

# LABOUR ACTION

LABOUR  
TORONTO & YORK REGION  
COUNCIL

Winter | 2015



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# P3 Projects Cost \$8 Billion More

The province is paying more for infrastructure projects delivered under public-private partnerships (Alternative Financing and Procurement) than it would be if the projects were contracted out and successfully managed by the public sector, Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says in her 2014 Annual Report.

PRIVATIZATION  
costs **more**  
delivers **less**

*labourcouncil.ca*

“For 74 projects that were either completed or under way under Infrastructure Ontario, tangible costs, such as construction, finance and professional services, were estimated to be nearly \$8 billion higher under the Alternative Financing and Procurement (AFP) approach than they were estimated to have been if the projects had been delivered by the public sector,” Lysyk said following the release of the Report.

Under AFP, the private sector initially finances construction, but, as with

projects delivered by the public sector, the province ultimately pays for these projects under the terms of their long-term contracts with the private-sector companies.

As at March 2014, there were almost \$23.5 billion in liabilities and commitments that current and future governments will have to pay for AFP projects. Canada’s unions have consistently argued that P3’s ultimately cost more and deliver less. Once again the facts prove we were right all along.

## SAVE THE DATES!

February 6/7	Canadian Labour Congress Election Preparation Conference, 89 Chestnut St.
February 21	Filipino Workers Network 31 Wellesley St. East
March 7	International Women’s Day March 252 Bloor St. West
May 22	Bromley Armstrong Dinner
May 23	Aboriginal Workers/Workers of Colour Conference



Cover Photo – Labour Council Vice-President Andria Babbington, Organizer Jennifer Huang and President John Cartwright at the Queen’s Park rally opposing privatization of healthcare services in November 2014.

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To receive the Council’s weekly email updates, please contact Ana Fonseca at [afonseca@labourcouncil.ca](mailto:afonseca@labourcouncil.ca).

Photos: John MacLennan; Federico Carvajal (Cover)





# TORONTO'S TRANSIT FUTURE

A report by ATU Local 113 for the people of Toronto



Photo by Rob Murdoch

Labour Day Streetcar  
with kids - Sept 2007

The Toronto Transit Commission's trains, streetcars, buses and Wheel-Trans vehicles carry almost two million riders a day. The system is the product of several generations of public investment, with a current value of over \$14 billion.

The single most essential fact about the TTC is that it is owned in common by the people of Toronto, which is why the core principle in transit planning has to be increasing service to the greatest number of riders as affordably and sustainably as possible.

The TTC shouldn't be only for those who have no other option. We want Torontonians to be able to choose public transit as their premier mode of city travel. We believe, as do many other cities around

the world, that a transit-supported lifestyle is the best way of ensuring our city develops as a green, pedestrian-friendly and vibrant metropolis.

Making transit more peoples' first choice, however, means it has to be the most attractive choice. The TTC has to be speedy, reliable, comfortable and well maintained. It has to make Torontonians proud of what a public service can deliver and it has to keep pace with ever-growing ridership. While TTC ridership is growing at record levels, reaching 536 million in 2014 (15% higher than five years ago), budgets have failed to keep up.

There are now fewer hours of service relative to ridership than there were four years ago and as a

result, passengers suffer from over-crowding, and wait longer at stops for tardy vehicles – poorer service than they expect or deserve. Today, the per-rider subsidy is lower than it was four years ago, despite inflation. To some, this subsidy is “gravy.” But without this subsidy, as low as it is relative to other cities, our roads would be even more clogged and our smog-laden air would kill even more people than it already does.

Even just to keep the current, inadequate system in a state-of-good-repair, we need at least \$2.7 billion more over the next 10 years than is now available. Where is this “just the status quo” money going to come from?

This report, available at [TorontoTransitFuture.ca](http://TorontoTransitFuture.ca), outlines a blueprint for the future of the TTC from those who know its workings best. Transit workers want to collaborate with the new mayor, City Council, the Commission and citizens' groups in taking a remarkable, civically owned public achievement with over 90 years of history and returning it to a place where it can legitimately claim, once again, to be one of the world's great transit systems. Toronto is owed nothing less.

