

# LABOUR ACTION

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WINTER | 2018



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# TIMBITS & RESPECT



The decision by millionaire Tim Hortons franchise owner Ron Joyce Jr. to strip benefits and paid rest breaks from his workers has created a firestorm of indignation across Ontario. It took virtually no effort for unions and the \$15+Fairness movement to organize rallies at 15 Tim Hortons locations on January 11th, and the response of customers was incredibly supportive. Media outlets looking to broadcast workers' own stories have encountered a wall of fear that surrounds anyone who makes a living in the fast-food world.

So here are the two questions in the Tim Hortons wage debate that we as Canadians need to ask:

1. **Why should a multi-billion dollar company like Restaurant Brands International rely and prosper on a business model based on poverty wages?**
2. **How can anyone in a big Canadian city put a roof over their head if they work only one job earning \$14 an hour.**

It wasn't that long ago when even conservative economists believed that someone working full-time should not be living in poverty. But that outlook changed with the triumph of neo-liberalism ushered in by Maggie Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Mike Harris. The pendulum swung to "market fundamentalism" – where anything that gets in the way of profit maximization is heresy.

But just maybe the pendulum is starting to swing back towards respecting workers and communities. Polling on minimum wage in Ontario shows majority support for the increase to \$14. Bernie Sanders fills Convocation Hall with a message that the system is rigged in favour of the 1%. And comedian Rick Mercer runs a dynamite rant on the injustice of Ron Joyce sending instructions to roll back employee benefits from the comfort of

his Florida winter residence.

Back when we were fighting for a \$10 Minimum Wage, there were town hall meetings in ten low-income neighbourhoods across Toronto. In one of the panels I sat beside a South Asian single mother who had left an abusive relationship and was raising two children. I will always remember her words:

"I work at Wendy's, and started at minimum wage (then \$8) but now I have a position of responsibility and earn \$9.26 an hour. But I can't raise my two kids on that money, so on Saturdays and Sundays I work at Value Village."

I was floored. I come from the construction industry, which can be a tough sector with its share of financial ups and downs. I could not fathom how anyone could work seven days a week and still parent two children, let alone care for themselves. But that is the harsh reality of life for tens of thousands of our neighbours, and it needs to change.

The majority of low wage workers in Ontario toil for corporate giants like Walmart, McDonalds or Restaurant Brands International which runs Tim Hortons and Burger King. Increasingly, workers are trapped in a franchise system that squeezes everyone involved.

Most of us have never heard of 3G, the ultimate owner of Tim's as well as Heinz and brewing conglomerate Anheuser Busch. In 2014 it paid \$12.5 billion to buy the Tim Hortons chain, and immediately instituted a new management regime. Globe + Mail journalist Marina Strauss exposed the "brutal transformation" of the company as half of head office and regional staff were let go. The squeezing started on franchisees and suppliers, profits skyrocketed while the pressure to find efficiencies became incessant.

When the Ontario government raised minimum wage on January 1st, some franchisees tried to take back some of the increase through creative measures – charging for uniforms, reducing benefits, taking tips. The most outrageous idea ran against the entire brand message - taking coffee breaks away from people who serve coffee for a living. Righteous anger spread across the country. What a PR disaster!

So far Tim Hortons/RBI/3G is refusing to issue a directive to franchise owners to roll back the cuts. They hope the wave of anger will subside and everyone will go back to the familiar ritual of Timbits and a double double. But they underestimate the determination of the dynamic campaigners leading the \$15+Fairness movement and union activists across the province who know how to walk picket lines in rain and snow.

Together we are fighting for a new legal framework to ensure that working people aren't stuck in poverty



wage traps. The authors of Ontario's 2017 Changing Workplace Review, John Murray and Michael Mitchell, highlighted the dire need to tackle precarious work, and made a series of insightful recommendations. Many were adopted, including equal pay for temp workers. But one crucial one was left out. Murray and Mitchell recommended creating a bargaining structure so that franchise workers could join a union and actually negotiate improvements in their lives.

It's a variation of the rules applied in the construction industry, where thousands of contractors and sub-contractors compete for work. Groups of contractors bargain standard agreements, that are extended to all union members in the sector. Thanks to that framework, physically dangerous work that used to pay poverty wages to vulnerable newcomers has become a career path to decent jobs. Sadly, this idea of broader-based bargaining was left out

of Bill 148, the Liberals signature effort to tackle income inequality.

There is good reason to revisit that decision, as well as sticking to the plan to raise the minimum wage to \$15 next year. And with an election looming, there is even better reason to keep up the pressure and momentum for change. Perhaps the politicians can frame the June ballot question around the words of the middle-aged woman who served me my Tim's coffee on the first day of action. She said simply "I have worked here for years and never felt respected. But today, I feel that people are finally giving us the respect we deserve".

Let's figure out how to make respect and decent work her reality every day of the year.

John Cartwright is the President of the Toronto & York Region Labour Council

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# LARGEST ORGANIZING DRIVE THIS CENTURY

On January 10 history was made as the largest organizing drive in Canada in this century resulted in giving union voice to 20,000 workers. The certification vote for part-time support staff at 24 Community Colleges held in June 2016 was finally counted, and 84% of ballots cast were to join OPSEU.

The union represents all full-time faculty and support staff at the colleges, and started pressuring the Ontario government in 2004 to make changes to the College Collective Bargaining Act to grant part time support staff to the right to unionize. The changes were made in 2008, and OPSEU made its first attempt to organize but was not successful. The nature of part-time work in 24 colleges with 100 campuses added to the difficulty of organizing. With a 30% staff turnover per year, job roles vary greatly; from student ambassadors to mechanics, advisors, library techs, to IT support roles. Winning a challenge proof threshold of signed cards required a new organizing strategy. With workers spread out across the province, the organizing scale would have no precedent in Ontario. The campaign came up with a number of creative strategies to get union cards signed.

"We had a bunch of stuff to learn and we learnt it," says Tracy MacMaster, a regional organizing coordinator. "In some of the colleges we had help from union locals who opened their offices to our meetings or student associations helping us hold events. This is how we spoke to the student workers". Holding meetings was not enough. Irregular schedules and some CAAT-PT staff work off campus resulted in a strong online element being developed

using social media and a game app to help staff to get cards signed.

"Online efforts helped us to reach out to people who didn't work on campuses. This allowed us to meet them and get a card signed. It was a substantial amount because of the sheer numbers involved," says MacMaster. Getting the vote out, though a daunting task, was successful thanks to local labour councils and volunteers who stepped up and helped OPSEU organizers and part time support staff who were active on the campaign.

The precarious nature of work is clear in the reality faced by computerized note takers, who provide in class support for those who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. Years ago, these George Brown College workers' pay was slashed by 25%, increasingly fluctuating work hours without sick leave or holiday pay and no Ontario's Employment Standards Act. Protection.

"Before, if you got a full schedule, you got a decent income" says Andrew, a computerized note taker at George Brown, not wanting to share his last name. "A lot of people quit at one point, and there was a staff shortage." Working in isolation, they created a Facebook group to talk about workplace issues.

"Tracy contacted the group, reaching

out to us about organizing. We started having informal meetings in each other's homes" says Nicole Salter, another computerized note taker at George Brown. Learning from the first failed organizing drive, all expected the college administration to fight back.

"The college put out letters warning workers that they would have to pay dues, but after a pay cut who cares?" says Salter. "Hours are not guaranteed, scheduling not based on seniority, there's no security, and the rules for the job are constantly changing. People that I was talking to could see through the warnings." For the note takers, e-mail and social media was key to victory. "I spoke to people mostly online, through email and Facebook groups reminding people to vote" says Salter.

While January 10th was a historic victory, the next step will be bargaining a first contract. OPSEU has also applied to represent part-time faculty, and hopefully that will come up soon.

OPSEU's successful organizing shows that precarious workers can be organized in non-traditional workplaces. Creative use of technology, a big commitment by existing unions, and worker tenacity are key to future victories.

Interview by Gerard Di Trolio @gerardDiTrolio

# Fighting for Community Benefits from Woodbine Casino Development!

The fight is on to make sure that the massive new casino project at Woodbine provides real benefits to residents and future employees.

