

**EXECUTIVE BOARD STATEMENT TO THE
TORONTO & YORK REGION LABOUR COUNCIL
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2006**



NOVEMBER 2006

On November 13th municipal elections will take place across Ontario. Labour Council has been preparing for over a year for these elections – training activists, interviewing candidates and analyzing the issues. We have developed a program (A Million Reasons to Vote) which describes the key elements we believe are necessary for the future of Canada's largest urban centre, both in city government and in our schools.

Each point in our program may seem obvious, yet they reflect tremendous struggles undertaken by labour and community activists over the years, and should not be taken for granted. Today, the massive tide of global corporate restructuring is washing over our country. Privatization of public services – garbage collection in Winnipeg, transit in York Region and Vancouver; contracting out that turns living wage jobs into poverty jobs in Ontario's hospitals; and the shameful examples of Calgary, Edmonton and Ottawa buying foreign-made transit vehicles.

Stephen Harper has gutted Canada's commitment to Kyoto, has shifted billions from childcare to military spending, and is speeding the integration of our economy into the U.S. The McGuinty government has refused to fix the structural damage imposed by the Harris Conservatives, continuing the crisis in our schools and electricity supply.

Compare this to the record of Toronto under Mayor David Miller. His stand on the TTC's new subway cars will guarantee hundreds of good jobs. City Council ended Lastman's contracting out initiative, and has invested in front line services. With the help of our mass campaign on public transit, Miller succeeded in negotiating funding for the TTC to buy hundreds of new buses and start to restore service. He led the efforts to get GST waived on all municipal purchases, saving the city millions every year. And he has stood with hotel workers in their struggle to improve the standards of immigrant workers in the growing service sector.

City Council has crafted a comprehensive environmental plan that is diverting millions of tons of garbage into composting, greening city vehicles, cleaning up our shorelines, and ended toxic pesticides in our neighbourhoods. It has defended construction union agreements, and negotiated fair contracts with its own employees in spite of the attacks by right-wing politicians. And the Police Services Board has finally been embraced a comprehensive strategy that emphasizes community policing instead of racial profiling.

Both the Public and Catholic School Boards have refused to make cuts required by the flawed provincial funding formula, and the trustees are standing up for the quality of education by openly defying the McGuinty government.

When you compare this record with what is going on everywhere else in this country, we have a lot to be proud of. And we have a lot to fight for. It's not that long ago that progressive civic leadership was lost in Vancouver, including nearly every seat on their school board.

Labour Council is urging every affiliate and every union activist to commit the time, energy and resources needed to succeed in these next six weeks. We want to elect new champions to our city councils and school boards. We want to make sure that David Miller has a strong mandate to fight for a new deal for Toronto that includes not just legislative powers but also the money that is needed to carry out progressive programs.

We want to see a clear majority of progressive school trustees who are willing to fight for an education system that truly serves every student in this most multicultural city in the world. And we want local governments that are willing to confront the destructive logic of globalization and stand on principles that favour working people over corporate greed.

The Executive Board recommends that:

1. Every affiliate reach out to all their members with a clear message about what is at stake in these elections, and mobilize their staff and membership to be involved in supporting labour endorsed candidates.
2. Labour Council undertake a rigorous and disciplined approach to harnessing the resources of the entire labour movement to help elect progressive voices across the entire City of Toronto and in York Region.
3. Labour Council work with our community allies to mobilize thousands of volunteers, working in every neighbourhood, to lay the basis for a mass movement for social justice that will be necessary to achieve the goals envisioned in our 2006 election program.