**THE TORONTO STAR**

# THE WORK OF WINNING HUMAN RIGHTS IS NEVER OVER

By Gary Pieters and John Cartwright

December 10th is the date of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations sixty-six years ago. That important act was the result of many years of struggle against racism and colonialism, combined with the horrors of the Holocaust that were still fresh in the memories of humankind after the Second World War.

Today's headlines remind

us that the work of winning human rights is never over. From the incidents in Ferguson Missouri and New York City, to the rampant evidence of sexual harassment and violence against women, we are reeling with the knowledge that so much more needs to be done. There is welcome news at the same time – the efforts of the Canadian Olympic Committee to support gay and lesbian athletes are to be applauded,

particularly in the aftermath of Sochi.

The fact is that our world was built on massive violations of human rights. The trans-Atlantic slave trade was matched in its brutality by the slave labour of indigenous people in the silver and gold mines of South America – millions died in the Potosi mine alone. The first joint-stock corporation – the Dutch East Indies Company

– included enslaving of indigenous people in its business model. That model provided an 18% average annual return on investment for two centuries.

Since the beginning of “globalization” the majority of humankind has struggled against racism and exploitation. The legacies of slavery and colonialism enshrined discrimination till long after WWII. A century



Bromley Armstrong, leader of Toronto Labour Committee on Human Rights in the 1950's, with Pura Velasco, leader of Caregivers Action Centre in 2010.

ago women in Europe and North America were organizing for the right just to vote – it would be many decades before women's equality found reflection in laws or practice. The Chinese Exclusion Act and Head Tax were a stain in our history, as were there turning away of ships bearing Punjabis or Jews in the 20th century. And we can trace a long and shameful legacy of Canada's relations with First Nations peoples, still simmering as the Harper Conservatives manipulate omnibus budget bills to undermine native rights in relation to their land and water.

But the area of Human Rights that is less frequently acknowledged is workers' rights. The Universal Declaration states that everyone has the right to decent incomes, equal pay

for equal work, and the right to join a union. The ability of working people to use their collective efforts to raise the standard of living above poverty set the stage for Canada's relative prosperity, even though that prosperity was never fully shared.

The labour movement became a key actor in the ongoing struggle against discrimination. The Toronto Labour Committee on Human Rights was formed in 1947 to challenge practices in restaurants, clubs, workplaces and accommodations, and partnered with black community activists to demand a change to Canada's racist immigration policies. With the growth of income inequality and racialization of poverty, the right to decent jobs must clearly be on the agenda.

But the real leadership of work on human rights has always come from the communities most affected. In 1975 community activists helped form the Urban Alliance on Race Relations in response to the increasing frequency of hate-motivated violence against African and South Asian Canadians in Toronto's streets, subways and shopping plazas. It was often difficult to speak the inconvenient truth about the reality of discrimination, but UARR has provided decades of leadership on education policies, police conduct and employment equity. The Black Action Defence Committee found itself constantly disparaged for its role in bringing racism to light, while others toiled with less notoriety but equal effect.

The fact is that the work for human rights needs

to be taken up by each generation. Those who penned the Universal Declaration had seen mass suffering at a level we can hardly comprehend. They were part of a long journey of humankind towards a more just world. We should all remember and strive to honour the first lines of the Declaration: "Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

First published in the Toronto Star online edition December 10, 2014

Gary Pieters is President of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations; John Cartwright is President of the Toronto & York Region Labour Council.

## ADVOCATE TRAINING AVAILABLE

Each season Labour Community Services offers courses for the Labour community Advocate (LCA) training program, previously known as Union Counselling. The program provides participants with information about the social issues faced by working people and the resources available in their community. Participants are trained in communication skills, interviewing and referral techniques so they can assist union members who are facing life challenges find appropriate resources. It also offers an opportunity for members from different unions to meet and network

locally while discussing their experiences and share ideas on social issues.

This program has three levels. The **Toronto Level 1** course starts on February 11th at the OFL Building. Contact Najib at [nsoufian@labourcommunityservices.ca](mailto:nsoufian@labourcommunityservices.ca).