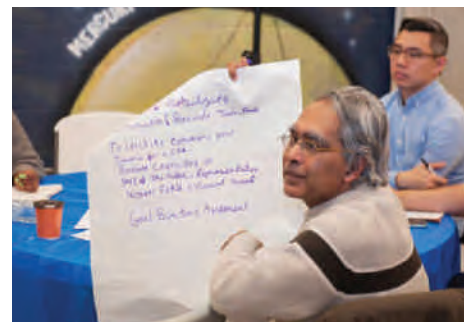
A decade ago, Rexdale's Community Organizing for Responsible Development (CORD) mobilized for local needs in a proposed expansion at Woodbine. Although the project did not materialize, the experience set the stage for a community benefits movement. In 2014 the Toronto Community Benefits Network, a coalition of over 80 labour and community groups, negotiated the first Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) in Toronto. That agreement with Metrolinx provides for access to careers in construction trades and professional occupations for the Eglinton Crosstown Transit Project.

In August 2017, Ontario Lottery and Gaming (OLG) announced that it had selected a consortium led by Great Canadian Gaming as the service provider for the existing slots and future casino at the Woodbine Racetrack in Rexdale. This project includes a casino, restaurants/retail,

a hotel, convention space and a theatre with an estimated value of \$1 Billion. The City of Toronto has set 21 conditions that must be met in order to approve the project, including a plan for community benefits.

CORD has joined TCBN to seek to secure a commitment for the construction and operation of the Woodbine Casino through a legally binding CBA. A proposal that has been unanimously endorsed by a meeting of dozens of community groups includes:

- Job training for North Etobicoke residents
- Apprenticeships and jobs in the project construction
- Good permanent jobs for local residents and historically-disadvantaged groups
- Successor rights for existing unions at Woodbine
- Child care support for casino employees hired through these programs
- Community access to venues and facilities in the new development



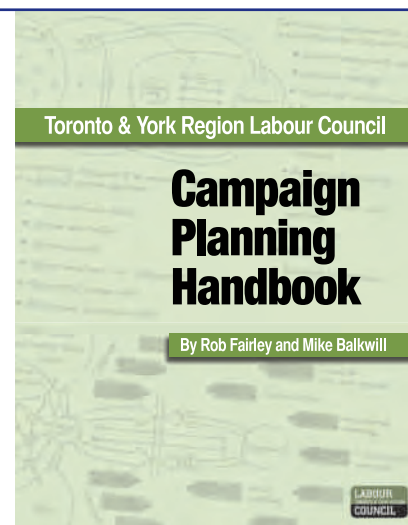
- A fair share of operating revenues to support community programs

All these are features of similar agreements with casino developments in North America. TCBN is now mounting a campaign to win support from City Council to be part of a formally negotiated CBA for Woodbine.

To find out about the summit on March 23, go to [communitybenefits.ca](http://communitybenefits.ca)

## Taking on a big struggle for justice in your workplace or community?

Visit [labourcouncil.ca/materials.html](http://labourcouncil.ca/materials.html) to download the Campaign Planning Handbook—a useful resource that draws on the knowledge of countless people to help improve our ability to plan and wage effective campaigns.



# From Syria To Toronto



Mahmoud al Rassoul at work.



Mahmoud al Rassoul + Hisham Mohsen (instructor at Labour Education Center)

**It would be the most important newspaper story ever written in the lives of Mahmoud Al-Rassoul and his family.**

In early January 2016 the Globe & Mail published a front-page story about a Syrian refugee family and their childrens' their first day of school in Canada. They arrived in Toronto after spending three years in Lebanon where they fled when the fighting from the civil war reached close to their home in the city of Homs. In a sentence in one of the story's last few paragraphs, there was a question about the family's economic future, given that Mahmoud had been a construction worker back home.

That one sentence caught the attention of Labour Council President John Cartwright who himself comes from the construction trades. Cartwright reached out to get in contact with Mahmoud. It turns out that Mahmoud is a carpenter with over 25 years' experience, starting while he was in his mid-teens learning basic carpentry skills from his uncle. Mahmoud came to the Labour Council's office with his sponsor to meet with Cartwright, Najib Soufian of Labour Community Services, and Chris Campbell from the Carpenters Union.

At the meeting, Mahmoud showed Campbell pictures on his phone of his concrete forming work in Syria. It was clear that he could get and excel at a carpentry job in Canada with a little help. But first, Mahmoud wanted to learn some English before entering the workplace.

Fast forward to February 2018. Mahmoud's oldest child is now 18, and his youngest is five. Mahmoud can now hold conversations in English about the work he has been doing. Since arriving in Canada Mahmoud has also received union safety training and landed his first job. One of the union contractors is an Arabic speaker and helped to set Mahmoud up with a job in concrete forming. Mahmoud has worked on projects all over Toronto

and surrounding municipalities. He is now making good wages and his family to be covered by union health benefits.

At first, Mahmoud encountered some significant differences in the construction industry between Syria and Canada. The biggest difference he says was the level of the safety in construction. In Syria, Mahmoud says, "there is no safety." In Canada, he has been working on mid-sized commercial and industrial sites. While many construction methods are similar, Mahmoud had to get used to power tools which were not used much in Syria.

Mahmoud says, "When you go to work here, you have to be flexible and know what skills you are good at. You will always be learning for the rest of your life so watch, ask, and learn from everyone."

With an attitude like that it's not surprising that Mahmoud says he learned to be comfortable on the job here within two months. Mahmoud admits he is homesick for Syria, but he also says that those "who have gone back to Syria get homesick for Canada."

But Mahmoud seems ready to stay in Canada for the long haul. While his experience seems like a one-in-a-million stroke of good luck, the Labour Education Centre, COSTI Immigrant Services and unions in the construction trades are developing collaborative programs that can help get Syrian refugees with basic skills into the workforce as soon as possible. Mahmoud's experience won't be the last success story for a newcomer to Toronto. And our construction affiliates have a strong track record of making those stories happen.



# Defending Bombardier's Toronto Footprint



**Labour Council is committed to maintaining good jobs in the Toronto area – and an important part of that is protecting the City of Toronto's Employment Areas.**

In early January, the public became aware of potential plans for sale of Bombardier's Downsview lands. Not only is Bombardier Toronto's largest

industrial employer – a source of over 3,000 good union jobs – but having an aerospace hub within the City is important to Toronto's economic strength.

If the lands are sold, there is no doubt that Bombardier jobs will end up elsewhere. The company claims it will move them to a location near Pearson airport. But more than likely that will be only a portion of the current workforce, with other production relocated in North Carolina, China or Montreal. If the entire Bombardier lands were sold there would be huge pressure for rezoning to remove the Employment Area designation.

Recent history has shown that when employment lands are converted existing jobs are immediately

threatened. Manufacturing and other employment activities are 'priced-out' of existence as property holders pursue higher value in other land uses. This has been the case when large-scale retail or residential zoning is introduced. Not long ago Toronto faced over a hundred applications to rezone employment lands, and Labour Council worked hard to insist that these jobs and lands be protected so that Toronto maintains a diversity of job opportunities for people from all walks of life. There are still over 310,000 manufacturing jobs in greater Toronto, and industrial vacancy rates are less than 2%. Let's not allow a wealthy company like Bombardier to destroy some of the best jobs in the city.

# Toronto Giving Away \$538 Million

**The 1% are still making out like bandits!**



Toronto City Council is rewarding big developers by giving away \$538 million in tax grants (TIEGs), "encouraging" them to build office towers in downtown Toronto instead of other cities. Torontonians are on the hook to pay this debt off between now and 2036. In the meantime, developers are lining up to get new grants.

First Gulf, a real estate developer whose anchor tenant at 351 King Street East is the Globe and Mail, will receive more than \$12 million

in grants for development there. Yet no TIEGs were needed to keep Globe jobs in Toronto, since the newspaper had initially planned to build its own tower at Front Street just west of its old location near Spadina.

This money is going to the 1% when key initiatives like Toronto's anti-poverty strategy and Transform TO were squeezed in at the very end of the City's 2018 budget process. To make up for the missing money, the burden of funding important Toronto programs rests on residential property taxes paid by Toronto home owners.

