

SUMMER | 2022

# LABOUR ACTION

LABOUR  
TORONTO & YORK REGION  
COUNCIL



@torontolabour



facebook.com/labourcouncil



labourcouncil.ca

2022 Labour Day Parade on Monday, September 5  
150th anniversary of labour marching in the streets of Toronto

加八工会组织  
工人各项权益保障

150 YEARS  
TOGETHER  
TORONTO & YORK REGION  
LABOUR COUNCIL

TOGETHER WE DID | TOGETHER WE CAN | TOGETHER WE WILL



Andria at the 2022 Political Action Conference



Andria at the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists' 51<sup>st</sup> International Convention in Los Angeles

# Message from the President

Dear Sisters, Brothers, Comrades,

In the two months since my last letter in Labour Action, many things have happened that affect our labour community. The challenges of the (almost) post-pandemic era, war-induced supply chain shortages, serious inflation, and the re-elected Ontario Conservative government have left us feeling stressed and uneasy. But we have upcoming opportunities to show our power and achieve our vision.

Many of us still face an extraordinary set of social, economic, and even existential challenges. That's why we see many going on strike. Soaring housing prices favour the wealthy, with insufficient government action. We are still striving so hard to secure inclusive economic outcomes for people of all backgrounds by reversing decades-long trends toward greater income inequality. And we are fighting for climate justice.

When I see the Buffalo news of ordinary people being shot in a supermarket just because they are Black, when I see the empty apology from the Toronto Police Service for its treatment of racialized people. I feel our work of eliminating overt and systemic racial discrimination is urgent, and our advocacy of addressing racial disparities in income and wealth due to a long history of past discrimination is an ongoing movement. We must fight white supremacy and hate. Take a look at page 15 for ways of showing community solidarity.

Labour Council's work rests on four pillars: social justice; economic justice; racial justice; and climate justice. Our kind of unionism goes beyond fights against the employer. When workers come together, we are powerful – and that power stretches beyond the workplace and into the community.

Often, when we feel angry and left out, we pull away. When we don't understand our power, we back away because we feel we don't matter. But the opposite is true. The more you speak about your experience, the more you communicate with others, and the more you create connections, build solidarity, and seize power.

We encourage workers to exercise their voting power at every opportunity and to have open and constructive conversations with each other about who they are voting for and why — the why part is so important. When I canvass, and I talk to people who tell me they aren't going to vote, I hear stories like: My family can't have access to the park or the community pool. I'm angry. Why should I vote?

We need to send a message that throwing away your vote is not okay. Each of us has the power to make change, but you have to use the tools available to you – and that's your vote and your voice. At election time, and between elections. Read page 7 about nine NDP MPPs you helped to elect in this region, who will represent our issues at Queen's Park.

On Monday, September 5th, join us for Labour Council's first in-person, on-foot Labour Day Parade since 2019. Throughout the summer and fall, show solidarity with workers who go on strike or take other kinds of labour action.

On October 24th, we will have our municipal election. In this issue of Labour Action, read our report card on the current Toronto City Council (page 4-6). In the next Fall issue, you can look forward to reviewing our carefully thought-out endorsements for municipal and school board elections in Toronto and York Region. We ask all of our sisters, brothers, comrades, and affiliates to vote, take back our power, have our voice heard, and let's keep our fight for justice ongoing and celebrate labour victories together.

Solidarity!

President



# Response to the 2022 Ontario Election

At the end of election night – June 2nd, 2022 – the counting was over and the Conservatives have formed a majority government, with the NDP as official opposition for the second time.

The Toronto & York Region Labour Council congratulates the nine Toronto NDP MPPs who were re-elected and newly-elected, and thanks labour-friendly candidates in Toronto and York Region who fought a good battle for progressive change.

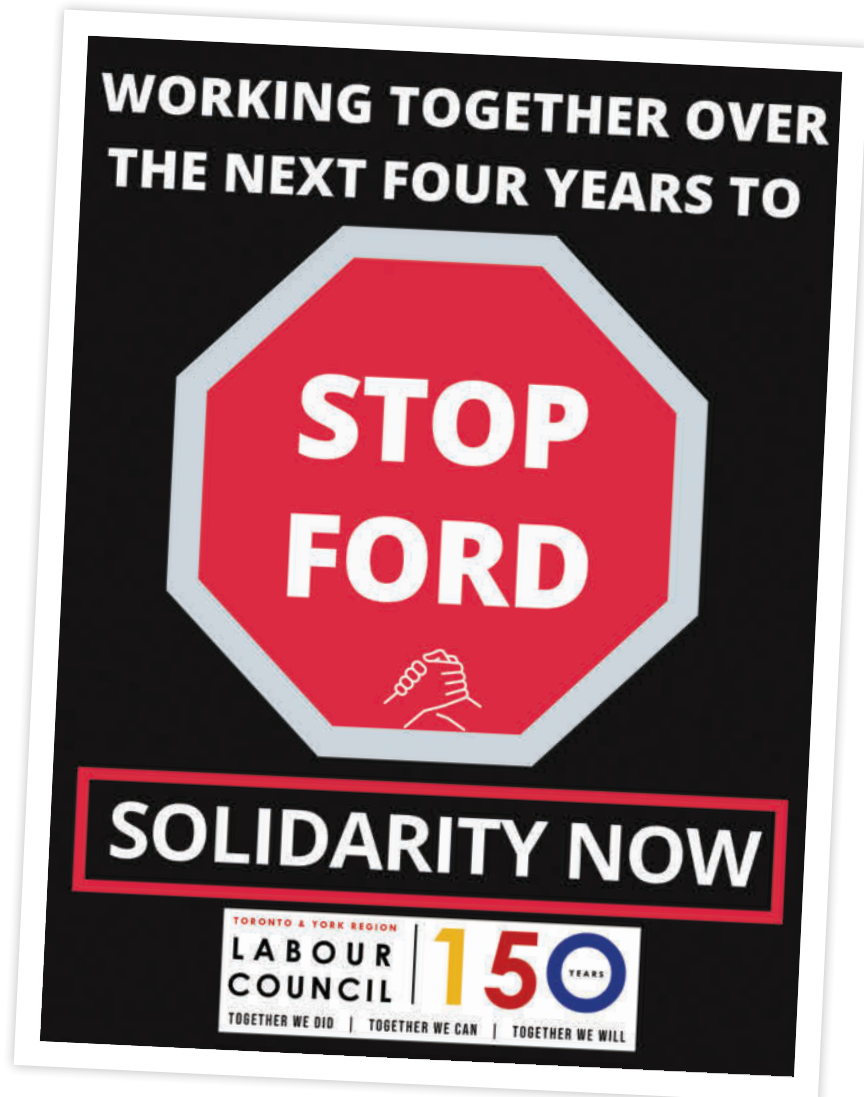
The Conservatives won with only 41% of the vote, after the lowest turnout of any provincial election in Ontario. This is not a strong mandate for taking reckless steps. We hope they respect this and we are prepared if they don't.

