



PRIORITIES FOR THE 2019 ONTARIO BUDGET

Toronto & York Region Labour Council has been working for social and economic justice since 1871. The Council represents 200,000 working women and men from all sectors of the economy.

Workers are the backbone of our economy. It is working people who provide Ontario's services and make Ontario's goods, and who spend most of their hard-earned dollars in their own communities. While income inequality is growing in our society, working families know that a foundation of strong public services is vital for all of us to enjoy a decent quality of life. Regrettably, allowing profitable companies to pursue a model based on poverty wages puts extra strain on the public purse, as the working poor must rely on more public services.

In this 2019 budget, we call on the provincial government to invest in public services rather than cutting them, to maintain them in public hands rather than privatizing services or assets, and to use the tools of government to support good jobs that pay a living wage.

Conservative governments typically adopt austerity measures and aim to shrink government. Experience has shown time and again that this approach fails the people's needs, instead enriching already wealthy families and corporations. The massive backlog of repairs in social housing and public transit are a direct result of decisions by previous Conservative and Liberal governments to favour tax cuts over proactive investment.

Accordingly, Toronto & York Region Labour Council calls on the provincial government to address the following priorities in Ontario's 2019 budget:

Priority 1: Adopt a proactive high-road industrial strategy in collaboration with labour and communities. This includes restoring the planned \$15 Minimum Wage and worker rights that were taken away in Bill 47. It means cracking down on the expansion of temp agency and misclassified work, which leads to more poverty jobs. It means looking at the how to leverage existing industrial or sectoral clusters to anchor future economic growth, while ensuring that regulations are in place to govern the behaviour of employers in the digital and disruptive economies.

Priority 2: Restore the capacity of public revenues. Do not sell off revenue-generating public assets. Ensure corporations and tax evaders pay their fair share by reversing the disastrous corporate tax cut made in 2010 by restoring the rate to 14% (could generate over \$2 billion annually) and reversing the small business corporate tax cut effective in 2018 which was unnecessarily put in place to offset the minimum wage increase.

Priority 3: Apply a "Climate Change" lens to all decisions made by every Ministry. All new infrastructure must be designed to attain the lowest carbon footprint in its operation, and money provided for adaptation of existing infrastructure to survive frequent severe weather events. Economic development policies and investment must help place Ontario's private and public sectors on the cutting edge of sustainable practices and business opportunities. Just transitions from carbon-based to carbon-

neutral jobs must be planned. Reinststate a carbon pricing system and reinvest the proceeds in green technology. Ensure the benefits of a green economy are fully shared with all communities.

Priority 4: Fully fund social housing and cover the billions of dollars of repair backlog. Ensure these properties are upgraded to highest levels of energy efficiency to lower operating costs.

Priority 5: Invest in expanded transit operations across the province and restore the traditional provincial funding model covering 50% of operating subsidies. Maintain public transit in the hands of local municipalities, and do not attempt to take over Toronto's subway lines or assets. Cease using public-private partnerships for transit maintenance or operation.

Priority 6: Fix the broken funding formula for education. Improve community use of schools and invest in a massive retrofit program for all school buildings across Ontario to reduce operating costs. Restore grants for low-income students in post-secondary education and make up the financial difference to colleges and universities of lower tuition fees.

Priority 7: Protect the integrity of public healthcare. Support the introduction of a national pharmacare program to lower drug costs and ensure access for all Ontarians to prescriptions they need. Do not introduce further privatization into the healthcare system at any level.

Priority 8: Commit to a comprehensive agenda of social, racial and economic equity. Strengthen workers' rights in order to tackle income inequality by reversing Bill 47 and eliminating worker-targeting aspects of Bill 66 (e.g., Schedule 9). Build on the Community Benefits process for public infrastructure, invest in a robust anti-racism framework, address the gender wage gap, update the fair wage policy. Take leadership to keep good jobs in Ontario, such as the GM jobs in Oshawa and the Bombardier jobs in Toronto.

Priority 9: Commit to proactively strengthening the social infrastructure needed to address growing poverty, youth violence, the social determinants of health, and the aging population. Reinststate the sex ed curriculum. Support the role of the Human Rights Commission in preventing harassment and discrimination. Ensure Ontario has effective and compassionate policies for refugee settlement.

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