

PRESS RELEASE

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INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE LAUNCHES SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN WITH ONTARIO TEACHERS TO STOP AIRPORT EXPANSION

The UK National Education Union (NEU) has today – in alliance with community and medical campaigners from around five European airports owned or part-owned by the giant investment firm: the Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan (OTPP) ⁽¹⁾ – launched a solidarity campaign aimed at teachers in Ontario, Canada.

Uniting under the banner SOFAX (Stop OTPP Funding Airport Expansion) ⁽²⁾, the group has launched a video ⁽³⁾ to raise awareness of where Ontario teachers’ pensions are invested. By funding airport expansion, teachers’ pensions are unwittingly causing unacceptable damage to the global climate and to the health and quality of life of local people.

Bristol Teacher Loz Hennessy said: “Ontario teachers are resisting budget cuts and ever-increasing workloads: many of the same issues we face in the UK today. We stand in solidarity with their struggle and see it as related to the fight against airport expansion. What are we prioritising?”

Climate campaigner Tanguy Tomes added: “We know teachers in Ontario are worried about climate change. Some have even campaigned on this issue before, so SOFAX seeks to build on those efforts.

The Pension Plan’s claim to be a responsible investor is completely incompatible with its commitment to expanding airports across Europe.” (4)

This campaign follows hot on the heels of a public letter putting pressure on OTPP to act to stop expansion at all airports where it has investments (5). It also delivers on the climate motion recently passed by the NEU (6). Campaigners are asking teachers and school workers in Europe to reach out to SOFAX to organise ‘phone-banking’-style events to reach Canadian schools. The pressure on OTPP will continue to ramp up over the coming months.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

(1). Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan (OTPP) owns Bristol and London City airports and has a stake in Birmingham, Brussels and Copenhagen airports.

(2). Stop OTPP Funding Airport Expansion (SOFAX) is an alliance of community campaigners, medical professionals, and school workers represented by the NEU’s Climate Network. Campaigners in the video include Bristol Airport is Big Enough (BABE), Bevar Jordforbindelsen, MedAct Bristol, and HACAN East.

(3). <https://youtu.be/W1kcIp4b6uY>

(4). Airport expansion increases carbon, air, and noise pollution. Near many airports, noise levels are already regularly above safe levels, including at schools. The climate emissions from additional flights are significant and rarely accounted for by the airports themselves.

(5). The campaigners’ letter ([here](#)) was sent to coincide with the company’s annual meeting and was posted on to the front door of its London headquarters and to its offices in Toronto.

(6). The National Education Union (NEU) passed Motion 16 at the 2022 NEU annual conference, see press release [here](#). For further information on this motion, contact bristolneuclimate@gmail.com

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