The **York Region Level 2** course will be held Tuesdays and Thursdays at United Way York Region offices in Markham. For more information contact Marcia at [mlopez@labourcommunityservices.ca](mailto:mlopez@labourcommunityservices.ca)

# Buy This Book: THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

Naomi Klein has made a career critiquing the effects of global capital and consumerism. Her 2000 book “No Logo” looked at the exploitation of workers by large multinationals, including Nike; her follow-up, “The Shock Doctrine” (2007), examined the ways in which corporations benefit from disasters, wars and other upheavals, often with the assistance of policy initiatives. These books have led to the Canadian-born Klein being called “the most visible and influential figure on the American left.”



For Klein, the tensions between individual freedom, individual rights and the primacy of the political-corporate complex exist in something of a crisis state. Nowhere is this more true than when it comes to climate change, the subject of her new book, “This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate,” which argues, in the starkest terms imaginable, that we as a culture have reached a tipping point.

“Slavery wasn’t a crisis for British and American elites,” Klein writes, “until abolitionism turned it into

one. Racial discrimination wasn’t a crisis until the civil rights movement turned it into one. Sex discrimination wasn’t a crisis until feminism turned it into one. Apartheid wasn’t a crisis until the anti-apartheid movement turned it into one.”

The implication is that climate change is at a similar come-to-Jesus moment, with projections that we are on track for a whopping 6 degrees Celsius of planetary warming by century’s end. This is, Klein insists, “the equivalent of every alarm in your house going off simultaneously. And then every alarm on your street going off as well, one by one.” It’s an arresting image — “and yet,” she continues, “rather than responding with alarm and doing everything in our power to change course, humanity is, quite consciously, continuing down the wrong road.... What is wrong with us?”

Klein is not naïve about

the issues. “...We should be clear about the nature of the challenge: it is not that ‘we’ are broke or that we lack options. It is that our political class is utterly unwilling to go where the money is (unless it’s for a campaign contribution), and the corporate class is dead set against paying its fair share.”

In that sense, she is arguing for a new way of thinking, of interacting with the planet, one that has a lot to do with those in power but also trickles down to all of us. Her final caution — “It is we humans who are fragile and vulnerable and the earth that is hearty and powerful, and holds us in its hands. In pragmatic terms, our challenge is less to save the earth from ourselves and more to save ourselves from an earth that, if pushed too far, has ample power to rock, burn, and shake us off completely.”

Abridged from the Los Angeles Times

If you want to support progressive independent bookstores, go to [www.anotherstory.ca](http://www.anotherstory.ca) at 315 Roncesvalles or [www.adifferentbooklist.com](http://www.adifferentbooklist.com) at 746 Bathurst St.