With the election behind us, and after weathering COVID to date, we hope for a summer we can enjoy with family and friends, not a repeat of the turbulent summer of 2018 that followed the last provincial election.

But first, with voter turnout at a historic low, let's talk with our members to learn what motivated their vote this year. Did they vote – how? Why? Or why not? Let's take some time for reflection. After that, we must develop ongoing plans for member engagement.

And let's keep our eyes open. One reason Doug Ford was re-elected is because he says he is a friend to workers and unions. This remains to be seen. Many of the Conservatives' key supporters are corporations who are not friendly to workers. They are expecting employment and economic policies that make their businesses more profitable. They will exert a lot of pressure to get their way.

This is not the first time that Ontarians have experienced a Conservative-led government in succession. Working people have led and won in spite of the odds against them through organizing and building grassroots activism. When we fight together, we can win economic, social, racial and climate justice. Solidarity!



**LABOUR**  
TORONTO & YORK REGION  
**COUNCIL**

[www.labourcouncil.ca](http://www.labourcouncil.ca)

LabourACTION is a publication of the Toronto & York Region Labour Council that is published several times a year.

Got feedback? Comment on an article?  
Story ideas?  
Email: [council@labourcouncil.ca](mailto:council@labourcouncil.ca)

## CONNECT + FOLLOW + SHARE

Stay connected with Twitter & Facebook  
Follow @torontolabour  
Like [facebook.com/labourcouncil](https://facebook.com/labourcouncil)  
Visit [labourcouncil.ca](http://labourcouncil.ca) for video, articles,  
press releases & more!



# City Council Report Card 2018-2022

Our Labour movement works hard to improve the quality of life for the people of this city. That quality of life is built on a foundation of strong public services for every neighbourhood, and programs that sustain healthy communities. We depend on those who work both on the front lines and in supporting roles. Those workers deserve fair wages and working conditions. The city also has valuable public assets which need to be defended.

COVID highlighted existing inequities entrenched in our systems. Throughout the pandemic, the Labour movement advocated and fought at the City level to protect and respect frontline workers, sustain those who lost their jobs or gave up careers to care for family and support those who shifted to working from home while balancing family responsibilities. As well, labour has addressed a heightened awareness of racism following the deaths of Canadians and Americans at the hands of police. It is also grappling with climate change, as we insist on climate justice while we bring our environment to net zero.

The Labour Council produces a report card every four years based on voting records and leadership demonstrated by the current City Council members. In addition, they are

assessed on their stand on crucial issues. COVID made the last two-and-a-half years an unusual point in time, where we saw the Mayor taking a more even-handed approach than previously. The report card reflects that.

Given how the business community is now beginning to clamour for fiscal restraint, that particular period of even-handedness is likely coming to a close. The Mayor may use his heft to intervene in local election races, endorsing corporate-friendly candidates to swing Toronto City Council to the right. This October, we need to elect progressive Councillors, who are independent, pro-labour representatives. The next issue of Labour Action will include our endorsements for the 2022-2026 Toronto elections.

Ward	Name	Grade	Commentary
	<b>John Tory</b> <i>Mayor</i>	<b>C+</b>	Mayor Tory has navigated the difficult issues that COVID thrust on the City of Toronto. However, his nominal support for affordable housing and mental health has not offset his low-tax austerity approach to city building. Supports anti-racism programs while at the same time backing Toronto Police budgets.
1	<b>Michael Ford</b> <i>Etobicoke North</i>	<b>F</b>	Right-wing voting record. His support for Mayor Tory is often overcome by partisan support for his Uncle Doug's Conservative government. Voted against construction unions, as a show of support for provincial Bill 66.
2	<b>Stephen Holyday</b> <i>Etobicoke Centre</i>	<b>F</b>	Hard right-wing voting record, undermining anything good for communities and workers. Voted against construction workers. Does little constituency work – when he previously supported slashing City Council, he said the Councillor job wasn't time-consuming.
3	<b>Mark Grimes</b> <i>Etobicoke-Lakeshore</i>	<b>F</b>	The man behind the CNE lockout of IATSE. Votes with the Mayor: Tory intervened in Grimes' 2018 re-election campaign by endorsing him to prevent a progressive candidate from winning. Absentee in the riding – ignores community issues while subject to many complaints of pandering to developers.
4	<b>Gord Perks</b> <i>Parkdale-High Park</i>	 <b>A</b>	An insightful critic of the Mayor who also comes with progressive solutions. Strongly pro-labour, leader on environment and community issues.