In 2008, the driver for the TIEGs program was job growth through development of industrial and commercial workspaces that otherwise

would not have been built in Toronto. Labour Council called then for a focus on manufacturing, the film sector and green enterprises. Only a very small amount of TIEGs have gone towards any of these sectors.

City Council recently voted to maintain the status quo, making a couple of minor changes to eligibility. But they refused to eliminate office developments entirely, lower grant rates, add green enterprises, make good jobs a priority, or require City Council review of each TIEG decision as Council now does with tiny community grants. Labour Council will continue to spotlight wasteful tax incentives to the 1% and press for TIEGs to be spent in sectors which can create good new jobs.



# Slavery In The Modern World

Four migrant workers from India faced harsh living conditions and were drastically underpaid as sculptors on a Hindu temple in Toronto, according to two of the workers who spoke exclusively to CBC Toronto. By day, they sculpted and painted one of the most holy parts of the temple, by night they would languish in the basement of the building, sleeping on cots by the boiler, according to Sekar Kurusamy, 51, and Suthakar Masilamani, 46.

"We were so hungry. It was unbearable. After being hungry, we would get light-headed," said Kurusamy, who spoke to CBC through an interpreter. In addition to lack of food, the workers claim they have not been paid for overtime and the Tamil Workers Network is asking whether there were inadequate safety practices on the job site. Toronto's Sridurka Hindu Temple hired the four Tamil men directly from India to execute part of a \$1.2-million renovation to the temple's gopuram — similar to a steeple on a church. The men said they started work at 8 a.m., without being fed, and no food was made available until two to three hours into the shift.

Kurusamy said when the four Tamil workers pressed the temple's chief priest for food, he became verbally abusive and threatened them with violence. "He got mad and told us to get out. He said, 'get out dog.' He used offensive words," Kurusamy said. "My soul hurt. We were crying because we didn't get sufficient food. We didn't know what else to do. We didn't know anyone. This was our first time in the country."

"We worked there for five months, yet not a single proper meal," said Masilamani through a translator. "We wouldn't be able to ask him about the food. We get the leftovers from the day before after the worshippers ate."

The workers said they worked more than 60 hours a week, without any regular day off, but it was the food and sleeping conditions that were most upsetting.

"His behaviour is not priest-like. He

used a lot of offensive language," Kurusamy said. "He put his hands up like he was going to hit us." Sridurka Hindu Temple refused an interview request with chief priest Rev. Thiagarajahkurukkal, but in a statement said for the past five years temporary workers have been brought to Canada to complete its religious sculpting work. The temple says "no overtime work was done" and the workers were housed on the premises "for ease of access to the construction site, to reduce the time required for commuting, [provide] access to meals and access to the temple for their spiritual needs."

Eventually, a member of the temple's congregation became aware of the alleged conditions the workers were facing and contacted the Tamil Workers Network.

"It's just the way the people were treated ... it's slavery in the modern world," said Ram Selvarajah, a volunteer with the Tamil Workers Network. Despite working up to 20 metres in the air on scaffolding, they had no safety gear other than a helmet and boots purchased at a second-hand store, the workers said. The four workers met with the Tamil Workers Network in September of last year and provided their employment contracts, something the men could not read because they do not know English.

The Tamil Workers Network has begun informal investigations within Toronto's Tamil community and doesn't believe it happened in isolation.

"When we realized the magnitude of

this, we're pretty sure there are quite a lot of cases that it's going to open up," Selvarajah said. "This is now on our radar."

Parkdale Community Legal Services has taken on the case for free. "Based on our preliminary assessment, we believe there is a substantial sum owing for both minimum wage and overtime pay," said John No, who is a lawyer with the clinic's workers rights division. Temporary Foreign Worker permit holders are restricted to work with one employer in Canada.

"Their ability to stay in Canada and make a living is completely dependent on that one employer. So if that one employer is treating them badly, whether in terms of working conditions or employment standards, they have very little real recourse because they can't leave that job," said No.

"We believe that's the tip of the iceberg," he said. "A lot of the workers are too afraid to come forward."

Article excerpted from CBC NEWS, Jan 17, 2018. For more info go to [TamilWorkers.org](http://TamilWorkers.org) & follow Tamil Workers Network on Facebook.





# Fairness For Injured Workers Means Workers' Compensation Is A Right

For the last two years Ontario's labour movement has been fighting for fairness for all workers. For injured workers fairness means addressing a broken workers' compensation system.

From 2009 to 2015, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) cut total benefits to injured workers by nearly \$1.16 billion, a 33% reduction over the six-year period.

For injured workers, the WSIB's austerity agenda means thousands of people every year are forced into poverty. A 2015 study found 46% of injured workers with a permanent disability were living at the poverty line, with 9% living in deep poverty. WSIB cut benefits to 38% of them despite being unable to return to employment since they were injured.

In addition to high levels of poverty, injured workers also suffer from high levels of mental health struggles following their injuries. A 2012 study found that nearly half of injured

workers experienced symptoms of depression, while 37% had symptoms of anxiety. In many cases, dealing with the WSIB is the cause of the mental health issues.

Injured workers refuse to accept this. The Ontario Network of Injured Workers' Groups (ONIWG), an umbrella organization of injured worker groups in communities throughout the province, launched the *Workers' Compensation is a Right* (WCIAR) campaign in September 2017. We are organizing to reclaim rights as workers for a fair and supportive workers' compensation system.

*The Workers' Compensation is a Right* campaign has recognized three key demands:

- No cuts based on phantom jobs
- Listen to injured workers' treating healthcare professionals
- Stop cutting benefits based on pre-existing conditions

All of these demands are directly linked to WSIB cutbacks. The cuts have been fuelled by a free-market based approach that focuses on minimizing business costs by keeping compensation to injured workers at bare minimums.

The WCIAR campaign is focused on organizing injured workers and their allies, educating the public and pressuring politicians to make these needed reforms to the workers' compensation system. Injured workers groups and their allies across the province have been speaking up in their communities, gathering signatures on our petition, and distributing thousands of leaflets and buttons. ONWIG members are also visiting politicians across Ontario to not only demand these changes, but to show them injured workers will continue to organize to make this an election issue in their constituencies.

In December, injured worker organized an outreach blitz across the province to raise awareness to the public that injured workers are struggling and fighting back. The holiday themed outreach blitz garnered media coverage across the province and in the New Year the campaign will continue to reach out to the public and to our allies to build support.

We would like to thank the Toronto and York Region Labour Council for endorsing the campaign and hope other locals will join us in fighting for a more just workers' compensation system.

Rachel Gnanayutham and David Bush

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**MARCH 3 2018**  
**INTERNATIONAL**  
**WOMEN'S DAY**  
**MARCH**

Liberation  
Honouring Our Sisters  
Celebrating our Victories  
Strengthening Our Resistance...  
On Indigenous Land

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OISE Auditorium  
252 Bloor St W, Toronto, ON  
1 PM MARCH  
Beginning at Bloor/Devonshire and ending  
at Ryerson University

[iwdtoronto.ca](http://iwdtoronto.ca)

# Keep Transit Public.

Metrolinx – the provincial transit planning organization – is working with the City of Toronto and the TTC to build several new LRT projects in the area. This is great and we applaud them.

What you may not realize is that your public transit company, The Toronto Transit Commission, will operate the new LRT, but a private company will maintain it. With its long, proud history of maintaining street rail, Toronto is best placed to keep those well-paid, union jobs in the public realm. Yet Metrolinx and the province are pursuing an aggressive agenda of privatization.

What gives?

Transit works best when it is publicly owned, operated and maintained. We've seen so many examples from around Canada and the world of what happens when private companies are left to maintain public transit. They try to squeeze profits any way they can by raising fares, reducing service and cutting corners on maintenance. Private transit has proven to be more costly and less safe.

In other Municipalities around the GTA, Like Waterloo, Hamilton, and Mississauga, Metrolinx has sought almost exclusively to hire a consortia of companies to Finance, Design, Build, Operate and Maintain. (FDBOM).

