institutions.

Judicial independence is a fundamental pillar of the rule of law. The existence of an independent judiciary is essential to ensuring justice and safeguarding constitutional values, including democracy, equality, and fundamental justice. Judges are impartial arbiters, entrusted with interpreting and applying the law fairly and without external influence. Judicial independence has two key aspects: individual and institutional. Your comments denigrate both of these aspects of judicial independence.

Individual independence means that judges, regardless of who appoints them, must be free to decide cases without pressure from politicians, interest groups, or other external forces. Their impartiality is the bedrock of public confidence in the fairness of legal proceedings.

Institutional independence ensures that the judiciary operates as a separate and co-equal branch of government, free from interference by the executive or legislative branches. Neither can direct the actions of the courts, nor penalize judges for decisions that may be unpopular or politically inconvenient. When government officials publicly question or disparage judicial decisions, it can erode public trust in the entire justice system.

If judges could be dismissed, threatened, or influenced for their rulings, the very concept of justice would be compromised. Judicial independence exists precisely to shield judges from such pressures and preserve the integrity of our legal system.

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<sup>1</sup> Laura Stone & Jeff Gray, "Ontario Premier Doug Ford Suggests U.S.-Style Elected Judges, Calls Judicial Independence a 'Joke'," *The Globe and Mail* (30 April 2025) online: <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-doug-ford-ontario-judges-comments/>

To be clear, judicial independence does not mean judges are above accountability. Mechanisms exist to address misconduct or incompetence. However, disagreement with a ruling—no matter how strongly felt—is not a valid ground for undermining a judge’s role or credibility.

We urge you to uphold your responsibility as Premier by respecting the independence of the judiciary and promoting confidence in the rule of law.

Yours sincerely,

[signature]

Joey Doyle  
Co-Chair  
Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada

[signature]

Harini Sivalingam  
Director  
Lawyers’ Rights Watch Canada

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