The Labour Council endorsed these Councillors in 2018. Endorsements for 2022 will be announced in our next issue.

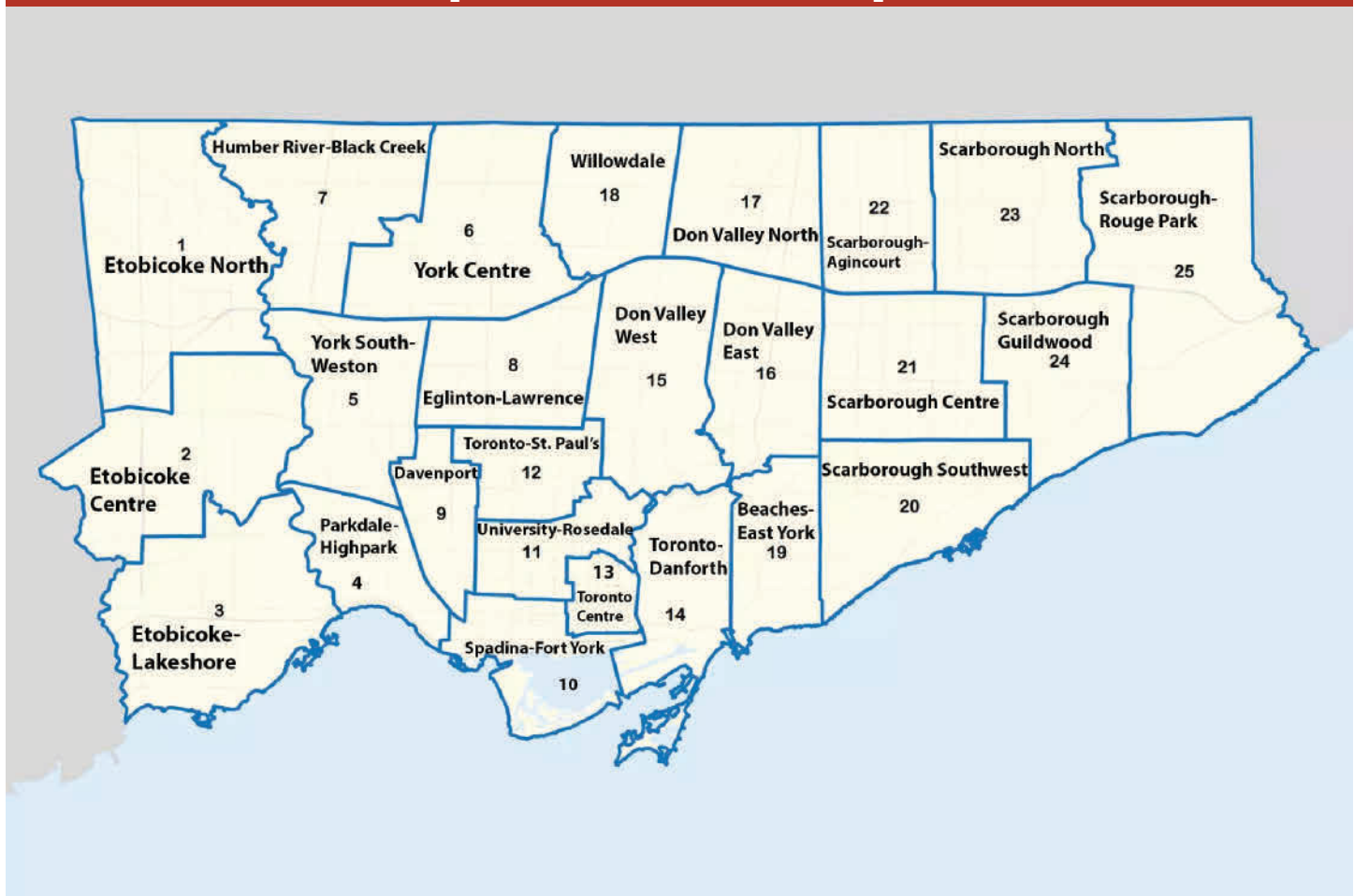
Ward	Name		Grade	Commentary
5	<b>Frances Nunziata</b> <i>York South-Weston</i>		<b>D</b>	Appointed Speaker, again. Supports the Mayor on most issues. Voted to highlight that the City's negotiations with the Conservative government were under protest when the province threatened to upload Toronto's subway.
6	<b>James Pasternak</b> <i>York Centre</i>		<b>D</b>	A voting record which upholds the inequitable status quo: voted against bringing jobs back into City or exploring alternative revenue sources.
7	<b>Anthony Perruzza</b> <i>Humber River-Black Creek</i>	★	<b>B+</b>	Strong support for workers, his community and local democracy. Skilled at balancing progressive issues in a suburban context.
8	<b>Mike Colle</b> <i>Eglinton-Lawrence</i>		<b>C</b>	Very mixed record and is a wildcard voter. We expect better from this former MPP.
9	<b>Ana Bailão</b> <i>Davenport</i>	★	<b>B+</b>	Lead advocate on housing, supports workers' rights and community benefits. Is a key bridge-builder within Council on many issues.
10	<b>Joe Cressy</b> <i>Spadina-Fort York</i>	★	<b>A</b>	Principled and ranked #2 in the power to get things done at City Hall. His work to protect public health budgets pre-COVID and set up vaccine clinics in marginalized communities saved lives and exemplified his work on other issues.
11	<b>Mike Layton</b> <i>University-Rosedale</i>	★	<b>A</b>	Leads Council persuasively on climate justice and road safety and is a central player in pro-labour votes and bringing labour's voice to the table.
12	<b>Josh Matlow</b> <i>Toronto-St. Paul's</i>		<b>B-</b>	Tending to work alone, Matlow's votes and motions are reflective of that approach. Prioritizes his communities.
13	<b>Kristyn Wong-Tam</b> <i>Toronto Centre</i>	★	<b>A</b>	One of the Council's strongest voices in the fight for gender and LGBTQ2S+ equity and accessibility. Reliably pro-labour.
14	<b>Paula Fletcher</b> <i>Toronto-Danforth</i>	★	<b>A</b>	A champion for Community Benefits, for film and culture industries, protecting employment lands, workers' rights and climate justice. Ensured launch of Housing Now. Consensus builder on key votes.
15	<b>Jaye Robinson</b> <i>Don Valley West</i>		<b>F</b>	Narrow-minded right-winger. As chair of the TTC, she supports big executive salaries, but goes along with efforts to contract out services. One of the few on Council to vote against construction unions.
16	<b>Denzil Minnan-Wong</b> <i>Don Valley East</i>		<b>F</b>	Reliably right-wing but has one of the worst attendance records on Council, so he misses votes he might otherwise make worse. Another of the anti-labour Councillors who voted against construction unions.
17	<b>Shelley Carroll</b> <i>Don Valley North</i>	★	<b>B+</b>	A strategic Councillor, she knows the budget process and works hard to achieve good budgets. Supportive of labour.
18	<b>John Filion</b> <i>Willowdale</i>		<b>C</b>	Fights over-development and gentrification in his ward but voted to delay the rooming house by-law. Pro-worker in some cases, but votes against construction unions in others.
19	<b>Brad Bradford</b> <i>Beaches-East York</i>		<b>C+</b>	Another Councillor endorsed by the Mayor in 2018, Bradford's votes tracks pretty closely with Tory's. As a former planner should be stronger on affordable housing issues

