

WINTER | 2022

LABOUR ACTION

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COUNCIL



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SONGS OF Solidarity and Struggle

Indigenous singer-songwriter and
activist Logan Staats performs
at November 6 climate rally.



Message from the President

Dear Sisters, Brothers, and Comrades,

Whether you celebrated the new year on January 1st or February 1st, I wish you health, happiness and solidarity! In this issue, we bring you “songs of solidarity and struggle.” I encourage you to listen to something that inspires you from our collaborative playlist as you read on. Let’s dance, sing, revel, and rant together through music.

Our good work fighting for health and safety, prosperity, and justice for all continues into what is now the third year of pandemic upheaval. It is easy to point to the virus as the cause of our social ills, but in truth, COVID has dramatically worsened problems that existed long before the world shut down in March of 2020.

Governments have come and gone over many years and left our healthcare system underfunded (pg 6 and 7); underinvested in education and refused to fund school building repairs (pg 8); created gaping holes in worker protection legislation (pg 4); abandoned the growing housing crisis to the whims of the market (pg 14); and dragged their feet in addressing the urgent, burning issue of climate change (pg 15).

Times are tough for many of us. We are tired, burnt out, and some of us are breaking under the financial and social repercussions of this pandemic. In many conversations, I hear rage, fear, and feelings of helplessness. But I have news for you: this battle is not yours alone. Together we can, and together we will build something better.

2022 is an election year at both the provincial and municipal levels. Through the blood, sweat, and tears of activists and grassroots advocacy, working people have been forcing changes that help everyone. We make our voices heard, and our power known. This year, we have two opportunities to become the rising tide that creates the sea change: at the polls in June and October as a united voice.

Labour Council continues to explore our deep-rooted progressive activism throughout our 150th year. In December, we co-hosted *Derailed: The History of Black Railway Porters in Canada* alongside Myseum of Toronto. Learn how we commemorated the Black Railway Porters’ fight for equality on and off the tracks on pages 9-10.

This Black History Month, we honoured the contributions Black unionists have made to our movement throughout history (pg 11-12) and in the present (pg 18 and 19). If your local is taking action to dismantle racism through celebratory events, policy changes, or educational initiatives, we want to hear about it! We invite delegates to share at general membership meetings, or you can get in touch with us. Let’s continue to challenge each other and ourselves to learn and to do better.

In March, join us to celebrate International Women’s Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Stay tuned for details on these and other upcoming events (pg 20).

As of publication, the Convoy continues to be an active issue. There is much to be said about this. We recognize the frustration and disenfranchisement of workers who are demanding recognition. We also note – and strongly condemn – the far-right elements who are the organizers and profiteers of worker frustration. In the short run, we must reclaim our streets and our cities, and in the longer run, build the better world we know is possible.

Solidarity,

President



Listen to the Songs of Solidarity and Struggle Playlist!

Listen along on our collaborative Spotify playlist. In the app, search “Songs of Solidarity and Struggle by Skylar” or visit tinyurl.com/bdf4ypuj to follow and add your own picks.

2022-2024 Executive Board and Committees

Please welcome our new Executive Board and committees to a new term of office. Nominations were held at our February 2022 Delegates' Meeting and all candidates were acclaimed.

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Standing Committees of the Labour Council

EQUITY

Ralph Chatoor - SUP 160
Joy Davis - CUPE 4400
Camlin Vinayagamoorthy - CUPE 4948
Keith Menezes - USW 9197
Monica McKenzie - UNITE HERE 75
Doug Warren - CUPW Toronto
Shardé Anderson - OPSEU 5111

MUNICIPAL

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Dave Mitchell - CUPE 79
Brandon Haynes - CUPE 4948
Hendrik Bruyn - USW 8300
Melissa Sobers - UNITE HERE 75
Jason Da Silva - ATU 113
Anthony Fracassi - CUPE 416
Chris Campbell - Carpenters 27

EDUCATION

Pam Beetlestone - ETFO York Region
Karen Ebanks - OECTA York Region
Marie Coulter - CUPE 4400
Rob Bauer - TECT
Mike Platt - OSSTF D12
Helen Victoros - ETT
Vanessa Stoby - OSSTF D16
Michael Butler - CUPE 1281

WOMEN'S

Josie Barberi - UFCW 1006a
Laura Thompson - OPSEU 503
Tunika Grace Udoh - ATU 113
Cara Brideau - IBEW 353
Emma Lee - CUPE 4948
Liz Parry - CUPW Toronto
Alex Thompson - USW 1998
Sarah Gardiner - UNITE HERE 75

Cover Story: November 6 Global Climate Justice rally

On November 6, 2021, Labour Council and many of our affiliates turned out at Queen's Park to speak up for a job-rich transition to a low-carbon future. We co-hosted this event with a coalition of environment and justice organizations for the Toronto Global Day of Action for Climate Justice, coinciding with COP 26 and with mass mobilizations across the world. The day brought together movements to build power for system change – from Indigenous struggles to trade unions, from racial justice groups to youth strikers. Pictured on the cover is Logan Staats, a singer-songwriter and Indigenous land use activist, performing his original song "Six Miles" at the demonstration. Photo credit: **Nadine MacKinnon**

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Smoke and Mirrors is for Magic Tricks, not Worker Rights

Labour Council passed the statement “The Ford Government Just Doesn’t Work for Workers” at the Delegates’ Meeting on January 6, 2022.

Doug Ford is trying to pull the wool over workers’ eyes. He wants to look like he’s helping workers and COVID-struck employers. But he’s actually helping workers as little as possible while rewarding bosses who injure their workers or deny their status as employees, in a desperate bid for re-election in June.

Consider the so-called Working for Workers Act. Bill 27 is full of too-little-too-late and half measures. It makes sure delivery drivers have washroom access, but doesn’t offer that right to construction workers. It requires temporary agencies to be licensed, but doesn’t help long-time temp workers get permanent status. It says recruiters can’t extract fees from foreign workers seeking Canadian jobs, but doesn’t address serious barriers to unionizing experienced by migrant and temporary foreign workers.