Because public transit companies don't Finance, Design or Build, they are ineligible to compete in the tendering process, and are out of the running to Operate and

Maintain new transit. This effectively means that only large groups of private companies may even bid on these projects. The current procurement process leaves the door open to all new transit in Ontario being entirely privatized.

However, IT'S NOT TOO LATE. If you take action now, we can pressure Metrolinx and the Provincial Liberal Government to make the TTC the default maintenance provider of any new transit projects that get built in our city.

.....  
[keeptransitpublic.ca](http://keeptransitpublic.ca)

## WHAT YOU CAN DO...

- **Sign the petition at [keeptransitpublic.ca](http://keeptransitpublic.ca)**

Signing the petition will automatically send emails to all MPPs and confirmed candidates in Toronto, as well as Metrolinx, the Ministry of Transportation, Infrastructure Ontario, and Premier Wynne's office.

**Please note:** This is a TWO-STEP process. After you sign the petition, you will receive an EMAIL CONFIRMATION. You MUST click the link in the email to confirm your email address. If you do not, your signature will not be added to the list and emails will not be sent to stakeholders.

- **Call your MPP**

Emails are great, but phone calls carry even more weight! Tell them to stop privatizing transit in Ontario.





## AN OPEN LETTER TO OUR MOVEMENT

By John Cartwright



On January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2018 the Canadian labour movement was plunged into a crisis with the exit of Unifor from the Canadian Labour Congress and the launching of raids on bargaining units of UNITEHERE Local 75. This open letter is intended as an urgent call for leaders in our movement, at every level, to strive to find a solution to this potential rupture before it becomes irreparable. And to allow time to explore solutions before hardening differences.

Unifor's disaffiliation from the CLC has massive implications for federations and labour councils across Canada – many have leaders from Unifor, and many rely on Unifor affiliation for their financial stability.

I have a deep foreboding of where this division can lead. My first full-time union position was not with my own union, but as a CLC Representative travelling the province trying to stop the split in our movement after the international Building Trades unions withdrew in 1981. It was bitter and divisive. It took more than ten years for the trades to return to the CLC. But by that time relationships had been permanently damaged, and very few labour councils or federations have been able to regain the active involvement of construction unions. Sadly, that decade also saw a massive attack on the building trades across North America that devastated union density in construction. It is a cautionary tale.

The key issues in that split 37 years ago were similar to what we face today. They revolved around workforce rivalries, the relationship with the NDP, union democracy and Canadian autonomy.

I was elected as a Representative of Carpenters Local 27 in December of 1982. My union was locked into a jurisdictional war with Labourers Local 183, a bitter fight that broke out into all-out raiding many times over three decades. I have been both an antagonist and on the receiving end of raids, and both the Carpenters and Labourers have come under CLC sanction for raiding. Unifor would face those same sanctions today if it had not disaffiliated. I can honestly say that despite the tens of millions of dollars squandered in those efforts, the lives of workers have seldom been improved as a consequence. On the other hand, when we were able to undertake multi-union organizing drives in the construction industry during the 1990's, we succeeded in bringing union standards to thousands of members, and Toronto now enjoys the highest level of unionization in construction anywhere in North America outside of Quebec.

In 2001, I was elected to lead the Toronto & York Region Labour Council. It is the largest in the country, with resources and membership larger than many provincial federations. Our affiliates committed to campaigns that brought decisive victories on a number of fronts, from defending public services and industrial jobs to building a strong equity agenda and being a key component in the Bill 148 victory.



In that role I have been afforded the opportunity to meet with my counterparts in labour councils of all sizes, across the geography of this country. Only a handful have full time officers or staff - most are run by committed volunteers who juggle responsibilities in their own locals as well as try to run collective campaigns on a wide variety of issues. They live on a shoe-string budget, and seldom receive institutional support from staff of national or international unions who live and work in their communities.

I have bargained with multinational companies and family-owned shops, with public sector bodies and politicians at every level of government. As part of leadership of central labour bodies for a quarter century, I have seen the best and worst of our behaviour, and learned how hard it is to build and maintain solidarity among diverse unions and competing interests. In reflecting on the current crisis, I draw on these experiences to suggest some key areas that need to be addressed by our movement.

1. **Raiding has rightly been identified as a cancer in our movement.** No matter how passionate or committed people are when they undertake raiding activity, at the end of the day it draws incredible resources away from our real task. Our first priority must be organizing workers and reversing the decline of union density in our country. In the coming months, every union in Ontario should be dedicating its full attention to helping bring union voice to hundreds of thousands of unrepresented workers using the tools of Bill 148. We need to fight for more labour law reform, including broader based bargaining so that precarious workers can have a vehicle in which to achieve dignity and economic justice. At the national level NAFTA calls for our urgent attention.
2. **Union democracy is a fundamental principle of our movement.** No group of workers should be held captive to an organization that does not serve their needs or respect their voice. After long and painful debates on how to end raiding, Article 4 was developed to offer workers a realistic option of fixing problems within their unions instead of seeking another home. Since its adoption, the Article 4 process has generally worked, but there is always the pressure by powerful affiliates to limit its application. In a handful of cases workers left to join another union in an orderly fashion overseen by the CLC. There have been few actual raids since its adoption.

But the disturbing events around the application for justification procedures by ATU 113 President Bob Kinnear showed a fatal flaw. What happens when a parent union disrupts the process and carries out reprisals against the member applying? What happens if another union is intentionally supporting the application, hoping to be the beneficiary of a displacement application? These issues threatened to blow up the 2017 CLC convention. They were assigned to a task force appointed after the convention, but at some point we should allow a full debate on this contentious issue. How the integrity of the process is safeguarded, and how top leaders around the CLC Executive choose to uphold that integrity will be a test to our movement and may be an essential element to resolving this crisis.



3. **This crisis will severely affect labour councils.** Many union leaders who now demand that labour councils and federations remove Unifor from our ranks do not themselves ensure support for those same labour bodies. The CLC Constitution Article 5.4 also calls for every one of those unions to ensure their locals are affiliated to federations and labour councils, but there is a silent wall of refusal to enforce that part of the constitution.

Some will explain how they have a culture of local autonomy and cannot force people to belong. But there are clear examples of the best commitment – Steelworkers and Postal Workers require mandatory affiliation, as did CAW before the creation of Unifor. OPSEU reimburses 95% of the per capita any local pays to a labour council, while OSSTF has built a strong network of support for labour council engagement. There is no reason for other unions to avoid an honest discussion on what is their obligation if the removal of Unifor from councils and federations results in crippling those crucial central labour bodies.

Labour Councils themselves will have to grapple with how they react. Some will opt to keep Unifor delegates and locals active, others will seek to remove them. What is most vital is that we continue to work together on key issues and campaigns, and maintain the strongest possible personal relationships with every union activist in our community. It is crucial for national unions that wish to enforce the removal of existing affiliates of labour council to ensure there is an alternative funding stream in place, by enforcing affiliation of all of their locals to labour councils. Nobody doubts that there must be penalties to stop raiding but **instead of immediately forcing Labour Councils into a divisive action, the CLC should allow time for everyone to digest the implications of this split before imposing an administrative answer to a deeply political problem.**

Because at the end of the day, all politics are local. Members of Parliament, MLAs and MPPs are elected in local ridings. They respond to pressures from their local constituents, not just rallies on Parliament Hill or provincial legislature. Non-union workers and their families see our collective impact in their own cities, towns or regions. Effective Labour Councils are crucial to the power of our movement.

4. **Article 26 of the CLC Constitution says there will be minimum standards of self-government.** That was won in 1974 after fierce controversy over Canadian autonomy and workers leaving their internationals to form Canadian unions. Since then, many internationals have gone through a process of creating Canadian structures, which has led to those unions being able to authentically represent the interests and distinct union culture of Canadian members. Yet it is clear that those practices are not universally applied.

However, a union being Canadian is by itself no guarantee of progressive or effective practice. Many of us know the benefits of working closely with our American colleagues who are leading tremendous struggles against overwhelming odds. Some of the difficult dynamics we face in a time of Donald Trump and global trade deals can only be addressed by an honest conversation about this issue, and a commitment of every union to develop robust structures that reflect their unique realities and strengths.



