

**EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT TO THE
TORONTO & YORK REGION
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, MAY 3, 2007**



A MILLION REASONS TO MOBILIZE

Two years ago, Labour Council launched "A Million Reasons to Take Action". We described it, not as a campaign but, as a framework for strategies to raise the standards of a million workers in greater Toronto. Since that time, there have been a number of major initiatives undertaken by Labour Council and our affiliates within the Million Reasons framework.

The first was Hotel Workers Rising - a continent wide campaign by UNITE HERE to raise the standards of work and incomes in the hospitality industry. In Toronto, Local 75 and Labour Council mapped out an approach that saw tremendous mobilization of hotel workers and community leaders to take on the global hotel companies. The aim was to bring the industry to embrace a high road strategy that combines quality service, a commitment to training, decent wages and healthier working conditions. The new contracts raised industry standards and brought a new determination to organize unrepresented hotel workers.

Next was the Made in Canada Matters campaign to ensure the TTC's new subway cars were built here instead of China. We worked with Mayor Miller and progressive City Councillors to reject the free trade mentality of those who would turn their backs on good Canadian jobs if a cheaper price could be found overseas.

Then newly elected MPP Cheri DiNovo brought forward a private member's bill to raise the minimum wage to \$10 an hour. When it passed second reading, Labour Council seized the opportunity. We quickly created a high-profile campaign with petition cards, posters and buttons that were soon to be found all across Ontario. Together with community allies, we held a series of town hall forums where low wage workers could tell about the reality of trying to live on less than \$10. The issue hit home, as the by-election victory of Paul Ferreira proved.

The response of the Liberal government to make low-wage workers wait three years until the minimum wage climbs to \$10.25 is unacceptable. We will continue to mobilize to demand \$10 now, as well as addressing the other key issues that were raised during the first phase of the campaign.

The next initiative is taking place within the social services sector. This sector is largely taken for granted, but comprises an essential part of both our economy and our social infrastructure. Every day thousands of people in Toronto depend on social service agencies to deliver expert programs that touch all our lives - from day care to home care, children and youth recreational programs, seniors services, crisis intervention, family counselling and employment/skills training.

A decade of inadequate funding for this work has created huge pressures on these organizations and left many workers in the sector underpaid and undervalued. A Community Social Services Campaign has been formed with agencies and unions to win stable, secure funding for this vital work. The campaign will be kicked off with a public event at Queen's Park on June 5th.

And then there is the silent crisis in manufacturing. Tens of thousands of good paying jobs have been lost in greater Toronto in the last five years. But their loss is masked by reports of overall job growth, so the depth of this crisis is not in the public mind. Labour Council passed an emergency resolution on the issue, listing key demands for government action. The Canadian Labour Congress is organizing forums across the country, with a major lobbying effort scheduled in Ottawa at the end of May. The OFL is mobilizing under the slogan **Jobs Worth Fighting For**, with a focus on the upcoming Ontario election.

On Thursday May 17th, a public forum on the crisis in manufacturing will take place at Toronto City Hall. This forum will put a human face on that bitter reality, and highlight the impact on working families across the Toronto region. It will also provide a call to action, and launch a period of intense struggle over the future of good jobs in our economy.

As we weave together the elements of these five distinct campaigns, what becomes clear is the common theme. There are a million reasons to organize in Canada's largest urban centre. There is a crying need for leadership and focused action. Good jobs matter in every sector of our economy, and they matter to people from all walks of life and in every neighbourhood and community.

In taking this on, we are directly challenging the agenda of corporate globalization that is sweeping the world. It will require all our collective skill and determination. Toronto's labour movement has a long and proud history, and this difficult task is the next step in our historic journey.

The Executive Board recommends that:

1. Labour Council and its affiliates mobilize for the May 17th **Manufacturing Matters!** forum at Toronto City Hall, and work with our community allies, the OFL and CLC to build pressure on all levels of government around the need to defend manufacturing jobs.
2. Labour Council and its affiliates support the efforts of workers and agencies in the Social Services Sector to gain long-term stable funding, and to improve income and service levels in this important sector of our economy.
3. Labour Council continue to work with UNITE HERE on their efforts to forge a high road strategy for the hospitality industry, and to ensure that new development projects commit to decent jobs and community benefits.
4. Labour Council work with our allies to carry out the second phase of the Minimum Wage Campaign under the slogan **RESPECT WORK, RESPECT PEOPLE, RESPECT COMMUNITIES**.