Take from injured workers to give to the rich

Appallingly, Ford slipped a gift to bosses into Bill 27. Under the bill, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) is required to give back employers up to \$3 billion because WSIB has accumulated a large surplus. This means that corporations like mega-bakery Fiera Foods will likely get money back, despite killing workers, because those workers were temps not Fiera employees. Thus, Fiera evades its WSIB responsibility. And where does this \$3 billion come from? The surplus is so large because WSIB squeezes injured workers and denies them coverage or benefits, which includes a process called “deeming.”

Wayne Harris, a Sprinkler Fitter, was permanently injured after falling off a ladder in 2012, resulting in seven shoulder surgeries to date. After Wayne went through retraining, the WSIB “deemed” him eligible to be a project manager. Whether or not there was an actual job for him and despite his surgeon saying he should not be working, WSIB cut Wayne’s benefits by two thirds as a result of his eligibility to take on a new job. His “phantom job” brought Wayne zero income but saved WSIB a lot of money. This money will now be gifted back to employers through Bill 27.



SEIU Healthcare and CUPE Central Hospital members call on the Ford government to repeal Bill 124 so they can fairly negotiate wages during bargaining.

If we don’t roll back these provisions, our workplaces will become less safe and our injuries will bankrupt us.

An Unlivable Minimum Wage

The minimum wage increase for 2022 is welcomed by minimum wage workers. But in another case of too-little-too-late, workers have lost an estimated \$5,300 because Ford’s Conservatives cut planned minimum wage increases in 2018. If it had gone to \$15 an hour in January 2019, it would already be at about \$15.90. Workers would have been earning \$1-plus an hour more for the last three years and would have had more money in their pockets already.

According to the Ontario Living Wage Network, nowhere in Ontario is Ford’s \$15 per hour minimum wage enough to live on. At the Ontario Federation of Labour’s 2021 convention, delegates voted overwhelmingly to demand a \$20 minimum wage.

If we don’t keep fighting for a living wage, the recovery will take place on the backs of marginalized workers, such as Black, Indigenous and other workers of colour, who have already suffered disproportionately from COVID and the resulting economic displacement.

Divide and conquer: Creating worker sub-classes

Third, Ford is getting ready to enshrine the second-class status of gig workers by acting on recommendations of the Ontario Workforce Recovery Advisory Committee. You may remember the Conservatives set up this small, quiet group in the summer of 2021, with no worker representatives. So, it was no surprise that the committee recommended carving out gig workers' employment rights and creating reduced access to benefits such as CPP, EI and workers compensation.

The Employment Standards Act (ESA) needs to explicitly recognize these workers as employees. The Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) has already determined that gig workers are not independent contractors and instead are much like employees. The OLRB's reasons? Simple: The app is the employer's tool; workers are not allowed to subcontract their work; and the fact that they are allowed by the gig company to hold down more than one job doesn't make the workers "independent contractors," it simply means they need multiple jobs to earn enough to survive.

If we don't fundamentally challenge the carving out of gig workers' rights now, you can be sure Ford and his Bay Street friends will come after the rest of us later. If there's a way out for profit-makers, they'll take it. If the bosses had their way, every employee would be subject to the same rules as gig workers. Suddenly, we'll all be gig workers!

Lowering Our (Employment) Standards

Finally, when Ford canceled the \$15 minimum wage in 2018, he also scrapped major improvements to the ESA that were won by the efforts of the Fight for \$15 and Fairness campaign, the labour movement, and other community organizations. These included permanent paid sick days and equal pay provisions for part-time, contract, casual and temporary workers. A year later, Ford's Conservatives passed Bill 124, which capped public sector wage increases at 1% for three years. This leaves a million public sector workers with earnings falling further behind inflation and has deepened the staffing crises in health care, child care and long-term care sectors.

Let's start the new year off right – be crystal clear about which laws actually work for workers, and which ones work for profit. Let's act to make sure workers know that Ford is no friend of theirs. Don't let the Conservatives pull the wool over workers' eyes!

"If we don't roll back these provisions, our workplaces will become less safe and our injuries will bankrupt us."

Labour Council Resolutions

1. Call on the provincial government to protect injured workers by:
 - a. Repealing the WSIB schedule in Bill 27,
 - b. Instructing WSIB to stop deeming/phantom jobs, and
 - c. Making the regulations set out under WSIA s 83(4) to hold client companies of temporary help agencies liable for WSIB premiums based on experience ratings of injuries, accidents and deaths of the company's temporary help agency workers (rather than the temp agency bearing that liability)
2. Call on the provincial government to protect gig and app-based workers by:
 - a. Applying employment standards universally and eliminating exceptions and special categories that restrict worker rights;
 - b. Proactively addressing the misclassification of workers as independent contractors and reversing the legal onus so employers must prove a worker is not an employee and is truly an independent contractor; and
 - c. Ensuring all workers have the right to organize into a union should they choose and making that right meaningful by addressing barriers to organizing.
3. Support a \$20 minimum wage
4. Continue to demand 10 paid sick days for all workers, the repeal of Bill 124, and the reinstatement of the ESA improvements cancelled by Ford in 2018
5. Collaborate with labour and community allies to educate affiliates and ask them to educate their members on the truth of Doug Ford's assaults and minimizing of workers' rights
6. Call on affiliates to urge their members to remember on June 4, 2022 – election day – how Doug Ford's Conservatives tried to deceive them

OFL Calls on Ford Government to Protect Health Care Now

Ontario workers are sounding the alarm.

Our province is facing its worst public health crisis since the COVID-19 pandemic began almost two years ago. Health care providers are describing it as a “full-blown emergency.” And the situation is getting worse with each passing day.

Just weeks into 2022, Ontarians are witnessing the collapse of our health care system. Health care workers are burnt out, demoralized, and getting sick in the thousands. Women and racialized workers are among the hardest hit.

Many health care workers are leaving their jobs, or have left already. There is a massive staff shortage. Ambulances are tied up for hours as understaffed hospitals struggle to offload patients. Long-term care facilities are appealing to restaurants and hotels to help feed their residents.

It didn't have to be this way.

At every stage of the pandemic, Doug Ford's government has failed to protect workers and keep our communities safe. Instead of following the advice of public health experts and frontline workers, Ford has taken shortcuts, implemented half-measures, and catered to Big Business.

He has consistently put “economic” concerns ahead of public health and the well-being of Ontarians.

Now Ontarians are paying the price.

Enough is enough.