# Conservative Government of Canada REPORT CARD 2015

Subject	Overall Performance	Grade
<b>Economy</b>	Stephen Harper has talked a lot about economic growth, but in recent years, 80% of all new jobs have been part-time. Manufacturing suffered from the high dollar linked to promotion of oil and gas industry at the expense of other sectors. Income inequality is growing faster than any other industrialized nation.	D
<b>Healthcare</b>	Unilateral capping of healthcare funding to the provinces is a ticking time bomb as the aging population puts more pressure on our healthcare system. The Conservatives refuse to defend the Canada Health Act against private interests seeping into public healthcare delivery.	D
<b>Retirement Security</b>	The late Jim Flaherty seemed to support expanding the Canada Pension Plan. But Stephen Harper is refusing to act on the looming crisis of seniors living without adequate pension coverage, and instead raised the age to 67 to qualify.	F
<b>Public Safety</b>	The Conservatives abolished the gun registry created after the Montreal Ecole Polytechnic Massacre. While easing access to guns, they have increased penalties for minor crimes resulting in a drastic increase in jail sentences for the poor.	F
<b>Families</b>	The Conservatives scrapped the national childcare program, replacing it with a meagre cheque for each child. Scandals with private childcare operators show that expanding quality public childcare should be a priority. It would cost less than the latest income splitting scheme which benefits only the wealthiest families.	D
<b>Transit</b>	Canada remains the only major industrial country with no national transit strategy – one of the reasons for GTA gridlock. Shameful.	F
<b>Public Services</b>	With Veterans Affairs staff slashed, massive delays to EI payments due to staff cuts, and mail delivery to be abolished across the country - maybe it should be an F.	D
<b>Environment</b>	The Conservative record on the environment is an international disgrace. Canada is the only country to withdraw from Kyoto, taking no action on climate change despite having the worst greenhouse gas emissions in the world. Harper is determined to pursue massive expansion of tar sands, changing laws to strip protection from watersheds and First Nations land.	F
<b>Trade</b>	The Conservatives have signed many trade deals that lock in corporate privilege at the expense of workers' rights or local jobs. The European Deal will make it illegal for Toronto or any other city to favour buying our transit vehicles in Ontario. Made in Canada means nothing to the 32 Conservative Members of Parliament in greater Toronto.	F
<b>Democracy</b>	From robo-call voter suppression, to muzzling scientists to spending half a billion tax dollars on partisan ads, the Harper regime is known for relentless abuse of power. Unions are targeted, along with any other organization that questions the Conservative agenda.	F
<b>Looking after the richest 1%</b>	From corporate tax cuts that now cost us \$14 billion each year to allowing massive tax evasion through offshore accounts, the Conservatives have consistently rewarded their wealthy friends. In fact they rate an A+ when it comes to coddling the rich while slashing benefits for the unemployed.	A+
<b>Overall Performance</b>	The legacy of this Conservative regime will be an economy where for the first time in history, the next generation of Canadians will have lower wages and less jobs stability than ever before.	F

**Not worthy of forming another government in 2015.**

# WE ROSE TO THE CHALLENGE

**"Do everything in your power to make sure this doesn't become your reality."**

Looking back at the 2014 Ontario Election - Labour Council played a leading role in the campaign to defend workers' rights.

"Do everything in your power to make sure this doesn't become your reality." Those were the words of Steelworker leader James Carvin to the delegates to the Canadian Labour Congress 2013 Political Action Conference. He described what it's like to operate in so-called "Right to Work" states in the southern U.S. His story contained a dire warning to Ontario unions facing the threat of Tim Hudak importing U.S.-style legislation. He told of workplaces where only a fraction of the workforce maintained union membership, where union power was seriously undercut by employers, and where politicians continuously devised new laws to weaken unions even further. The message was clear.

At a number of points during the 2014 Ontario election, public opinion polls showed that a victory by the Hudak Conservatives was a real possibility. But in the months since the election, the threat posed by Hudak's "right-to-work" policies has begun to slip out of the debate about what happened during the election. Some union members never came to terms with the implications of the Conservatives' plans, and may forget the significance of soundly defeating Hudak.

## **At first, a muted response**

Hudak's June 2012 White Paper spelled out Conservative plans to go for labour's throat. The Conservatives believed that they could significantly increase their vote among union members by promising them a free ride – all the advantages of union membership without an obligation to pay dues.

Several excellent research papers exposed Hudak's anti-union policies as an attempt to crush opposition to austerity and impose a wide range of regressive measures. However, labour was not quick to deal with the threat. The initial response to Hudak's declaration of war was surprisingly low key.

## **Michigan was a wake-up call**

South of the border, the "right-to-work" offensive was gaining momentum. The Governor of Michigan, Republican Rick Snyder had assured unions that he would not attack their rights. But in December 2012, Governor Snyder broke his promise and made Michigan – home of industrial unionism in America – a right-to-work state. That act sent alarm bells ringing across Canada. Within days of the shocking

news from Michigan, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council passed a resolution that identified the seriousness of the threat to union members, to working people in general, to equity and human rights and to progressive politics across Canada. Labour Council laid out a plan for an internal campaign which would immediately take campaign issues into the workplace through member-to-member discussion.

Labour rights were not an issue of our choosing and were not a winning issue among the broader public. Labour Council was confident however, that it could be a hot issue and major motivator for union leaders, staff and activists.

Labour Council set as its main campaign goal a significant reduction in the percentage of union members who vote conservative.