5. There is an urgent need to create an organizing culture in the Canadian labour movement. We cannot reverse the decline of union density and power unless far more resources – staff, money and leadership time – are devoted to organizing unrepresented workers. With Bill 148 in Ontario we have a unique opportunity to utilize tools that can dramatically change the reality of life for hundreds of thousands, and in the process help shape the politics of the coming decade. The ill-fated CLC review of organizing carried out some years ago had no real mandate, and offered no solutions because the political will of top leadership was lacking. **Now is the time to have a fierce debate across the entire CLC family about what “organizing to scale” would actually look like in the face of dramatic changes to the nature of work.**
6. The topic of union renewal is full of landmines, but absolutely necessary. At its core is the question of labour power, commitment to real social unionism, and equity. I work with and admire many colleagues in the United States, who are hamstrung by organizational and political decisions made by past generations. Fortunately, we have a different history, which includes a commitment to coalition work and a social democratic party that, despite its flaws, has been crucial to the extensive social policies and labour laws we enjoy. As the working class of this country becomes truly multi-racial in every region, **we have to examine the urgency of achieving equity within every institution in this country, including our own.** There needs to be an honest assessment of what we should look and feel like a decade from now. That may be a longer term discussion, but we don't get there without taking first steps in the right direction.

As we struggle with each other to find solutions to the current crisis, a vision of a powerful, effective, inclusive union movement of the future needs to arise. That will provide guidance for the steps we need to take in the coming weeks.

It will take courage on all our parts to get through this. There will be some bruises and setbacks along the way. **If leaders let personal grievances or institutional rivalry dominate the discussion, we will fail,** and it may take years to heal the damage.

I am cautiously optimistic that the foundation of our labour movement is solid enough to allow us to survive, and grow. If we do it right, we will emerge with a movement that is ready for the immense challenges of the years to come. **We all have a part to play.**

John Cartwright is President of the Toronto & York Region Labour Council  
[jcartwright@labourcouncil.ca](mailto:jcartwright@labourcouncil.ca)



# Joint Environment Committee Takes Off

On January 8th, the inaugural meeting of a Joint Labour-Management Environmental Committee was convened at the headquarters of the Toronto District School Board. The Committee brings together representatives from the Board and from education unions to push for greater sustainability and a lower carbon footprint in all operations of the TDSB.

This is the first committee of its kind in Ontario's education sector, and follows successful precedents set by Unifor in auto plants. Steelworkers and CUPE have won contract language on the same concept with the University of Toronto, and the Canadian Union of Postal Workers embraces a similar goal in their national negotiations. The consensus is that employers can better fight climate change and its effects with employee voices at the table.

The idea of the Committee took root last year at Labour Council's Environment Committee. From there discussions took place with TDSB Director John Malloy, to bring recommendations from Labour Council's Green Print for Greater Toronto to the country's largest school board. Worker reps on the Committee are Chris Chandler (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation), Joy Lachica (Elementary Teachers of Toronto), Stefan Sommer and Kari

Sardella (Canadian Union of Public Employees 4400), and Mark Ratcliffe (Maintenance, Construction & Skilled Trades Council), with Brother Chandler as the worker Co-Chair, opposite Richard Christie from the TDSB's Sustainability Office.

Two working groups have already been struck: one to work on Buildings and Energy Use; and a second to look at Curriculum, EcoSchools and Waste. Preliminary discussions are already underway on a range of issues from proposals for retrofits and building lighting, to curriculum development, and training for teachers and workers. The drive to create a low carbon economy, sustainable growth, and climate justice must obviously include public education. Toronto's education workers and teachers are now at the centre of that drive.

Go to [LabourCouncil.ca](http://LabourCouncil.ca) to download the Greenprint



**ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR**

# RALLY for Time to Care

**@ Queen's Park**

**12 pm / Feb 27, 2018**

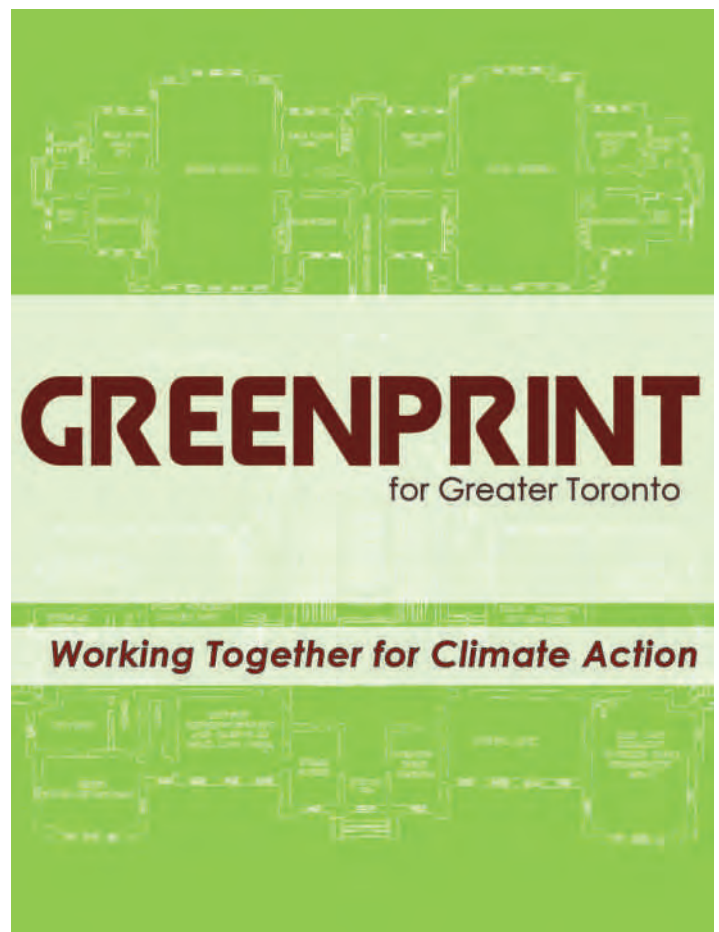
Ontario's long-term care system is in crisis and is less funded than any other province in Canada.

Bill 33, the Time to Care Act, calls for a minimum standard of 4 hours of daily, hands-on care for seniors in long-term care the law in Ontario. We got our MPPs to pass it at Second Reading, now we need to get it over the finish line.

On Feb 27, let's rise up for seniors in long term care who have waited far too long. Come to Queen's Park at 12 pm to send the Premier and all our MPPs a clear message:

**Make Time to Care the law in Ontario.**

For bus information contact  
Melisa Bayon  
mbayon@ofl.ca  
647-234-1795



# GREENPRINT

for Greater Toronto

**Working Together for Climate Action**

# After #MeToo: Labour's Role in Addressing Gender-based Violence



The labour movement's commemoration of the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women last December 6th found us amidst an outpouring of revelations from survivors who have experienced harassment, sexual assault and abuse inside and outside of the workplace. #MeToo is a response to the statement that if all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too' on Facebook and Twitter, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem. With countless survivors coming forward, filing criminal lawsuits, and demanding action to end gender violence, harassment, sexual assault and the rape culture that enables it, the problem can no longer be ignored.

The labour movement – and the women in it – has often been a leader in working toward programs and legislation to address gender-based violence across society and in our workplaces. Responding to the École Polytechnique massacre, the Canadian Auto Workers negotiated Women's Advocate Programs. OPSEU and other unions fought for Bill 168, which was enacted in 2009 to require training and other measures on workplace violence and harassment.

Since the introduction of Bill 132 in 2016 that strengthened Ontario's sexual violence and harassment law, situations have improved in many of our unionized workplaces. Our employers are now compelled to investigate complaints and incidents of workplace harassment and are responsible for maintaining a harassment-free workplace. Labour fought hard to ensure Bill 148 included paid and unpaid leave for workers experiencing domestic or sexual violence, and we celebrate its passage. Now we need to expand this work to find solutions that will address the gender-based abuse that is happening in our communities, in our homes and sometimes in the labour movement itself.