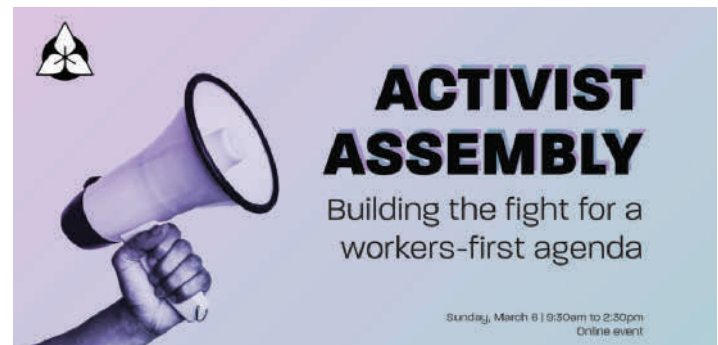
The Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) is joining with frontline workers in health care, long-term care, education, and other sectors to issue this emergency appeal. The Ford government must:

1. **Recall the legislature** for an emergency session.
2. **Repeal Bills 124 & 195.**
3. **Legislate a minimum of ten permanent employer-paid sick days** and an additional 14 paid sick days during the pandemic.
4. **Hold an emergency summit of all health care stakeholders** and develop a rapid response plan to hire the tens of thousands of RNs, RPNs, PSWs, and other health care workers.
5. **Require health care and educational institutions to provide airborne precautions** to staff, patients, residents, and students, and extend protections to frontline workers in other sectors.
6. **Launch an emergency public health campaign** to communicate urgency and to build broad public support for a comprehensive public health strategy.

These demands represent the bare minimum of what is required to confront this unprecedented crisis, but they are only a start. The Ford government must act decisively to implement the full recommendations of public health experts, health care and education professionals, and frontline workers. We can no longer afford shortcuts, half-measures, or empty rhetoric.

These demands have been endorsed by dozens of labour organizations, including the Toronto & York Region Labour Council.

This statement has been edited for length. To read the full statement and find out how you can act, visit ofl.ca/ontario-crisis-statement/.



Calling all Activists: Online Assembly on March 6

On Sunday, March 6, over 1000 people from every region of Ontario will take part in the Activist Assembly, a full day of strategizing, skills-building, and planning as we get ready for the province-wide day of action for a workers first agenda on May 1. We simply can't afford another four years of the Ford government. We urgently need a workers first agenda in Ontario. But we need to get organized to win.

To join the March 6 Activists' Assembly, visit ofl.ca/activist-assembly-2022/

Mark Your Calendar for May 1

This May 1, just one month ahead of the provincial election, the OFL is holding a province-wide day of action for a workers first agenda. There will be at least 12 regional actions across Ontario, where we will raise the demands that matter most to working people and their communities. The GTA event will be held at Queen's Park.

Labour Council will be providing updates on the May 1 event at labourcouncil.ca/events.



**ONTARIO
FEDERATION OF
LABOUR**

Let's Make June 2nd a "Circuit-Breaker" Election

Working people need a government that works for them

Last December, under the spectre of Omicron, public health experts called for "circuit-breaker" measures – policies that would radically change the way Ontarians interact – to prevent a health system collapse.

As usual, the Ford government's response was too little, too late. Too slow to implement the measures that would have blunted the Omicron wave, and now, too quick to lift them in the face of public scrutiny. Ford's choices over the last several years have been a wrecking ball at the foundation of social infrastructure, and have simultaneously cracked the bedrock of public confidence in government.

Lockdown after school closure after cancelled surgery, the Ford government has called on Ontarians again and again to make personal sacrifices for the greater good of this province. In the spring of 2020, when COVID-19 was a great, looming unknown, we made our sacrifices willingly. We were all in this together, after all.

But as the pandemic has worn on, it has become increasingly clear that while we may be in the same storm, we are not all in the same boat. And more importantly: the Ford government only cares about positive outcomes for a small, wealthy minority.

Working people are becoming aware that they have been asked to give up their personal health and safety, their mental wellbeing, and their financial security because this government has failed to protect them at every turn. And they are furious that it has come to this.

We don't need an expensive, greenbelt-gobbling highway serving a few thousand people and rewarding developers; we need staffed hospitals.

We don't need higher salaries and legal protection for the negligent CEOs of private long-term care facilities; we need respect and equitable pay for personal support workers.

We don't need education delivered cheaply through a media contract with TVO; we need smaller classes, refurbished school buildings, an end to hybrid education, and respect for teachers' expertise.

We don't need petty fights with the federal government over the carbon tax; we need deals to build housing, transit, and \$10 a day child care.

Ford, his cabinet, and his big-business financial backers have priorities that are all wrong for the vast majority of Ontarians. In 2018, this Conservative leader promised to govern "For the People," but three and a half years later, there is no evidence of that promise in action.

To be sure, education, healthcare, child care, and environmental protection have been under-served by successive provincial governments for a quarter century. Promises have been made and broken by many governing parties. These pillars of our society did not crumble because of this pandemic; rather, COVID-19 has brought into sharp relief what has been strained to breaking for years.

The good news is: our government is accountable to us, the voters.

It's time for a "circuit-breaker" election. The status quo is no longer sufficient to lead this province. Permanent damage has been done to our social infrastructure that requires radical repair. Working people demand to be prioritized by those who are elected to serve them. We demand better.

YCFPE on School Safety, Mental Health, and Anti-Racism



As Co-Chairs of York Communities for Public Education, we extend new year greetings to you and your families! We know it has been a rough start to the year for everyone in publicly-funded school communities, and trust us: we are right there with you.

We approached the return to in-person school with high anxiety, along with trepidation and hesitancy. First there was the delay of in-person learning due to rising COVID cases under the Omnicron variant within our schools, families and surrounding communities. Between the uncertainty of when we would return to in-person learning, the ongoing fight to make schools safer, pivoting - yet again - to online learning, and a two-day snowstorm, there has been so much to grapple with.

Ahead of kids and teachers finally getting back into classrooms on January 19, and after weeks of advocacy by school communities across the province, Minister of Education Stephen Lecce finally announced some key changes in mid-January. These included shipments of N95 masks for educators, 3-ply masks for students, 3000 additional HEPA filters sent to schools, and 2 rapid antigen tests per student.