To accomplish this it was necessary to ensure that the Conservatives' pitch to union members could not get traction. It was also important to challenge union members who usually vote Conservative to think long and hard about the impact that a Hudak win would have on their wages, benefits and pensions.

Unions in Ontario are far from united in their advice to members about which



political party to vote for. A unified anti-Hudak campaign was necessary and possible, but a single message about “who to vote for” was not achievable.

## Launching the Workers’ Rights campaign

On March 2, 2013, the Labour Council held a day-long forum of over 700 union leaders, staff and activists to deliver a thoughtful but tough message about the mortal danger facing our movement and, importantly, about the possibility of turning this danger into an opportunity. Participants were urged:

- Don’t fall into the trap of being spectators who watch the opinion polls fluctuate.
- Overcome denial in your union. Focus attention and resources on the campaign.
- Make detailed plans for respectfully engaging members on campaign issues.
- Start the campaign now, don’t wait for the election.

The March 2 meeting was the beginning of a long and sometimes frustrating process of overcoming denial about the “right-to-work” threat within the labour movement. Working with staff from the CLC, OFL and national and international unions, a hard-hitting message was developed along with a guide for local unions to participate in the campaign. The CLC conference at the end of March brought speakers from the U.S. and Australia to highlight the need for a serious, deeply-rooted effort to defeat the threat, and the Fairness Works ads were developed to help change the narrative about unions’ role in society.

## Taking the Fight Province-Wide

With an election possible in the spring of 2014, Toronto & York Region Labour Council crafted a resolution for the November Ontario Federation of Labour Convention. It urged that the labour movement make the anti-Hudak fight its

main focus and called for a province-wide Workers’ Rights Campaign by the OFL. The resolution passed unanimously.

The OFL set up a “War Room” and shifted into campaign mode. At the heart of the campaign was a series of regional meetings across the province that brought together thousands of union leaders, staff and activists. Labour Councils across the province worked closely with the OFL campaign team to make every meeting a responding success. Some unions mounted developed their own messaging and others used the OFL materials. The OFL campaign gave the efforts of all unions a tremendous boost - many people said that it was the best labour campaign in years.

## A Historic Victory

The labour movement accomplished its goals. The Hudak attempt to win over union members never got off the ground. In the end, the Liberals ran a strong campaign and won majority status at Queen’s Park, while the NDP made serious mistakes and lost the balance of power. The Conservatives were crushed.

The labour movement across Canada and many of our allies breathed a sigh of relief. And, there was jubilation among labour leaders and many activists in the US. The bad news is that the Liberal government continues to attack its employees and is

pushing ahead with austerity and privatization. We are not, however, experiencing the mass social and political wreckage that would have come with a Conservative win.

With the Liberals in majority at Queens Park and now a Conservative mayor in Toronto, the struggle continues.

## The labour movement felt its power

It is not a stretch to say that the provincial election of 2014 began with the NDP by-election victory of Unifor leader Wayne Gates in Niagara Falls. It knocked Hudak off balance and destabilized the Conservative base. On Election Day, a major breakthrough was the NDP win (Jennifer French) in Oshawa. Both were union candidates and both victories were due in large part to union support. Neither of these campaigns suffered as a result of labour’s anti-Hudak focus. In fact, both campaigns benefitted significantly from it.

The Workers’ Rights campaign was a tremendous boost for morale. The movement successfully planned and implemented an ambitious campaign. We averted a major defeat and demonstrated again that labour can play a role in politics when we focus our efforts on a clear goal.



# STOP HARPER Join the Postal Workers Fight

## Prime Minister Harper plans to stop mail delivery to YOUR home!



← He wants **YOU** to travel to a “community” mail box like this to get your mail.

“Community” mail boxes are a major eyesore—and a nightmare if installed in front of your home. They attract litter, graffiti and theft! And, they reduce property values.

**Please ask your MP, Roxanne James, to speak out **clearly** and **publicly** to save door-to-door mail delivery!**



Roxanne James  
Scarborough Centre

▲ This leaflet is one of the individualized messages being taken by CUPW members and allies to the door in Conservative ridings.