★ The Labour Council endorsed these Councillors in 2018. Endorsements for 2022 will be announced in our next issue.

Ward	Name	Grade	Commentary
20	<b>Gary Crawford</b> <i>Scarborough Southwest</i>	<b>D-</b>	As budget chair, supports the Mayor's low tax austerity agenda. Despite the City's nearly \$1B gap during COVID, Crawford passed up some opportunities to address the gap. Accustomed to a more affluent constituency prior to 2018, Crawford does not serve diverse residents well.
21	<b>Michael Thompson</b> <i>Scarborough Centre</i>	<b>C-</b>	Typically votes conservatively and favours big money, including voting against a report on a commercial parking levy to bring in more revenue. But adds depth to anti-racism initiatives.
22	<b>Nick Mantas</b> <i>Scarborough-Agincourt</i>	<b>D</b>	Not much of a voice on Council. Elected mid-term to replace outgoing Jim Karygiannis, but without the kind of support, his predecessor sometimes showed for workers.
23	<b>Cynthia Lai</b> <i>Scarborough North</i>	<b>F</b>	Bland right-winger. Anti-labour and anti-affordable housing.
24	<b>Paul Ainslie</b> <i>Scarborough-Guildwood</i>	<b>C</b>	Makes some good vote choices, but poor record on affordable housing.
25	<b>Jennifer McKelvie</b> <i>Scarborough-Rouge Park</i>	<b>C+</b>	Takes her job seriously. Has a lot of responsibility for a rookie Councillor. Votes with the Mayor more than any other Councillor.

★ The Labour Council endorsed these Councillors in 2018. Endorsements for 2022 will be announced in our next issue.

Please check this ward map of Toronto to see where your ward is.





# Political Action Conference 2022:

## Building worker power by learning in community

**Municipal Edition 2022:** On June 12, over 100 activists from labour and community gathered for a full day of in-person learning, sharing, and mobilization around the upcoming municipal elections.

Municipal elections are an important opportunity to create changes that stand to make the biggest impact in our day-to-day lives, outside—and for some, also including—our place of work.

Labour Council's municipal action plan laid out a path to victory, which included building capacity through training for union activists. The Political Action Conference is an important element of that work.

Early on a sunny Sunday, many of you showed up and packed the IBEW main hall, bringing enthusiasm for change and a willingness to work. The positive energy carried through the day and was reflected in the plenary speakers and workshop sessions.

Our cool, calm, and collected Masters of Ceremonies, Karen Ebanks (York OECTA) and Brandon Haynes (Toronto Library Workers), guided us through the day with a steady hand.

President Andria Babbington kicked things off, setting our collective compass toward the four pillars of justice that guide our political values: social, racial, economic, and climate justice.

We got motivated by hearing about what's at stake: affordability in Toronto and the GTA is an increasingly large barrier. That includes lack of affordable housing, an overloaded shelter system, high cost of food and poor access, and access to childcare. Access to city services is inequitable—including some of Toronto's very best features like recreation programs and parks. TTC access continues to be a challenge, especially for workers with longer commutes from the suburbs.

Council candidates Ausma Malik and Chiara Padovani (running in wards 10 and 5 respectively) shared their stories with attendees and spoke about why they are running in 2022. Several other council and trustee candidates attended with their teams, taking advantage of the atmosphere to meet and learn alongside labour activists.

Other plenary speakers included Erica Woods, a Progress Toronto advisor, who gave a high-level view of the political landscape and our path to victory; former Labour Council president John Cartwright, who got us inspired with stories of our wins and what we can do when we work together; and Donovan Hayden who helped us check in with ourselves and each other throughout the day.



Attendees were able to take advantage of three separate workshop sessions, each offering insight into the inner workings of campaigns, practical skills for volunteering or working on campaigns, and important legal and accountability measures in the electoral process. With highly skilled and experienced facilitators, we heard high praise for the programming and saw folks leave empowered to go out and make change.