We learned that the isolation period for vaccinated students would be cut down from 10 days to just 5. Students would no longer be able to confirm any symptoms with a PCR test and that RATs would only be used for symptomatic students. Further, schools are no longer required to report cases to public health, effectively ending tracing and public reporting of school outbreaks.

The rate of student vaccination for children 5 to 11 years of age was at about 34% for one dose by the time Jan 17th rolled around. About 3% were double-vaccinated for this group and students ages 12-17 were more than 6 months out without booster shots unavailable to them.

Now a month into our return to in-person, we are still advocating for the Ministry of Education to address:

- Providing better quality masks which fit smaller faces such as N95s, KN94 or KN95;
- A return to reporting cases in schools and clear rules about when to close down classrooms and notify close contacts;
- Ensuring all classrooms in Ontario have a HEPA and providing air quality reports which quantify what good air quality levels should be;

- Re-examining the 5-day isolation period;
- Improving vaccination rates of all students who are eligible;
- Providing clear mental health supports.

We know that working and learning in unsafe classrooms can cause physical risks, and also mental and emotional pressures on staff and students. Beyond the risk of COVID-19 spread, rotating between in-person and online schools is causing distress and continued mental health challenges.

YCFPE is working actively towards dismantling racism in education. We acknowledge that there are mechanisms of oppression built into our school systems as we know them now. One example is streaming (the separation of students into college-level and university-level classes starting in Grade 8). YCFPE as a group has been learning more about how streaming disproportionately harms and impacts the life outcomes of minorities, especially Black students, from the Coalition Against Streaming in Education (CASE). In the coming months, we expect to continue our engagement on this issue.

On a personal level, the challenges of the past few weeks can feel so isolating. We have been asked to shoulder so much. But the good news is, we're not doing any of this alone. Your calls for action, for urgent help, are being heard and amplified by thousands of others who share your experience.

Together, our voices are strong. Together, we are powerful. Together, we are winning. Let's keep up the momentum!

.....
Your parent and student co-chairs,
Sandra Huh and Riya Bhatla

York Communities for Public Education is a coalition of parents, students, educators, education workers, and community allies who share an interest in maintaining the high standard of publicly-funded education in York Region.

Follow on facebook.com/YCFPE, twitter.com/york4_public_ed, and instagram.com/yorkcommunitiesforded.

Derailed: The History of Black Porters in Canada Event Recap

"All aboard, brothers!"

"10 minutes? A lot can happen in 10 minutes."

"Train #202 – Toronto to Ottawa!"

"10 minutes is enough to lose your job."

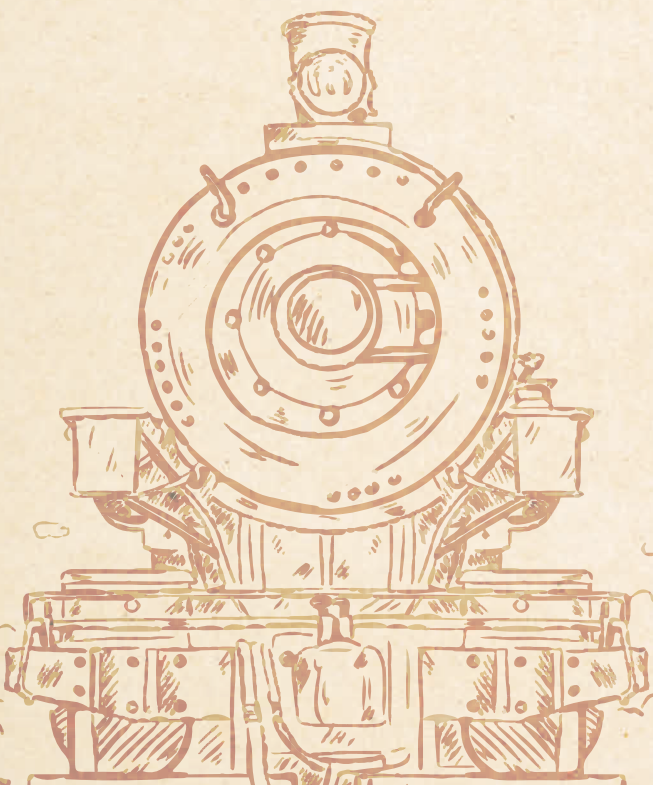
"Don't you dare miss it..."

Canada as we know it today would not look remotely the same without the transcontinental railway, reads the exhibit's introduction. Those tracks connected the country from coast to coast, ushering in a new era full of economic prosperity and powered by national pride. But the story does not end there. Indeed, while the railway was built by Chinese labourers, once complete the trains that skated across its tracks, stopping in cities from Montreal to Vancouver, were maintained largely thanks to the underappreciated work of the Black railway porter – men who were hired to work on the railway and in sleeping cars.

In December, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council partnered with Myseum of Toronto to tell their story in "Derailed: The History of Black Railway Porters in Canada." With well over 100 attendees, this virtual event took the audience on a journey through time from the late 1800s to the mid-1900s, following Canada's Black railway porters as a group of workers who disrupted the system, eventually becoming instrumental in leading the fight for fair employment practices and anti-discriminatory laws.

Rather than a typical video conference, the Labour Council and Myseum strived to make "Derailed" a unique experience. To help guide viewers through this history, the centerpiece of the evening was an educational and eye-opening conversation between author, academic, and journalist Cecil Foster (They Call Me George: The Untold Stories of Black Train Porters), Labour Council president Andria Babbington, and moderator John Cartwright, past Labour Council president. Together, the three held a thoughtful and in-depth conversation that walked through the experiences of Black railway porters, the demeaning and degrading working conditions they were forced to endure, and ultimately their banding together to fight for historic change.

Throughout the evening, the event was punctuated by music, interviews, and recorded monologues. Filmed on location at Toronto's



"The Labour movement has a lot to do to continue this fight. When it comes to education and mobilizing in our workplaces, we are making sure we are moving politically to... strengthen [policies] and make changes for people of colour."

- Andria Babbington



Union Station, actors gave impassioned performances as they stepped into the shoes of some of the key figures who played crucial roles in this movement. They included John K. Crutcher, a Porter for the Canadian Pacific Railway, retelling the events of Christmas Eve 1954; Charles Ernest Russell, a Senior Porter who received a letter from the civil rights activist A. Philip Randolph to organize a Canadian chapter of The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters; and Stanley Grizzle, (see profile on page 11).