Join with members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) to defeat the Harper Government's assault on Canada's postal service.

As the Federal election draws closer, CUPW Toronto and CUPW Scarborough with the support of Labour Council are hitting the streets in Conservative ridings. It is time to put responsibility for cuts to postal service directly on the heads of individual Conservative MPs. Many people are unaware that their Conservative MP shares the blame for the attack on door-to-door delivery. CUPW is combining newspaper ads with door-knocking to “connect the dots” - so that residents know their Conservative MP is responsible, and doesn't deserve their vote in the upcoming election.

## Please help take the message to the door!

January 24 – Scarborough & Etobicoke

February 28 – Scarborough & Mississauga

March 28 – Scarborough & Brampton

All canvassing starts at 9:30 a.m.

**Details at [labourcouncil.ca](http://labourcouncil.ca)**

## OUR CITY MATTERS – STILL!

Last summer Labour Council created an election website to highlight the issues most important to workers and their communities in the 2014 election. Now that the election is over, the website [www.OurCityMatters.ca](http://www.OurCityMatters.ca) will become a permanent campaigning site – one that offers information on current efforts by unions or community allies to make Toronto a better place for all of us. There will be lots of timely content, analysis and links for background material. OurCityMatters will be a one-stop location to learn all the news about City Hall, School Boards, TTC and other important bodies that are essential to a democratic society. Check it out and register to get updates, and follow Twitter or Facebook at OurCityTO.



## Town Hall Meeting

# RETIREMENT SECURITY

It is no secret that Canada faces a retirement crisis. About two thirds of workers in Canada do not have a workplace pension plan and the vast majority of Canadians are not able to save for retirement on their own. The demographic shift that is currently occurring only compounds this reality, and in decades to come the ratio of working age Canadians per retiree will decrease dramatically. If Canada does not address this crisis, millions of Canadians can only look forward to poverty in retirement.

The Canadian Labour Congress, in partnership with all its affiliates, Labour Councils and many ally

organizations, has been leading a campaign for *Retirement Security for Everyone* over the past few years. A major plank of this campaign is the expansion of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP). Expanding the CPP is by far the simplest and most cost-effective vehicle for both workers and employers to contribute to the cost of a secure and adequate retirement income. Virtually all working Canadians (including the self-employed) participate in the CPP. In addition to CPP expansion, the CLC is calling for the Federal Government to restore the age of eligibility for Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) to 65

and for a portion of the Federal surplus to be used to increase GIS benefits for the poorest seniors in the country.

The latest phase of the *Retirement Security for Everyone* campaign was kicked off in Toronto on November 12, where the CLC, Labour Council, Toronto Retirees Network, and CURC held a Town

Hall meeting to discuss the campaign, and what can be done to ensure that retirement security becomes a key election issue. The message from participants was clear - any political party that wishes to obtain the support of workers and retirees will need to commit to expanding the CPP and to make retirement security a reality for all Canadians.



CURC Toronto's Barry Stevens shares ideas with Helen Liu and Sheila Block.

## Painters' Community Outreach Program

For the past eight years now, Painters Union District Council 46 has been proud to lend a helping hand to thousands of students who live in the Fircrope Jane/Finch community in Toronto. Many of the union's members live and work in this community and the union office is located in this area as well.



The Union collects donations from industry partners including our contractors, contractor associations, professionals, training centres, etc.. These donations are then used to purchase backpacks filled with school supplies which are donated to thousands of children who go to school in the Jane/Finch area. In addition, DC 46 donates scholarships to several

students who exemplify what community activism is all about – these scholarships are used towards their continuing studies in college or university.

Union Representatives Greg Smith and Bruno Mandic, who have been involved with the program from the start, say there is no better feeling than seeing the happy, smiling faces of the children as they receive their school supplies and backpacks. "It's what really makes this all worthwhile", said Greg Smith.



# THE ORIGINS OF COMMUNITY BENEFITS

It's been twenty years since the original Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) were developed in California. The campaigns to win the first CBA's in North America were spearheaded by LAANE (the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy) – a coalition of community groups, labour and social activists.