For women not in unions, and for those in precarious workplaces whether unionized or not, for indigenous, immigrant, migrant and racialized, queer women, trans and gender diverse people and some men, gender-based violence has a disproportionate impact. Many survivors don't report incidents, based on the injustice of the justice system and the physical, economic and mental costs of having to testify. Solutions need to address these experiences.

The labour movement is not above the systemic oppression that defines our current political and economic system. We have our own history of ignoring bad behavior, including the challenging working conditions women in the trades face in their workplaces. Let's commit

ourselves to solving these problems at the same time.

These solutions must acknowledge that people are socialized by our patriarchal society. Some people may not realize how their background can lead them to maintain the unequal power imbalance that exists in all structures and institutions in our society.

The impact of the #MeToo response is that survivors are emboldened to share their own experiences. However, it cannot be left up to survivors to 'solve' the problem of gender-based violence. The individual examples must be addressed with systemic solutions that help fight oppression and build a 'culture of consent' – a move from victim-blaming to survivor-believing.

Whether inside or outside of the workplace, survivors of sexual harassment, sexual assault and gender-based violence need to know that they will be believed and supported in order to feel comfortable and safe turning to their local union for support. To accomplish this, workers need to know how to recognize signs of gender-based violence, how to be active allies rather than bystanders, how to deal with reports with empathy, beginning with the premise that 'we believe survivors.' In doing so, labour unions would become resources for their whole community.

The current situation calls for acknowledgement of the problem by the labour movement and the development of an action plan that will begin immediately.

Labour Council Statement - December 2017





# Celebrate Black History Month With A Different Booklist



People of African descent have been a part of shaping Canada's heritage and identity since the arrival of Mathieu Da Costa, a navigator and interpreter, whose presence in Canada dates back to the early 1600s. This February, for Black History Month, take a moment to explore the achievements of Black labour activists.

Have you read "*The Story Of Albert Jackson: Toronto's First African Canadian Postal Worker*"? A historical retelling that transcends time, this storybook is a must-read, for children and adults alike. The book can be bought from A Different Booklist Bookstore at 777 Bathurst Street. For just over two decades, owners Itah Sadu and Miguel San Vicente have operated the bookstore as an organic hub. A Different Booklist was taken over by the husband and wife duo 17 years ago from its former owner. Coming from the worlds of trade union organizing (San Vicente) and education/children's book writing (Sadu), sought out mentorship from peers and leaders in the community as they embarked on a new adventure. Famed journalist and editor Harold Hoyte told them, "Every single thing in the city that moves, the bookstore must be connected with it, because everything in the world has a

book." Those words helped to shape the strategy that informs their survival to this day. "We took on a physical place and people designed the space," Sadu says.

"One of the things that we've witnessed as a bookstore and a conversation that happens almost every day is around the building of infrastructure for our community and the ownership of things, and how important it is for our young people to see the ownership of things. With all that we've read, all the movements we've been a part of, all the things that we know, and all the issues that we face, the one thing that we know most is that our access to space is the on-growing agony, conversation and focus of people of African descent. The ownership of land." Says Sadu. A must explore gem in Toronto – plan to spend a few hours!

Adapted from CBC Arts Article - 2016

**BROMLEY**



## ARMSTRONG AWARDS 2018

**FRIDAY MAY 11, 2018 at 6pm**

175 Wynford Drive  
(Toronto Don Valley Hotel), North York  
oliu@labourcommunityservices.ca  
labourcommunityservices.ca

# INTERNATIONAL DAY for the ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is observed annually on 21 March. On that day, in 1960, police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration in Sharpeville, South Africa, against the apartheid pass laws. United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the day in 1966, calling on the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. Events in the United States, Quebec and Ontario remind us of how important it is to build a strong movement to stop racism, Islamophobia and discrimination.

## UNITE to STOP HATE

**March 21, 2018 Toronto City Hall at 7pm**  
urbanalliance.ca for more info



# ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC RACISM

Last year the Labour Council adopted a comprehensive plan to challenge racism and discrimination. It was a response to the dramatic rise of hate activity across North America, including here in Toronto and other Ontario cities. Part of the plan involved holding two full-days of training sessions for union activists and leaders who wanted to take part in our collective work on addressing systemic racism. The project, in partnership with Labour Community Services, was widely supported at the Heads of Unions meeting in the fall of 2017.

Several major union (or area councils) sent two or three members who attended a day long “learning exchange and planning session” related to key concepts, strategies, and goals of the program. These were members who have the confidence of their union leadership to be able to take the learning and help develop a framework for action in their union. The framework would be specific to each union, and could include engaging stewards, Executive and staff as well as the communications capacity of the union.

Participants had some knowledge of issues of race and equity, so that the dialogue started with a common level of understanding. Participant were not only workers of colour - our members need to see workers of every ethnicity and background addressing this issue. Our hope is that this project will enable union leaders and members to:

- develop a shared understanding and common language around systemic racism
- build the confidence and skills of members and leaders to engage in critical conversation about racism
- construct ways of challenging the right-wing narrative of anger and bigotry, while promoting an alternative racial justice strategy, especially related to workers’ rights, immigration issues, and collective agreements
- agree on a framework for action that will guide the planning and follow up to sustain and expand an on-going effort across every union.

To learn more about labour’s work on racism and equity watch the video “Building Barriers, Linking Struggles” at [labourcouncil.ca/equity.html](http://labourcouncil.ca/equity.html)

For more information on this project contact [fmohamed@labourcommunityservices.ca](mailto:fmohamed@labourcommunityservices.ca)



# CORRECTING COURSE:

## A BLUEPRINT THAT MEETS ONTARIO'S EDUCATION NEEDS

Fall 2017 marked the 20th anniversary of the funding formula for elementary and secondary education in Ontario, which was introduced in 1997 as one of the signature pieces of legislation in the first term of the conservative government led by then Premier Mike Harris.

For the Harris government, the control the provincial government gained in bill 160 was not an abstraction. It was control with purpose. As was the case with many of the new government's legislative initiatives in its first term, the overriding objective of education finance reform was to free up fiscal capacity for its central election campaign promise: a 30% reduction in Ontario's personal income tax.

It also supported other key policy goals and preconceptions. By limiting available resources,

It drove the system towards a nostalgic vision of a simpler approach to education dimly recalled from the 1950s, and focused on the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. It constituted a forceful articulation of the new government's lack of respect for locally elected school boards and distrust in their decisions. And its emphasis on equality in funding addressed the politically important issue of resource discrepancies between rural and urban school boards and between the public and catholic school systems.

Even as we are approaching 15 years of a liberal provincial government, remarkably little has changed in the fundamentals of the Harris government's vision for the funding and control of the education system. The revised approach to funding public schools was premised on an education funding formula that was flawed from day one and, while subsequent governments made minor tweaks to the formula, education in Ontario remains woefully underfunded.

This is not to deny improvements. Reductions in class sizes in primary grades, the provision of additional resources for secondary students, and The introduction of full-day kindergarten has had a material positive impact on students and their families.

In other areas, nothing has changed. The marginalization of school boards in education governance has effectively been codified in the current collective bargaining regime. The Harris government's insistence on equality rather than equity as the basis for funding continues essentially

unchanged. And while the education system is no longer a prime source of revenue for tax cuts, the fundamental fiscal gap created by the Harris government's tax cuts in the first place persists. It's time for a new funding formula — one that presses the reset button on what the objectives of the education system should be. It's time to articulate a new set of goals for elementary and secondary education in Ontario that lays out a unifying vision for public schools — one that starts by asking: what does a school need in order to fulfill its function? new objectives for funding Ontario's education system should include more transparent and local democracy; access to high quality education, no matter where you live; greater support for diversity and inclusiveness in schools; healthy schools that are the centre of the community; elimination of the school maintenance deficits; adequate funding to meet these objectives; and evidence-based decision making — that is, regular reviews to ensure the new funding formula is working to meet these objectives.

It's time for a course correction.

Hugh Mackenzie is an economic consultant and CCPA research associate and the author of *shortchanging Ontario students: an overview and assessment of education funding in Ontario*.