The monologues and other multimedia that were shown are part of Myseum of Toronto's larger "Derailed" digital exhibit. Available now on myseumoftoronto.com through April 2023, the full exhibit features a variety of videos, photographs, and other historical artifacts to further tell the story of Canada's Black Railway Porters. Produced in collaboration with Cecil Foster himself, visitors to this one-of-a-kind virtual experience are invited to go beyond the surface and explore these stories in detail with talks held by historians and community leaders.

As the evening's conversation wound down that December night, attendees ruminated on the history of Black Railway Porters in Canada, and remarked on their stories. Reflecting on their struggles, President Babbington couldn't help but see a connection to the labour movement of today.

"The Labour movement has a lot to do to continue this fight," she told the audience. "When it comes to education and mobilizing in our workplaces, we are making sure we are moving politically to...strengthen [policies] and make changes for people of colour."



Black History Month: Profiles of Courage

Recognizing the historical contributions of Black unionists is integral to our 150th celebrations. Today's Toronto & York Region Labour Council owes its strength to Black workers' courage, commitment, and dedication in the face of adversity. Black and other racialized workers have helped establish a culture of worker-led change in our movement that has led to many major victories over the last century-and-a-half.

At the same time, however, we must also recognize that labour institutions have and continue to uphold systemic barriers. It is incumbent on us to commit wholeheartedly to ending anti-Black racism, in our unions and in Canadian society. Our shared fight against racism and discrimination continues.

Below are six Profiles of Courage the Labour Council wishes to highlight in honour of Black History Month 2022. These individuals each displayed incredible acts of courage and leadership in the battle to overcome the barriers of racism. These profiles are but a few in the history of the labour movement. Our unions and our communities are stronger because of acts of bravery we commit every day. We encourage everyone to learn more about these and so many others who worked and continue to work to build a better, more inclusive society.



Bromley Armstrong (1926-2018)

United Automobile Workers, Urban Alliance on Race Relations

A Black trade unionist, community organizer and activist, Bromley Armstrong was a pivotal figure in the early anti-discrimination campaigns in Ontario that led to Canada's first anti-discrimination laws. As a self-described "blood and guts" ally of the working poor, he demonstrated a lifelong commitment to the trade union movement and the battle against disadvantage and discrimination. For more than six decades, Armstrong worked for human rights, helping to generate civic and government support for racial equality and advocating for human rights reforms in public policy. The Bromley Armstrong Awards were initiated in 2002 to celebrate his legacy and recognize those who have taken up the mantle within our movement.



Stanley G. Grizzle (1918-2016)

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, CCF

A former Citizenship Court judge, railway porter, World War II veteran, political candidate and labour union activist, Stanley Grizzle was a dynamic force in the African Canadian civil rights community. As a railway porter, he helped organize workers under the banner of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, serving as the local chapter's president for 16 years. In 1959, Grizzle and Jack White became the first African Canadians to seek seats in the Ontario legislature for the CCF. Grizzle was the recipient of many honours, including the Order of Ontario in 1990, and the Order of Canada in 1995. In the 1990s, he was inducted into the Labour Hall of Fame.



Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (est. 1917)

The First Union for Black Workers

As one of only a few job opportunities available to them in Canada, the vast majority of sleeping car porters were Black men. Black railway employees were prevented from joining the Canadian Brotherhood of Railway Employees. In response, Black Canadian porters formed the first Black railway union in North America (1917) and became members of the larger Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1939. Together, both unions combatted racism and confronted the many challenges that porters experienced on the job. The impact that the BSCP made within Canadian history is profound. At a time when Black people were fighting for their basic human rights, the union was a much-needed group that helped to fight for the rights of Black men in the workplace.



Ladies Auxiliary (est. 1938)

Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

The Ladies' Auxiliary was the backbone of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters movement. The group had its own regional and international officers, conventions, and a mandate that included education, fundraising, and scholarship initiatives. The Auxiliary actively educated other women and children about the labour movement, staged consumer protests, and organized local and national civil rights campaigns. These women played an essential role in shaping public debates over Black manhood and unionization, setting political agendas for the Black community, and crafting effective strategies to win racial and economic justice.



Hugh Burnett (1918-1991)

President, National Unity Association

Hugh Burnett started as a carpenter before becoming a prominent civil rights activist, eventually becoming a key figure in the fight for anti-discrimination legislation in Ontario. Through the 1940s and early 1950s, he rose to prominence as a leader and organizer of the National Unity Association (NUA), pushing for equal rights in Dresden and the surrounding area. By 1954, the NUA began working in earnest with the Toronto Joint Labour Committee for Human Rights to push for further anti-discrimination legislation in Ontario.



Jan Simpson

President, Canadian Union of Postal Workers

Nearly 30 years after being a shop steward in her workplace, Jan Simpson is the first Black woman to lead a national union in Canada. Jan has been breaking barriers at the Canadian Union of Postal Workers for many years since first starting at Canada Post in 1985. She was the first Black woman elected to the CUPW national office and to the national board. Since the beginning, Simpson has been a fierce advocate for her members. Her leadership has particularly shone during the trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

These are only a handful of the many stories of courage held by Black men and women in the labour movement. Their contributions to creating a more just society are immeasurable, but the work is not finished. Although much progress has been made thanks to the actions of these individuals and others, anti-Black racism persists. The labour movement must continue to lead the charge against racism and discrimination in Canada.

U of T Casual Workers Win Paid Sick Days



Casual workers at the University of Toronto who were seeking better treatment from the nation's richest university have achieved a new collective agreement, including long sought-after paid sick days.

USW Local 1998 represents approximately 3,500 casual workers at the university. After pandemic-related delays at the bargaining table, the local union and the employer worked together to reach a new contract.

In bargaining, the local union demanded better treatment for casual workers, who work alongside full-time workers on the same projects, programs and departments but were not treated similarly. Casual workers are on contracts with the university, ranging from a few weeks to a full year. Many of the casual contract workers have been employed with the university for decades, without access to permanent positions.

"We were bargaining with the nation's richest university and it was reasonable

for casual workers to expect the basic level of fairness from the university," said Colleen Burke, USW Local 1998 President. Burke mentioned that the union also worked with the Decent Work and Health Network to campaign for a fair contract, including paid sick days.