It was invigorating to see everyone there. We witnessed a strong commitment to doing the hard but just work to build our movement, in our unions, and in our communities, to improve the lives of working people.

Huge thanks to IBEW local 353 for the donation of their hall and for sponsoring the lunch. It felt wonderful to be back in the space where we had been holding our general membership meetings pre-pandemic.

In labour, and in progressive organizing generally, we know this to be true: that decentralized power beats centralized power every time.

The more of us are included, and the more we see ourselves in each other's struggles, the greater our chances. How do you win? You out-organize the competition.

Thank you to all who joined us on June 12, those who attended the Progress Toronto spring training series, and those of you who will join us for the election work ahead!



# LCAT 1

## LABOUR COMMUNITY ADVOCATE TRAINING PROGRAM – LEVEL 1

SEPTEMBER 14 - NOVEMBER 23, 2022



**The Labour Community Advocate Training program is designed to build resilience, develop inclusivity, and train union members to become a valuable resource in the community.**

Also focuses on helping Labour Community Advocates deal with equity, empowerment, solidarity, and building relationships within the union and affiliates.

### TOPICS COVERED

- Unions & Communities Working Together
- Community Services
- Principles of Communication
- Stress: Causes & Impact
- Addictions & Dependency
- Understanding the Causes/Effects of Domestic Abuse
- Family Law
- Tenant Issues
- And more +

### LEVEL-1 TRAINING PROVIDES

- Good listening, confidentiality and communication skills
- Skills on how to gather information and referrals
- Help for members beyond what the collective agreement provides
- Links for workers facing workplace, personal or family challenges with appropriate resources in the community

**REGISTER ONLINE TODAY!**

[WWW.LABOURCOMMUNITYSERVICES.CA/LCAT](http://WWW.LABOURCOMMUNITYSERVICES.CA/LCAT)

*In partnership with*





# Unique Green Building Operator Program Begins

The Labour Education Centre (LEC) has started the first entry-level training program to operate green buildings in Canada. The first class began on June 20 with 13 students.

As Canada struggles to move to a low carbon economy, it is essential that we design, construct and operate our built environment to a new standard. In Toronto, Transform TO has set goals for the built environment. Meeting these goals requires “smart” building using technologies such as Building Automated Systems (BAS), heat pumps, and in some cases, geothermal heating and cooling.

Canada’s building trades are rising to the challenge, using the foundation of the apprenticeship system to incorporate training on green building materials and practices.

LEC’s Green Building Operator program is intended to build a parallel, though modest, pathway for diverse workers and for those whose employment or education was disrupted by the Covid pandemic to enter a career as a building operator. The program is funded by the Future Skills Centre of the Federal government through the Canada Green Building Council (CaGBC).

Four property company members of the CaGBC are assisting in delivering the program by providing guest lecturers, site visits and attending a job fair to hire graduates. In addition, the Toronto Environment Alliance (TEA) is providing training on waste separation in multi-unit residential buildings, a course they have developed over the past several years.

Training will be delivered on HVAC systems, BAS and humidification. In addition, certifications such as Working at Heights, Working in Confined Spaces, soft employment skills, and resident communication will be provided.

LEC’s program was inspired by a long-time union training for existing building operators in New York City run by the Service Employees International Union, Local 32BJ. LEC hopes to expand the GBO program to place graduates in publicly owned buildings such as those operated by the school board, municipalities and other governments.

Steve Shallhorn, Executive Director at Labour Education Centre



## The City of Toronto's Transform TO has established the following 2030 carbon reduction goals:

### Homes & Buildings

- All new homes and buildings will be designed and built to be near-zero greenhouse gas emissions.
- Greenhouse gas emissions from existing buildings will be cut in half, from 2008 levels.
- All City Agency, Corporation and Division-owned new developments are designed and constructed to applicable Toronto Green Standard Version 4 achieving zero carbon emissions, beginning in 2022.
- All City-owned facilities will have achieved zero waste.
- Greenhouse gas emissions from City-owned buildings are reduced by 60 per cent from 2008 levels.
- By 2040, City-owned buildings reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions.



# CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF LABOUR MEDIA

Monday, June 20 2022

Dear Faduma Mohamed, Executive Director,

Your union has won at the 2022 Canadian Association of Labour Media awards.  
Congratulations!

We received hundreds of entries in from 33 organizations in 40 categories. The 2022 awards highlighted the very best in union and labour communications this past year, and you should be proud that your organization's communications work was honoured.

We asked each of the judges to share with us their reasoning for each of the winners. Here is what was said about your union's winning entry:

**The Fighting Oppression Award for a communications initiative that raises consciousness and contributes to struggles against racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism and other forms of oppression and discrimination**

"Refugees in Canada: Facts and Myths Presentation"

This presentation was delivered during the 2021 Canadian Labour Congress online conference. It outlines the importance of working people standing with refugees and debunks anti-refugee talking points that are used to pit vulnerable groups against each other, which only benefits those in power. It also describes how refugees are created as a result of outside forces meddling in developing countries, highlighting our responsibility to assist them.

On behalf of the executive and in solidarity,

Nora Loreto, Editor and Virginia Ridley, Coordinator  
Canadian Association of Labour Media

cc. Tasia Brown, CALM President

Canadian Freelance Union - Unifor

## **Congratulations! Labour Community Services has won CALM's 2022 Canadian Association of Labour Media Awards!**

The Canadian Association of Labour Media (CALM) is a communications cooperative that represents nearly 200 labour unions across Canada. CALM seeks to strengthen the communications capacity of the labour movement and provide a link between large national unions and federations, and smaller locals, in all regions and sectors in Canada.