### CAMPAIGN BACKGROUNDER

#### 1 About the campaign

Across Ontario, publicly funded schools are in a state of disrepair. In fact, gross and chronic underfunding versus demand. In fact, gross and chronic underfunding versus demand. In fact, gross and chronic underfunding versus demand.

The Fix Our Schools campaign is organizing over 100,000 signatures to put the disrepair in Ontario's schools front and center in the June 2018 provincial election. Signatories of the campaign are asking provincial candidates to sign the Fix Our Schools Pledge.

In the 20 years since our provincial government took over school funding in Ontario, the investment in public schools has been slashed by 15%.

- Heating and cooling systems are old and inefficient
- Classrooms are too hot in summer and too cold in winter
- Classrooms can be as cold as 12 degrees in winter months
- Classrooms can be as hot as 32 degrees in summer months
- Bathrooms are often the most neglected part of the school
- They are responsible for keeping them — and the list goes on.

The 2 million students who attend publicly funded schools in Ontario need better school conditions — so do the teachers and staff who work in these schools. Not to mention the adults who work every day in these buildings.

Ontario schools ought to be safe, healthy and well-maintained. Visit the campaign website: [fixourschools.ca](http://fixourschools.ca) to find out more about the issue and sign up to take the campaign.

#### 2 The problem: School disrepair

Ontario's publicly funded schools are in a state of serious disrepair. Our provincial government has acknowledged and documented the extent of this disrepair, confirming that there is a \$15.9 billion repair backlog in Ontario's schools as of fall 2017.

Studies show that school conditions matter. They impact student learning and achievement, attendance and health, and even determine school conditions used a strong message about the value society places on education. Studies also show that repairs are only going to get more expensive and school conditions are only going to worsen unless our provincial government starts to take prevention and fund schools as critical public infrastructure.



#### 3 The cause of the problem: Underfunding

Twenty years ago, the provincial government took over responsibility for funding education. By 2007, \$5.6 billion of disrepair had accumulated in Ontario's schools and in the 15 years since, disrepair in Ontario's schools has been allowed to triple to \$15.9 billion.

In 2015, Ontario's Auditor General confirmed that provincial funding for school repairs was grossly inadequate — at some points, only one-fifth of what it ought to have been, according to industry standards.

When asked the reasons for the disrepair in schools, the Auditor General identified four main factors:

- Limited resources: The province has not increased its spending on school repairs.
- Limited resources: The province has not increased its spending on school repairs.
- Limited resources: The province has not increased its spending on school repairs.
- Limited resources: The province has not increased its spending on school repairs.

#### 4 Campaign goals

Economic analyst Hugh Mackenzie has examined the current provincial education approach to funding and outlined how the province's schools can address the \$15.9 billion repair backlog.

- Increase annual funding for school repairs, capital projects and operational maintenance to \$1.2 billion per year while at the same time maintaining the special \$1 billion per year SCF funding until the \$15.9 billion repair backlog is eliminated.
- Establish innovative standards for good school conditions, including not only facilities, but also quality air quality, water, noise, indoor air, and electrical code, natural light, and temperatures in classrooms.





# SKILLED TO SUCCESS



The construction trades in the Greater Toronto Area can be a great opportunity for newcomers to Canada to find a union job with good wages, benefits, and a pension. The life changing potential of getting a job in the trades can be seen in Amanihe Tesfaselase's experience.

Amanihe came to Canada from Eritrea in 2011. Though he had been working since he was 12 years old there to support his family in a carpentry shop, he had not gained enough skills to work in a trade in Canada. But today he is a third year sheet metal apprentice with Sheet Metal and Roofers' Local 30 and has worked on major projects like the recently completed University of Toronto residence, Campus One in the heart of downtown Toronto.

Amanihe received his initial training in the trades through the Central Ontario Building Trades' Hammer Heads training program which has played a role in securing and readying young people from historically marginalized and underrepresented communities for the skilled trades.

While in the beginning stages of the program, he visited the different training centres of the building trade unions to get a taste of each trade and basic tool and safety practices in the industry. Before going on to the apprenticeship stage, Amanihe, like everyone else in the program had to list their top three choices for what trade they would focus on. Sheet metal, he says, was what "I liked the most," and was his first choice

of trade to pursue. Sheet metal workers fabricate, install, and repair heating, cooling and ventilation systems. Local 30 also has members that do decking and siding work, as well as roofers.

"I was working in a factory when I came here. I was doing my high school in the morning then going to work at the factory full time. I had to do it, that's life. I was making what, around \$11? When I get to the Hammer Heads program and I get to see the construction world, I was starting at \$16 or \$17. That was a big change for me. Once I hit my second year, I was getting \$21," Amanihe says.

Amanihe's apprenticeship with Local 30 is a five-year, 9,000 hour program that includes three rounds of both day and night school at George Brown College. Once those tasks are completed, he will have to write a Certificate of Qualification test to become a certified sheet metal journeyman.

Amanihe has seen first-hand the importance of having a union, especially in the construction trades. Even as a third year apprentice, Amanihe has begun contributing to his pension. "It's good to be union in terms of benefits, pension, and everything else," he says.

## CONNECT + FOLLOW + SHARE

Did you know? Have you heard? Did you read? Got a campaign? No .. No .. No .. Yes!

Stay connected with Twitter & Facebook...Follow @torontolabour...Like facebook.com/labourcouncil

Visit [www.labourcouncil.ca](http://www.labourcouncil.ca) for video, articles, press releases & much more!

Got feedback about Labour Action? Comment on an article? Story ideas?

Email [kkulendiren@labourcouncil.ca](mailto:kkulendiren@labourcouncil.ca)



# YORK REGION SPEAKS OUT

In November of last year, York Region passed a bylaw that would allow businesses to remain open on almost all statutory holidays - Christmas Day being the only exception. The politicians quietly passed the bylaw, without consulting the workers who would be affected, making it law as of January 1st, 2018. Even when faced with protesters from labour organizers who were adamant that this bill would drastically affect their lives, the politicians were not swayed to reconsider their actions.



The council said they consulted with economic development officers, the chamber of commerce, and the Business Improvement Association, but they did not consult the public. York Region shut the door on 64,000 retail workers and passed legislation that would have a drastic impact on their lives.

The Chamber of Commerce stated that the law was meant to level the playing field among stores and is only an optional law. However, the optional participation is up to the employer, not the employee. If an employee is told to work on what should be a holiday, they cannot refuse without facing the potential of being fired.

Retail workers - from high school students to single parents - are being treated as lesser in our society. They were not given a voice; they were not given a chance to show why this bylaw is wrong; and, now, they are forced to give up their holidays so that York Region businesses can stay open for an extra nine days out of the year.

Visit [yorkregionspeaksout.ca](http://yorkregionspeaksout.ca) to send an email to councilors saying York Region Needs Public Holidays.

## ~ Save the Date ~ 2<sup>nd</sup> Filipino Workers' Conference 2018

April 14, 2018

"Uniting Filipino workers from the Greater Toronto Region to step and speak out"

**Keynote Speaker:**

**Luisa Blue, Executive VP, SEIU International**

United Steelworkers Hall, 25 Cecil Street, Toronto, ON

**For more information, contact:**

[campaigns@labourcouncil.ca](mailto:campaigns@labourcouncil.ca)

Lei Eigo — 416-953-1419

Paulina Corpuz—416-320-8703

[www.filipinoworkers.org](http://www.filipinoworkers.org)



## UNION MEMBERS LIVING AND/OR WORKING IN TORONTO OR YORK REGION

### LABOUR COMMUNITY ADVOCATE TRAINING

#### In Toronto:

Level 1 - March 21 to May 20

Level 2 - March 20 to May 22

#### In York Region:

Level 1 - March 22 to May 31

#### To register contact:

[nsoufian@labourcommunityservices.ca](mailto:nsoufian@labourcommunityservices.ca)

For more info [labourcommunityservices.ca](http://labourcommunityservices.ca)

# Canadian Companies + Human Rights

At long last, the federal government will appoint an ombudsperson to ensure Canadian corporations respect their human rights obligations abroad. The new position will be mandated to investigate allegations of wrongdoing by Canadian mining, energy, and textile companies. About 1,500 Canadian-owned mining and exploration companies operate in over 8,000 properties in more than 100 countries around the globe. Many have been accused of grave human rights abuses including murder and gang rape, or forcing workers into life-threatening labour conditions.