The local union came away with some important wins, despite being constrained by the provincial government's Bill 124, which prevents bargaining more than a 1% increase in wages and benefits. Major highlights of the three-year contract are a 1% wage increase, two paid sick days, better protection for members facing discipline or termination, and improvements to dental benefits.

UFCW Organizes Steamworks Baths and PetSmart in Toronto



Twenty-three hospitality workers at Steamworks Baths and twenty-six sales and salon workers at a Toronto PetSmart have joined UFCW 1006A. The Steamworks vote took place in November and the PetSmart (Yonge and Empress location) vote took place in February.

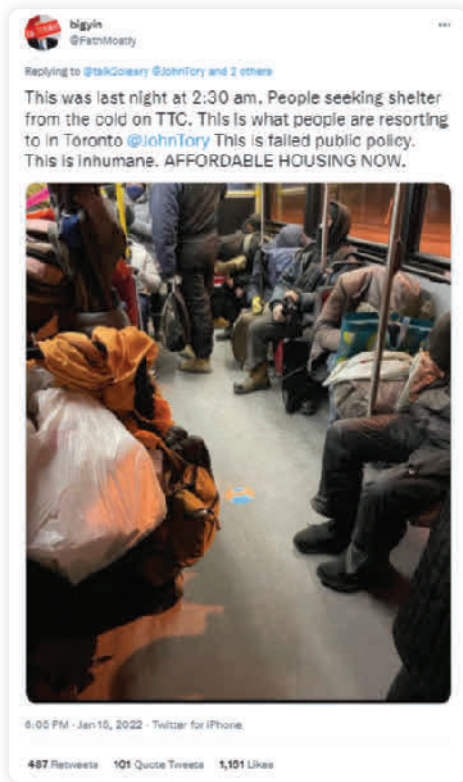
Regarding Steamworks, UFCW 1006A President Wayne Hanley said, "Our local union has a proud history of supporting the 2SLGBTQ+ community and we are proud to welcome these newest members."

Lesley Prince, Director of Organizing, said, "It is inspiring to see retail workers at PetSmart and other retail locations stand up for workplace improvements." Wages, health and safety related to COVID-19, hours, and staffing were key issues at that workplace.

Workers in traditionally low-paid, low-status workplaces are standing up for themselves and recognizing the value of a union. "I know how hard we work and I know that none of us deserve to take home anything less than a living wage," says Graeme Lamb, Steamworks Baths worker. "A lot of us were motivated to join the union because we want impartial scheduling, transparent discipline, health and safety measures, and a predictable pay grid. Workers should never be afraid to demand fair treatment, even during a pandemic."



A City to Live, Work, and Play In: Toronto Budget 2022



The City of Toronto's 2022 operating budget was voted on at Council on February 17. Labour Council advocated for courageous strides towards a just recovery in the face of an administration that is upholding the status quo.

The context of this second year of pandemic budgeting reveals both challenges and opportunities.

The challenges: Omicron is definitely creating huge holes in Toronto's budget, due to increased expenses and reduced revenues from sources like TTC fares. Other levels of government will once again need to step in to bridge the gaps. Further, our frontline workers can't do their jobs if they are under-resourced. We also need to start the recovery, addressing all those problems that everyone understood last year were exposed by the pandemic, not caused by it: systemic racism, undertreatment of mental health, over-policing of BIPOC communities, the affordable housing shortage, poverty, and the severe impact of climate change.

The opportunity: public support. Never before has there been such a strong social recognition of the impact that frontline workers have on our daily lives. And, never before have Toronto residents been, en masse, so directly supported by City workers.

City of Toronto staff have always been part of the soul of our cherished city services – from parks and rec to libraries to chapel services. But over the past 23 months, City workers were called to serve our city beyond their customary duties. As citizens, we've been greeted at vaccination clinics by administrative support staff or received contact tracing calls from recreation-turned-public-health staff from CUPE 79. We've been kept entertained and

culturally connected thanks to CUPE 4948 library workers.

And we've seen frontline City workers in many sectors support our most vulnerable residents by doing the very difficult jobs we ask them to do with dignity and respect. We have witnessed, for instance, ATU 113 bus drivers sheltering street-involved people who could not get into shelters during recent weeks. We saw Toronto Firefighters pitching in to close the service gap when EMS was overloaded with calls.

Residents understand better than ever that their lives are directly impacted by the city we choose to build together. Now is the time to be bold.

What we have seen from the 2022 budget is a lack of audacity to set us on any recovery pathway. This is still very much a status quo budget, with minor exceptions holding the line on program growth that would meet community needs.

We are past papering over problems. That's just not good enough for a city that wants to continue to attract and retain people of all walks of life to live, work, and raise their families. It's time to advance the progressive priorities that residents care about: great public services, diverse and safe transportation options, affordable places to live, and leadership on climate change and racial justice.

This is an election year, and we are in crisis. Toronto residents are looking for leaders with a bold vision and the courage to act.

TransformTO: Toronto's Heavy Lifting for the Planet

When the world's leaders arrived at Glasgow for the United Nations Climate Conference (COP26), they were greeted with a poignant image. The official COP26 banner hung from the giant 175-ton Finnieston Crane at the edge of the River Clyde, a symbol of the city's industrial heritage. The message was clear – it is “Time for Heavy Lifting.”

To reach the goal of keeping global warming to 1.5 degrees, there will have to be massive effort to decarbonize every workplace and every community in the world. It's a path that the City of Toronto has been on for many years, and last month City Council voted overwhelmingly to support a new level of commitment to doing the heavy lifting needed to address the climate crisis.

In fact, cities across the world have often been in the leadership of translating lofty goals into lived reality. Networks of mayors and city staff have been experimenting and sharing best practices at a global level for decades. Toronto has often led the way, without a lot of fanfare. We have a district energy and deep lake water cooling system that services millions of square feet of commercial and institutional buildings downtown; a Better Buildings Partnership that supported massive energy retrofit projects; early adoption of recycling and organic waste diversion; the Toronto Green Buildings Standard; and the most electric buses in North America – all examples of real municipal leadership supported by labour.