You can watch this "Refugees in Canada: Facts and Myths Presentation (2021)" video on Labour Community Services' website at: <https://www.labourcommunityservices.ca/refugeenextdoor>

# Indigenous & Workers of Colour Conference 2022



**"We can't have economic, social, and climate justice if we don't have racial justice".**

— **Andria Babbington,**  
*President of Toronto & York  
Region Labour Council.*

On June 18th, Labour Council's Equity Committee held its second virtual Indigenous and Workers of Colour conference, connecting with nearly 100 union members across all sectors. IWOC 2022's theme was "The Racialized Majority – Know our worth, normalize our power, and take what's ours." Together we learned and discussed how workers who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color can be recognized for all they do and use their power to build a better future.

The struggles of workers of colour and Indigenous workers share similarities. Both need to be treated equally with respect, seek justice for past wrongs and share a better future for our children. Merv King gave an Indigenous opening. The keynote speaker was Nicholas Marcus Thompson, an award-winning social justice advocate and labour union leader. Thompson opened up to criticize Canada's public service leadership, where lack of multiculturalism and diversity hiring is causing significant harm to Black, Indigenous, and racialized people. He shared his in-depth analysis of institutions' systemic racism problems that lead to substantial trauma to these groups. Talking about race, racism, and racial justice, Thompson emphasized our commitment to removing the barrier limiting the potential and excellence of BIPOC.

Panellists helped attendees learn from stories of progress. Struggle against dire situations can create incredibly inspiring stories. From fleeing from an abusive

family in India, growing up in a union family fighting poverty, to defending territory and implementing visions for true reconciliation, our panellists successfully resisted the hierarchy. They fought back against various racial injustices in collaboration with others. Altogether, we see a stronger will to build public awareness. As we recognize our roles in this conversation and empower workers of colour to participate within their unions fully, IWOC is the bridge between policy and practice.

Five dynamic workshops covered subjects ranging from Owning Our Music, Protecting Our Land, Building Our Power, Growing Our Community, to Telling Our Stories. There are many times when racialized workers need to communicate their anger, frustration, and pain to the world and to speak truth to power. Through this conference, we talked about the systemic obstacles to equal opportunity and justice. We clearly know our worth, and we will keep taking action.

# PRIDE



After a two-year hiatus because of COVID-19, downtown Toronto becomes a sea of rainbows as tens of thousands of people attended June 26th's Pride parade. This return of the in-person LGBTQ2S+ celebration was full of enthusiasm, respect and joy — the music and cheering were terrific. Seeing so many people marching in the Toronto Pride Parade gave us power. Our streets were filled with support, warmth, solidarity, and energy.



# Strikes and Struggles

## Construction

Construction workers who were deemed “essential workers” by the Ontario government stayed on the job throughout the pandemic. This spring, with contracts ending across the sector, building season ramping up, and inflation rising, many construction unions voted to strike, some for the first time in years. Those strikes have ended, with substantial wage increases won by each of the unions.

Several trades in residential, commercial and institutional construction went out across the province. Thousands of crane operators from the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) were joined by more than 15,000 skilled labourers from Labourers International Union of North America (LIUNA), and more than 15,000 members of the Carpenters’ District Council of Ontario, United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America in the ICI sector (Carpenters).

IUOE Local 793 members work on crane and other equipment, steel erection and mechanical installations, foundation, piling and caisson boring, excavation/earth moving, general contractor construction and surveying.

LIUNA Local 183’s striking members work in high-rise forming, self-levelling flooring, house framers, tile installers, railing installers, and carpet and hardwood installers.

Carpenters’ DCO members work on millwork, general carpentry, forming, cladding, residential trim, scaffolding, roofing and resilient flooring. In the GTA, they are represented by Local 27 and Local 675.



Each of the unions’ leadership pointed to the multiple reasons for their members’ strike votes: ongoing work throughout the pandemic, the profit being made in the fastest growing construction sectors, and workers deserving fair pay and benefits, especially during a time of inflation. The Carpenters noted they hadn’t been on strike in the ICI sector (including building hospitals and schools) for 34 years.

In the trades, workers often have to purchase their own equipment and travel to job sites across the region. According to Rafael Gomez, Director of the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources at the University of Toronto, “there’s a lot of frustration and resentment among this group of workers who have had to bear the brunt of all of our COVID measures... So sensing an opportunity, the unions [members] are finally saying, ‘Hey, we need adjustments, we want fair wages and payments,’ and they know all of these projects, the government needs them to get back on track.”

## Transportation

In April, nearly 100 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 2029 who work as train movement directors and signallers went on strike at Union Station. They had been without an agreement since 2019, yet they remained committed throughout the pandemic, ensuring an essential service remained operational to the public for nearly three years. Finally, after a couple of weeks of disrupted service and Metrolinx seeking an injunction, the two sides agreed to a return to work and binding arbitration for outstanding issues.

Just two months later, IBEW Local 2052 members at the Canadian National Railway Co. walked off the job across Canada. About 750 signal and communication workers, who are responsible for rail crossing maintenance and train inspections, struck for fairer wages and benefits.

## Warehouse

Over 330 e-commerce warehouse workers at HBC Logistics (The Bay) went on strike in late June. Negotiations broke down suddenly after the company refused to offer an increase in compensation for the past year when workers continued to provide services without a contract during the pandemic. The Bay is only offering a pay increase going forward, rather than retroactive to the beginning of the contract. These workers are represented by UNIFOR Local 40.

# Meet Our Orange 9 - City of Toronto's NDP Members of Provincial Parliament.



**Dr. Jill Andrew, PhD** has been re-elected for Toronto St Paul's. She is the first Black Queer person to be elected to the Ontario Legislature where she serves as the Culture Critic and Women's Issues Critic for the Official Opposition. She has supported numerous people dealing with all sorts of issues, from evictions and bad faith landlords to insufficient government support for people with disabilities.