In November 2017, two workers were murdered while on strike at a Canadian-owned mine in Mexico. The collapse of the Rana Plaza garment factory in

Bangladesh in 2013 left 1,100 workers dead and thousands more injured; the tragedy stands as a stark reminder that this industry, which includes and supplies prominent Canadian companies, must be held to account for its actions.

“All of us want Canada to be a human rights leader around the world; we don’t want to find out that the products we buy are contributing to human rights violations and abuses elsewhere,” said Canadian Labour Congress President Hassan Yussuff at the announcement.

The CLC is a member of the Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability, along with over 30 other unions and human rights, environmental and faith-based and solidarity groups.

# Canada’s Unions Protest TPP Trade Deal

Canada’s unions are uniting in protest over today’s announcement that the Canadian government is signing onto a new Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal, saying the move directly contradicts the government’s claim that it is standing up for Canadian workers.

“The way this new deal was suddenly announced, without any consultation or transparency, is undemocratic and flies in the face of the government’s claims that it is standing up for workers in trade negotiations,” said CLC President Hassan Yussuff.

Yussuff recalled widespread opposition to the TPP in cross-Canada consultations in 2016.

“Everywhere the government went, Canadians were clear that they opposed the deal because it would cost Canadian

jobs and harm Canadian industries,” he said.

“It’s clear that none of those issues have been resolved. This deal won’t just undermine Canadian workers in its own right, but will undermine any possibility of a progressive strategy on NAFTA or any other trade deals,” he added.

Problems highlighted by Canada’s unions since Canada first joined TPP negotiations in 2012 include:

Chapter 12 of the TPP, which gives corporations the ability to bring employees to Canada en masse, without any requirement that they be paid fairly;

That it allows employers to transfer skilled trades and technical employees to Canada with no requirement that they attempt to hire within Canada first;

That the deal’s labour provisions have

## HUMAN RIGHTS OMBUDSPERSON FOR THE EXTRACTIVE SECTOR

The creation of an independent human rights ombudsperson for the international extractive sector is urgently required to provide those who suffer harms associated with Canadian mining, oil and gas companies with an effective venue for complaints - The Canadian Network on Corporate Accountability



### Independence & Integrity

- Confidence is critical
- Sits at arms-length from government
- Appointment is transparent and merit-based
- Proper remuneration and security of tenure



### Effective investigation

- Investigates complaints that allege harm or a significant risk of harm
- Screens out vexatious, frivolous complaints
- Has mandate and power to pursue investigations
- Robust protections for companies, individuals, communities and even the ombudsperson themselves



### Public Reporting

- Regular public updates on progress
- Information posted in a timely manner throughout the complaint process, including requests for information and final recommendations



### Recommendations

- Ombudsperson issues a public report with recommendations
- Recommendations can focus on the company, but also the Government of Canada



### Monitoring and Follow-up

- Parties that are the subject of recommendations must report upon progress, in a timely fashion, to the ombudsperson
- Within six months, the ombudsperson will issue a public report on the progress made to implement recommendations

Prepared by the  
CANADIAN NETWORK ON CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY  
@openjustice <http://openjustice.ca/openjustice>



no teeth and provide no guarantees that basic workers’ rights will be protected or that workers will be able to exercise their rights to form a union and to engage in collective bargaining;

That the deal will mean massive job losses in Canada’s auto sector because it eliminates any incentive to manufacture vehicles in Canada and increases the incentive to source auto parts from low-wage non-TPP nations. No side deal can improve Canada’s auto exports to Japan.

That it will undermine efforts to combat climate change. Investor-state dispute mechanisms allow corporations to challenge environmental regulations and could put a chill on governments trying to fight climate change.



# Designate January 29 as Day of Remembrance & Action on Islamophobia

January 25, 2018



TO ALL CITY OF TORONTO COUNCILLORS

Dear Member of Council,

On January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2017 a few hours after the shooting in Quebec City, the National Council of Canadian Muslims called the Toronto and York Region Labour Council and asked to assist. The following morning one of our staff members was sent to Quebec City to assist the families and the mosque in dealing with this catastrophic event.

When he returned, he shared the story of a 6 year old girl who was in the room inside the mosque when the attacker opened gunfire. She survived, not because she was not seen, but because when the gunman turned to her and fired, he had run out of bullets – but her father was shot 6 times and is now paralyzed. Six men were killed that fatal evening, but many more victims still live with the pain. In fact many within the Muslim community still feel the trauma of knowing that one of their houses of worship saw such bloodshed here in Canada.

The Labour movement responded that night, and we continue to educate and bring voice to the poison of Islamophobia. We are proud to be a part Toronto where we all believe in creating a society free of hate and discrimination, but to do so we must name and speak loudly against that which divides us.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims has requested January 29<sup>th</sup> to be named a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia and we join their call. We hope that you as a Member of Toronto City Council will also join us in voicing your support, as we all have a role in standing firm against Islamophobia and all forms of hate and discrimination. We urge you to support Councillor Neethan Shan's motion for the January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018 Council meeting that will name January 29<sup>th</sup> as a Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia.

Yours sincerely,

John Cartwright  
President

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Canadian Muslim communities are still reeling from the devastating terrorist attack in Québec City on January 29, 2017, that claimed the lives of six Muslim men worshipping in their mosque and gravely injured many others. It was an unprecedented attack that left a Canadian place of worship – a sacred sanctuary – a scene of unimaginable carnage and left 6 women widowed and 17 orphans.

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), with the support of over 70 Canadian Muslim associations and organizations and over two-dozen community partners, recently wrote to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau asking his government to designate January 29 as a National Day of Remembrance and Action on Islamophobia.

NCCM is calling on local governments to do the same at the city level.

This call is based on precedent. Every December 6, there is the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women to mark the anniversary of the 1989 shooting massacre of 14 women at l'École Polytechnique de Montréal.

By making this designation, we can honour the memory of the victims and their families and also ensure that Canadians never forget the horrific consequences that can occur of allowing hatred and xenophobia to go unchecked.

Go to [nccm.ca](http://nccm.ca) for more information.



# Pharmacare

A PLAN FOR EVERYONE

## PHARMACARE TOWN HALL — TORONTO

TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 6:30 — 8:30 PM

3.5 million Canadians can't afford to fill their prescriptions. Nobody should have to choose between paying for groceries or the medication they need. Help us win a universal prescription drug plan for everyone.

Join us for a discussion on how together we can win prescription drug coverage for everyone in Canada.

REGISTER AT [APLANFOREVERYONE.CA/TORONTO](http://APLANFOREVERYONE.CA/TORONTO)

Chestnut Residence - Ballroom (2nd Floor) - 89 Chestnut St, Toronto, ON M5G 2J1



Canadian Labour Congress  
Congrès du Travail du Canada

# UNIVERSAL PHARMACARE - A WIN FOR ALL!

Canada's unions are proud that we've won health insurance coverage for many of our members. But we believe anyone with a health card should have coverage for the medicines they need. That's why we're working to win a universal prescription drug plan that covers everyone in Canada, regardless of their income, age or where they work or live. Today, 8.4 million working Canadians do not have employer-funded medical benefits, and that number is rising.

It has left Canadians with wildly varying prescription drug coverage and access. Many are paying different rates for the same medications. We aren't benefitting from the current system, but pharmaceutical and private insurance companies are. Pharmaceutical companies can charge higher prices for drugs because they sell to so many buyers. Private insurance companies benefit by charging employers, unions and employees to administer private drug insurance plans.

A universal pharmacare plan will save Canada billions of dollars. The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives estimates that public pharmacare would mean almost \$11 billion a year in savings for federal, provincial and territorial governments, the private sector and individual Canadians. It's time to tell the politicians to get on board. Go to [aplanforeveryone.ca](http://aplanforeveryone.ca) to send that message.

Be a part of it. Add your voice now.  
[www.aplanforeveryone.ca](http://www.aplanforeveryone.ca)

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