TransformTO is setting even more ambitious goals. It seeks to make Toronto net zero by 2040. All new buildings must be Net Zero, and existing buildings will be renovated to that level. The city's vehicle fleet and TTC will consist of 50% zero-emission vehicles, and extensive charging infrastructure will be installed for personal electric vehicles. It aims to have people walking, cycling, or taking transit for half of all trips shorter than 5 km. And it calls for the continued expansion of renewable electricity combined with energy-saving measures. Procurement is to align with climate objectives, and Toronto Hydro will have a leading role.

Of course, the City can't do all this by itself. It requires senior levels of government to step up and enact strong regulations while investing in new technologies and workforce training. The federal Cabinet is making all the right statements, but the Ford government will have to change its approach. If they did collaborate, we could find a new path to sustainability – but it will take time, effort, and money.

If done right, we could have a job-rich transition to the new economy. There will be tens of thousands of jobs renovating

buildings, installing new infrastructure, turning wasteful consumerism into a circular economy, making new products (we'll need at least a million heat pumps) and taking more time to fix and improve everyday items. In the process, we need to make sure these are decent jobs with high skills, not precarious work paying poverty wages. And those job opportunities need to be part of an intentional plan for racial and gender equity by using tools such as Community Benefits Agreements to set people on real career paths.

This work won't be easy. It will take dedicated staff, finances, and elected leadership to help guide the way. And it will require all the rest of us to pitch in and support the plan, especially when obstacles emerge. Civil society organizations, community groups, labour, and business all need to be involved. There will be a city Climate Advisory Group that will help centre the voices of equity-deserving groups, and work with Indigenous communities to share knowledge and learnings to inform climate action.

An important new feature reflects the principles of Just Transition – there will be a dedicated table where the City's unions will contribute the intimate knowledge of frontline workers to help implement the TransformTO measures for City operations and assets; and another for the construction industry that will draw on decades of union training experience. This will build on our recent experience at the Toronto District School Board. Labour Education Centre's Working Green 2050 Project will help provide training and background for union reps at these and other sectoral tables as they are developed at the local or national level.

In August, the United Nations Secretary General said, “Today's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report is a code red for humanity. The alarm bells are deafening, and the evidence is irrefutable...billions of people are at immediate risk.”

That's a warning we all must heed. With TransformTO, Toronto is pledging to do its part of the heavy lifting needed for the future of this planet. The labour movement must be an integral part of making that happen - let's roll up our sleeves for climate justice!



Labour Education Centre offers York Region Black youth entry to building trades

**Labour
Education
Centre**

The Labour Education Centre (LEC) is part of a novel and innovative program for Golden Mile residents to enter the construction industry as part of a multi-billion, multi-partner private development of the neighbourhood along Eglinton Ave East, east of Victoria Park Ave in Toronto.

In 2018, United Way Greater Toronto CEO Daniele Zanotti and BMO Financial Group CEO Darryl White, co-chairs of Inclusive Local Economic Opportunity (ILEO), launched an initiative to ensure residents of redeveloped neighborhoods have access to jobs within the development projects. Active participants in the project include many of Toronto's 'blue chip' companies, developer and construction companies, as well as community organizations.

UNITED WAY
ILEO
Inclusive Local
Economic Opportunity

The first phase of the development will focus on Scarborough and will include 3 towers built by Daniels and Choice Properties on the north-east corner of Eglinton Ave East and Victoria Park Ave, across from the LRT station. The entire Golden Mile redevelopment project will use union labour.

To support targeted recruitment, The Centre for Inclusive Economic Opportunity (CIEO) Golden Mile was incorporated in 2020 as a non-profit corporation, LEC is one of 10 community partners of CIEO. CIEO then entered a partnership with the Aecon Group (Canada's third largest construction company) to form Aecon Golden Mile (AGM)

a construction joint venture with the community with 51% ownership through CIEO and Aecon Group the minority partner with 49%. AGM is a construction and maintenance company that will provide construction services to the Aecon Group and other construction firms. Initially staffed by Aecon employees, AGM will eventually employ Golden Mile residents in office-related jobs as well as in the construction trades. This model is based on a similar project where Aecon has partnered with the Six Nations indigenous community in southern Ontario.

Marzieh (Marci) Sarvi, a LEC Job Developer, has started work to recruit Greater Golden Mile residents to enter the trades. Priority will be given to participants who live in the Greater Golden Mile, defined as postal codes: M4A, M1J, M1K, M1L, M3C. (Golden Mile, Victoria Village, Flemingdon Park, Ionview, Kennedy Park) These are home to diverse communities, with significant immigrant and racialized populations. Income and employment rates in the neighbourhood are below the Toronto average.

Marci can be reached at msarvi@laboureducation.org or 416-537-6532 ext 2215

Further information on the initiative and a list of the ILEO Leadership Table is at <https://www.unitedwaygt.org/ILEO>.





EVERY CHILD MATTERS

2,021 graves. Gone, and never forgotten.

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Counselling and crisis intervention for Indigenous peoples: 1-855-242-3310

Happy New Year
虎年快樂
Year of the Tiger

TORONTO & YORK REGION
LABOUR
COUNCIL



TOGETHER WE DID | TOGETHER WE CAN | TOGETHER WE WILL





Labour Community Services

Your Labour Voice in the Community

2021 Bromley Lloyd Armstrong Award Winner Works to Build Up Our Workplaces and Communities

Toronto & York Region Labour Council along with Labour Community Services, established the Bromley Lloyd Armstrong Award to commemorate the courage, dedication and outstanding service of Armstrong to the Labour and Human Rights Movements in Canada. In 2021, we celebrated the annual event, virtually, recognizing union and individual achievements. Ivan Dawns was among those who were acknowledged and recipients of the award.

Dawns, the first Black Business Representative in Canada for the International Union of Painters & Allied Trades (IUPAT), is the Ontario Black History Society's 2022 Dr. Anderson Abbott Award recipient for High Achievement. Working in the construction industry, after coming from Jamaica in 1997, Dawns' personal journey has driven his involvement in his union and communities, dedicating himself to building others up.

Tackling issues of systemic racism and breaking down barriers in the workplace continues to be a prominent issue with a "long history of racism and discrimination against Black communities in Canada." In Dawns' workplace, he has helped draft resolutions for the recruitment and retention of Black people and women, including a path for them to achieve positions in leadership, stating, "if we don't change the systems we work in, nothing will." Dawns' activism is helping tackle generations of inequality, which has been impacted even more so due to the COVID-19 pandemic where "both the direct and indirect impacts of COVID-19 in Canada have been worsened by systems that continue to perpetuate racism, ageism, sexism, and homophobia, in addition to other structural or social factors that further marginalize, such as homelessness."