The early CBA's leveraged high-profile private developments to create good union jobs, local hiring, youth training, and affordable housing in poor communities. In Los Angeles, high-profile projects like the Hollywood and Highland Centre (where the Oscars are held) and the Staples Centre (home of the Lakers and LA Kings) delivered significant Community Benefits after widespread grassroots organizing.

The movement for Community Benefits has seen a recent surge. In recent years, eighty new coalitions have formed in the US and Canada. In many cases, they have been the catalyst for broader

Living Wage campaigns or complemented union organizing efforts.

Toronto Community Benefits organizing was born 2006 in Rexdale – to take advantage of a proposed expansion called *Woodbine Live!* which claimed to be creating 10,000 jobs in a mega-complex of hotels, theatres, shopping malls, and restaurants. Early concerns in the area that the development would do nothing for the low-income residents, surfaced when then Councillor Rob Ford infamously declared it will turn “Rexdale into Rosedale.”

UNITE HERE Local 75 represented food service workers at Woodbine racetrack, and saw the unionization of *Woodbine Live!* as crucial to maintain good hospitality jobs in one of the most depressed areas of the City. Starting with its own members, the Local brought together residents and neighbourhood organizations to create CORD – Community Organizing for Responsible Development. Within a year, meetings packed with as

many as 500 people brought together Sikh seniors, Somali youth, hospitality workers, daycare advocates, teachers, and many others united to demand Community Benefits from *Woodbine Live!*

Success was mixed. The City and the developer came to agreement on local hiring and training, with significant goals over a multi-year period funded by a \$1 million commitment. All construction jobs would be Union. But many of the other demands were initially rejected. As the campaign carried on, the US-based developer pulled out, the world economy went into crisis and the project never got off the ground.

However the potential of community and labour joining together for mutual benefit to win Community Benefits was recognized and many lessons were learned. It's safe to say that the recent success of the Toronto Community Benefits Network builds on the earlier formative efforts of CORD in Rexdale. Good jobs are worth organizing and fighting for!

# Leader's Guide To Equity



Our Times magazine's cover story this fall features Jojo Geronimo, former Executive Director of the Labour Education Centre, talking about the Leader's Guide to Equity published by the Labour Council. Here is an excerpt from the article:

Geronimo says that while the guide is a comprehensive resource, it is not meant to be a universally applicable, step-by-step action plan. It is a working document, and he invites feedback.

"I see this as a first stage," he says. "Let's experiment

with this guide and then, using our experience, let's remake the tool and come up with another edition. Each union is very unique. There are big unions, small unions, multi-industry unions and unions that only have one workplace. So, it is important that each one adapt the guide to their own situation."

The idea that the guide is an organic tool, and that guide users should bring their experiences back to the author to allow for a revised version, sets the stage for long-term conversations about racism in labour

movement, and recognizes how antiracism work, like maintaining equity, is a continuous process.

"You can't get an organization-wide effort until and unless people see this as essential to the goals and mission of the organization. So, it begins there. It begins with a bit of conviction to do something."

The Guide can be downloaded from The Council's website [labourcouncil.ca](http://labourcouncil.ca)

To subscribe to Our Times, Canada's independent labour magazine, go to [ourtimes.ca](http://ourtimes.ca)

# Responding to Violence Against Women

In response to the murder of Sister Zahra Abdille (a member of CUPE Local 79) and her two children Faris and Zain by her abusive partner, the Toronto and York Region Labour Council Women's Committee developed the following checklist.

We believe that if our union locals begin to take these steps within their organizations, it will build the labour movement as a powerful organization that speaks out and takes action to stop violence against women.

## How can locals take steps to ensure this happens?

- Ensure every local union has a Women's Committee and that this committee is developed as a safe place for sisters to go to discuss any issues related to violence against women;
- Develop and/or implement a program like Unifor's Women's Advocate Program that educates local members about issues like domestic violence, workplace harassment and develops referral contacts to whom to refer sisters facing difficulties;
- Develop an ongoing and meaningful relationship with a local women's shelter. This could include donating money, fundraising, and/or developing programs for women from the local to implement at the shelter;
- Have our brothers take the pledge to end violence against women, join and publicize the White Ribbon Campaign and become advocates that speak out about violence against women;
- Encourage active reporting about harassment in the workplace; don't turn a blind eye – eliminating workplace harassment is everybody's responsibility
- Encourage our affiliates to develop and implement feminist education courses for the brothers in our unions.