**Doly Begum** was recently re-elected as MPP for Scarborough SouthWest. She is the first Canadian of Bangladeshi origin to hold elected anywhere in Canada. Prior to politics, Doly was the chief coordinator of the province-wide Keep Hydro Public campaign that stopped the privatization of Toronto Hydro and Wasaga Distribution.



**Jessica Bell** was recently re-elected as MPP for University-Rosedale. She is the Critic for Housing, Urban Planning and Tenant Rights. Prior to being elected, she was the founding Executive Director of TTCriders, and an advocate for environmental justice. Jessica is a lifelong community organizer who believes in the power of bringing people together to create real and lasting change.

**Chris Glover** was re-elected as MPP for Spadina-Fort York. Prior to his election, he was a TDSB Trustee, a member of the Toronto Board of Health and an Adjunct Professor at York University. Chris has been fighting for affordable housing, an end to homelessness, supports for small businesses and workers, and a just transition to a green economy.



**Bhutita Karpoche** was re-elected as MPP for Parkdale-High Park. A trained epidemiologist, Bhutita is a public health researcher and community organizer with deep roots in Parkdale-High Park. In 2018, when she was first elected, she became the first person of Tibetan heritage to be elected to public office in North America. She has long been an advocate for public health, affordable housing and fair wages.

**Tom Rakocevic** was re-elected as MPP for Humber River-Black Creek. As a lifelong local resident and dedicated community advocate, he is the Opposition Critic for Transit where he fought for safe, accessible, affordable and reliable public transit for all. Prior to being elected, Tom was Executive Assistant to City Councillor Anthony Perruzza, where he helped lead projects to improve services, community safety, public spaces and infrastructure.



**Marit Stiles** was re-elected as MPP for Davenport. She is a long-time community activist, parent and former School Board Trustee. Marit has worked hard for stronger public services, a better transit system and a public education system. Since 2018, she has led the fight against Doug Ford's cuts to education as the former Official Opposition Critic for Education.

**Peter Tabuns** was recently re-elected as MPP for Toronto Danforth. Voted best MPP twice by NOW Magazine. Peter was first elected as MPP in 2006, and then re-elected in 2007, 2011, 2014, 2018, and now 2022. Peter has held numerous portfolios and was most recently the Opposition Critic on Energy and the Climate Crisis.



**Kristyn Wong-Tam** was newly elected as MPP to represent Toronto Centre. Although new to the Provincial Legislature, she has served on Toronto City Council from 2010 to 2022. Kristyn has been a tireless champion on many issues including workers' rights. Kristyn chaired the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee and launched Toronto's 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee. Kristyn lives in Toronto Centre with their wife and energetic toddler.

# Workers didn't cause this inflation. And they shouldn't have to pay for it

Workers lost more than three per cent of their real purchasing power in the past year alone. If wages aren't lifted soon, they will experience a permanent reduction in their living standard, writes Jim Stanford.

There's a painful contrast in the latest Statistics Canada data on prices and wages. Average consumer prices increased 6.8 per cent over the past year — the fastest in more than 30 years. In contrast, average hourly wages grew 3.3 per cent in the same period. You don't need an economist to see what this means: prices are growing twice as fast as wages.

That widening gap means real (inflation-adjusted) compensation for Canadian workers is shrinking — and quickly. On average, workers lost more than three per cent of their real purchasing power in the past year alone, with more to come.

Public sector workers face draconian pay caps that amplify the losses from inflation. For example, 270,000 public sector workers in Ontario have had pay rises capped at one per cent by the Ford government since 2019. As compensation for their bravery and dedication during the pandemic, their real wages will be cut 5.5 per cent this year alone.

Other governments are imposing only slightly less draconian real wage cuts on their public servants. The federal government is offering its staff an average 1.7 per cent per year over four years. Other provinces are capping pay rises well below labour market averages, and even farther behind inflation.

No one can credibly argue the current inflation was caused by workers. Wages have lagged well behind prices since mid-2020, and workers' share of GDP is shrinking as prices surge. No, this inflation was clearly caused by supply chain disruptions (like semiconductors and cars), the housing bubble, and the energy price shock following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Those factors will likely moderate in coming months: real estate prices, for example, are already falling. Higher interest rates will cut deeply into domestic spending.

But even if inflation subsides, what will happen to workers' wages in the meantime? If wages aren't lifted, and quickly, workers will experience a permanent reduction in their living standards as a legacy of inflation they didn't cause — but which enriched others (from petroleum giants to housing developers to grocery chains).

That's morally reprehensible, and economically damaging. It causes household financial fragility, greater inequality, and conflictual labour relations (already visible in Ontario's construction strikes).

Employers, whether public or private, can certainly afford to boost wages in line with prices. Government revenues are

increasing lock step with inflation; that's why budget balances, both federally and provincially, are much stronger than anticipated. Governments have plenty of room to increase wages at the same pace.

Private sector employers, too, are reaping wider profit margins as consumers shell out for higher prices. Wholesale margins have grown more than twice as fast as overall inflation, and pre-tax corporate profits have reached their largest share of revenues in over a decade this year as inflation took off.

It's clear the current situation is a case of profit-price inflation, not wage-price inflation. Suppressing wages doesn't address the cause of the problem and will have no value curing it.

It is possible to protect workers against inflation, without causing more inflation. Unit labour costs grow more slowly than wages (thanks to productivity growth). And labour costs make up only one-third of direct production costs, on average, across all industries. So honest businesses only need to increase prices one-third as fast as wages while still preserving their (already-swollen) profits.