Looking forward, as well as looking back and knowing what it feels like to go through hardships himself, Dawns' work to helping youth find employment in construction, was solidified when a young man who he helped get into the



trades, once told him, "I wish I had met you long ago - it would have prevented me from spending 9 years in jail." Experiences like this help strengthen his dedication to making a difference. It also helps to remind the us the result of not taking the impact one person can make on someone's life for granted.



This past Christmas, remembering what it personally felt like to struggle during the holidays, Dawns worked with the Black Door Mission, and a team of volunteers in Oshawa, and paid to generously provide 250 people a warm dinner, which he hopes to continue to do this year for more people. Dawns also worked with 360 Kids in York Region, adopting 2 youth for the holidays and providing them with gift cards.

As many of us know, the road to making positive change can be challenging. However, Dawns is an example of someone accepting those challenges, one person and action at a time. Ending systemic barriers and racism needs people who are willing to put in the work and inspire us today for our future, and not take for granted what we can all do every opportunity we have.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/news/2021/02/cpho-sunday-edition-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-racialized-communities.html>

Bromley Lloyd Armstrong Award Nominations

Know someone within the labour movement who you think deserves to be recognized for their work in equity and human rights? Stay tuned for the 2022 Bromley Lloyd Armstrong Awards Nomination Form in February. For any questions, please email info@labourcommunityservices.ca.

www.labourcommunityservices.ca

"If WE don't change the systems we work in, nothing will."

Ivan Dawns

Giving Back with Dignity: Tackling Food Insecurity in the Black Community

Attasha Jordan was a member of Labour Council's Equity Committee for the 2020-2022 term. She shares how she has worked through her union to address food insecurity in the Black community.

Skylar Maharaj: Tell us about yourself.

Attasha Jordan: I'm a mom, a sister, a partner. I'm a doer. I work in the Ontario Court of Justice. I'm the president of OPSEU local 510, representing over 100 members. At OPSEU, I sit on the Coalition of Racialized Workers as Treasurer, I'm the alternate for the Women's Committee, and the delegate for the Human Rights committee.

SM: What can you tell us about your equity work in the area of food insecurity?

AJ: I wish I didn't have to do [this] work. It's sad that it affects racialized homes three times more than an average home. And it's important to me because I am a survivor of that. My lived experience growing up was going to all the after-school programs in the community.

I've never gone to a food bank. Our community, the African-Black-Caribbean community, they kind of shun the food bank. And not because we don't need the items there; it's because of how we were raised. It's our pride that gets in the way, in a sense.

SM: So it's the stigma of accessing a charity?

AJ: Absolute stigma. Once I started participating in these union activities, I started seeing first-hand how badly we [the Black community] are impacted by this.

I came to understand the social determinants of health in the work that I was doing with one particular charity as COVID hit. A lot of people I knew were being faced with eviction. It became clear that the more pressing issue was, "I have to choose between paying my rent and food." I knew we had to do something.

I paired my [OPSEU Human Rights committee] efforts with Black Food Toronto because I've personally benefited from this organization prior to COVID.

"It started with me reaching out to my union to borrow a van."

A simple ask. No one was using it, COVID had happened, we're shut down, everything is closed. "Can I use this van to help this organization deliver food? It's going to save the organization from renting an additional van and that money

can go back into buying food, which is the goal."

They said, sure, no problem. A small ask for a few weeks turned into the year.

Here I was, driving produce to all over Toronto. I was working at the time, I was pregnant, I was driving, picking up the van, doing deliveries... I literally drove until I could not drive anymore. But we did it!

I was so proud, driving the OPSEU truck and delivering, because when people see you and then they ask that question, "why does OPSEU have an interest?" I get to say to them, "Because we all matter. This is a human effort. You don't have to be a member of OPSEU for OPSEU to care."

And that's what makes me grateful for OPSEU. Because they allow you the autonomy to say, "this is an initiative that's important to me. How can you help me?" And they provide you the resources so you can go out and make a difference.

I think it made a big difference for these families to see our faces giving and supporting. This whole thing for me was just trying to give back that dignity.

Read the full interview at labourcouncil.ca/tackling_black_food_insecurity.



UPCOMING EVENTS

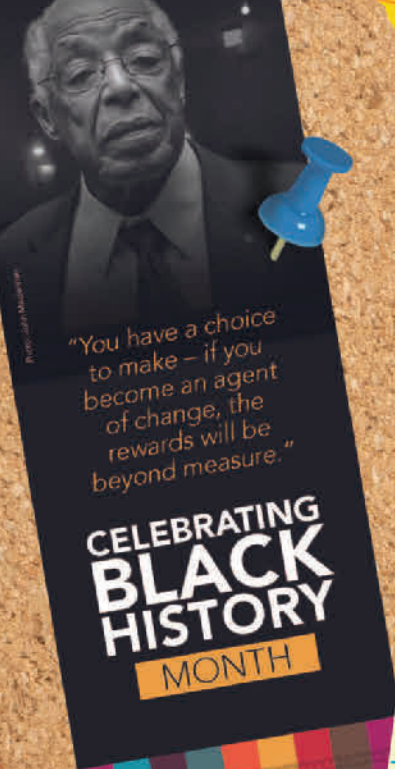
- MARCH**
- 3 - Delegates Meeting
 - 5 - IWD Rally
 - 6 - OFL Activists' Assembly
 - 8 - International Women's Day
 - 21 - International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (IDERD)

- APRIL**
- 7 - Delegates Meeting
 - 28 - Day of Mourning

- MAY**
- 1 - OFL May Day Rally at QP
 - 5 - Delegates Meeting

- JUNE**
- 2 - Provincial Election
 - 8 - Bromley Armstrong Awards Gala
 - 18 - Indigenous and Workers of Colour Conference (IWOC)

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HONOURING
BROMLEY LLOYD
ARMSTRONG
(1926-2018)

Bromley Lloyd Armstrong
Jamaican immigrant who is
a Canadian civil rights leader
dedicated trade union
committed community
who was passionate about
social change in the fight
against racial discrimination
cupe.ca/black-history