# WHAAAAAT? They're Closing My Neighbourhood School?

## Why is the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) closing schools and severing off school yards and selling them off?

It is because the school board has been systematically underfunded for the last 16 years. Provincial law states that school boards cannot operate at a deficit and if they cannot balance their budget, they must sell their property to make up the shortfall. This sale of publicly owned land, bought and paid for by taxpayers is, in fact, a provincially driven policy. Yet most people are unaware that it is happening.

The TDSB has already

closed and sold 16 schools – mostly in low-income neighbourhoods. Three of them were devoted to teaching adult ESL. Two were secondary schools with large special education populations.

If you didn't know the fire sale was on, it is probably because the school board has taken steps to keep to the whole business below the radar. School trustees retreat into "private" session any time property is going to be declared surplus, or the business of the Toronto Lands Corporation is discussed. Announcements of public meetings are made with minimum notice, restricted to parents in the effected schools and neighbours in the very immediate vicinity,

and buried deep in obscure pockets of the TDSB website.

Long standing systemic under-funding of public education began when Mike Harris forced the amalgamation of the school boards in 1998. Up 'til that time, (since 1841) school boards were largely funded by local municipality property taxes. Prior to 1998, the school boards always balanced their budgets and kept their school buildings in good condition. Funding now comes directly from the province and it's never enough. Net funding dropped by \$450 per student between 1998 and 2009 – Ontario now has one of the lowest levels of funding in North America.

It stands 46th among 51 jurisdictions in the U.S. and Canada.

To balance its budget year after year, the Board ruthlessly cut staff and whole programs. It also put off building maintenance and construction. In time, small problems became bigger ones. Now the TDSB faces a \$3 billion maintenance backlog. Without revenue of its own and an inadequate Ontario funding formula, the TDSB is caught in a web of provincial policy forcing it to sell off property in order to raise funds for its crumbling infrastructure, and robbing the collective social wealth that took over a century to accumulate.



City of Toronto employees broke all records with this year's United Way campaign. United Way is labour's charity of choice, and our funding partner for Labour Community Services staff and programming in Toronto and York Region.



# Not enough money for public services?

## SCRAP THE CORPORATE TAX CUTS!

- » Did you know that Stephen Harpers' corporate tax cuts have depleted federal revenues by \$14 billion every year? Even companies that send our jobs overseas are rewarded with lower tax rates.
- » The Ontario cuts to corporate taxes cost Ontario nearly \$2 billion every year.
- » Corporations are sitting on \$600 billion of "dead money" they refuse to invest in new jobs. Yet we keep hearing there is not enough money for healthcare, education, childcare, transit, our cities...or to seriously tackle climate change.

It's time to tell Harper and Wynne they have the wrong priorities.

Scrap the corporate tax cuts – and invest in the public good!



Go to [labourcouncil.ca](http://labourcouncil.ca) to send them a message.

# WORKING ELECTION PREPARATION CONFERENCES TOGETHER

WILL THE NEXT FEDERAL GOVERNMENT WORK FOR YOU & YOUR FAMILY?

## DEMOCRACY SKILLS

WORKSHOPS ON THE ISSUES THAT MATTER  
& THE SKILLS YOU NEED TO TALK ABOUT THEM.

University of Toronto Conference Centre  
89 Chestnut Street, Toronto, Ontario

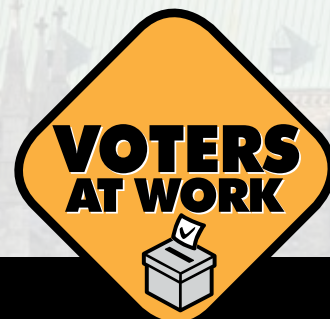
Friday, February 6, 2015 – 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
Saturday, February 7, 2015 – 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



<http://goo.gl/M6uwq4>

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