So long as the actual causes of inflation are addressed (by fixing supply chains, energy prices, and housing), inflation would then decelerate, even as wages keep up. Contingent wage protections (like cost-of-living adjustments) would also maintain the purchasing value of wages, without prompting higher inflation.

Meanwhile, governments could act to directly bring down some prices: such as childcare; health, dental, and drug costs; transit fares; and even housing (through expanded nonmarket housing construction). To the limited extent that domestic demand pressures are reinforcing higher prices, it is better to use more focused and fair contractionary measures to dampen spending. The federal NDP's proposal to lift taxes on petroleum companies, and recycle revenues to enhance social benefits, would be neutral in its effect on inflation, while helping protect the hardest-hit households.

Whether public sector or private, workers should reject the permanent reduction in real wages their employers are demanding. Workers didn't cause this inflation. And they shouldn't have to pay for it.

Jim Stanford, Contributing Columnist of The Star.

Originally Published in the Toronto Star, May 28, 2022.



# Celebrate Women in Construction

## Keep Leading the Vision for A More Diverse and More Inclusive Workforce

Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN) presented The NexGen Builders Champion Award to Rokhaya Gueye, a carpenter with Local 27 and co-founder and CEO of Global Connection Venture. Gueye, who prefers to be called Rok, is an active coach and proud union member. The award recognized her role as a construction industry mentor.

Rok is involved in union committees that address equity and inclusion within the union. In addition, she's a peer mentor with TCBN's NexGen Mentoring Program, a mentor in the workplace, and active in union outreach to underrepresented job seekers in communities impacted by Covid-19, job loss and poverty.

In her work, Rok provides excellent support and guidance in addressing workplace and work/life challenges experienced by mentees. She delivers clarity and 'tough love' when necessary. Through her work, Rok builds the capacity and confidence of colleagues to address concerns through union, contractor, and community channels and shares experiences and examples of problems and solutions regarding systemic and anti-Black racism within the industry.

Rok is also an Ambassador for the Toronto Community Benefits Network (TCBN), a Member of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee of Carpenters Union Local 27, and a Delegate to the Toronto & York Region Labour Council. Congratulations on winning the award!



Rokhaya Gueye is the winner of The NexGen Builders Champion Award

## Together We Can – CommunitySolidarity.ca

Community Solidarity is a collective response to the rise of the politics of division and hate. As a labour movement, we believe deeply in equity, human rights, and social solidarity; affirm the need for fair, consistent public health measures and strong public services in all communities; and support every person's right to decent work conditions and respect from those with wealth and power. A toolbox for unions and community groups to help frame a positive narrative for working people is available at [communitysolidarity.ca](https://communitysolidarity.ca)

Intolerance and hate can overshadow the love and empathy in our communities. Yet, the answers to today's problems are built on collective solutions. Together we can invest in families, education, health care and a sustainable future.

While we may not agree on everything, we all want to live in communities where people thrive, and everyone has the opportunity to live a good life, not just a select few. Together we can build inclusive communities of understanding and compassion.

The odds are stacked against many Canadians. The cost of living is rising while wages stay the same, and inequality is on the rise. However, we can win against those odds by working together. Together we can demand fairness and economic justice.



The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed healthcare and frontline workers to the brink of mental and physical exhaustion. Together we can protect public healthcare and demand respect for all frontline workers.

# NEVER HAVE I EVER...

## City Elections Edition

In our movement, we fight for the **whole worker**. That means advocating for issues in the workplace, but also where we live, work, and play. Municipal elections are one opportunity to engage in **political bargaining**. Use this activity to start meaningful conversations in your union, your workplace, and at your dinner table about issues that will guide your **choices at the ballot box** this fall. Our City Hall has grappled with each of these issues over the last four years.

Read our Toronto Council report card on pages 4-6 to see which councillors have your back. Visit [labourcouncil.ca/municipal2022](http://labourcouncil.ca/municipal2022) for ongoing updates.

## Monday, October 24th

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Put my waste at the curb, or used a sidewalk waste bin                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 13. Walked in the road because the sidewalk was unplowed                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Been concerned for road safety as a driver, pedestrian, or cyclist                        | <input type="checkbox"/> 14. Pulled over for a fire truck or ambulance   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Talked to a taxi or rideshare driver about whether they make a living wage                | <input type="checkbox"/> 15. Attempted to use a public washroom or water fountain but found it closed            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4. Been worried about how I or someone I love will afford to live in this city               | <input type="checkbox"/> 16. Used a public library (and maybe forgot to return an item on time)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5. Encountered an individual who could use a safe place to go to escape extreme heat or cold | <input type="checkbox"/> 17. Received a vaccine from a Public Health-operated clinic                             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6. Enjoyed the shade of trees in a park, ravine, or on the boulevard                         | <input type="checkbox"/> 18. Protested the cutting of Toronto council to 25 seats                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 7. Tried to access a City program but got waitlisted (e.g. recreation, daycare subsidy)      | <input type="checkbox"/> 19. Joined the "Don't steal our subway" fight.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 8. Wondered which government was responsible for an issue                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> 20. Wondered whether public works and repairs were done by unionized workers            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 9. Taken the TTC   | <input type="checkbox"/> 21. Waited a long time to get a response from your councillor                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 10. Thought that policing needs to be reformed   | <input type="checkbox"/> 22. Thought that our cities could do more to tackle climate change                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11. Visited a public pool, beach, splash pad, or wading pool                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> 23. Fought to "Kill Bill 66" to keep public construction works in union hands           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 12. Paid property taxes OR paid rent   | <input type="checkbox"/> 24. Agreed that communities should benefit from development with good jobs and services |