



THE EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT TO THE TORONTO & YORK REGION GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2016

“LABOUR IN TORONTO & YORK REGION - 2016 to 2019”

As the Labour Council celebrates 145 years of working for justice in Toronto and York Region, we look back on a remarkable journey that working people have taken. Over those many years we have learned important lessons from decades of struggle and success. Today working people face immense pressure from the economic and political forces that seek to roll back those gains. Time and again the labour movement has mustered its strength to fend off attacks, sometimes suffering defeats but often winning tough fights. Recently the Labour Council spearheaded the efforts to engage our members to defeat Tim Hudak’s agenda. That experience showed the need for a much deeper relationship between the Council and its affiliates, activists and social justice allies.

Over the next three years the Labour Council will focus on becoming more powerful as a movement in greater Toronto. The effort of the Council will concentrate on four key areas:

1. The fight for good jobs, in particular for the next generation. We must seize the opportunity to win improvements in Labour Law, employment standards and minimum wage; and build a commitment across our movement to increasing union density in every sector. Instead of austerity and poverty wages, we will consistently demand “high-road” economic policies by all levels of government.
2. The forging of solidarity across unions and communities. We need to strengthen the collective support for those engaged in tackling economic inequality and discrimination. Organizing efforts, contract fights, and campaigns on key social justice issues deserve broad support and the expertise that Labour Council has developed over years of struggle. The Council will relentlessly advance policies for inclusion and respect, challenging both ourselves and others to ensure that equity is a core practice of every organization in greater Toronto.
3. The struggle for effective action to tackle climate change. In the coming years the economy and society will be transformed by new technologies and the necessary actions to reduce carbon emissions. Labour Council will be in the forefront of the

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movement for green jobs, fighting for equity and Just Transition in a sustainable economy.

4. The goal of transforming politics in the region. This involves strengthening the ability of labour, with community allies, to campaign for public services, equity, economic development and healthy communities. We will work to elect many more diverse, progressive candidates to City Councils and school boards in Toronto and York Region. Labour Council will also build its effectiveness in advocating on key issues that relate to other levels of government.

Labour Council has had a consistent “alliance policy” for many years, working with social justice partners on wide variety of issues. The Good Jobs for All coalition and the Diverse Workers Networks can be important vehicles for racial and economic justice in greater Toronto, as can the Toronto Community Benefits Network. Labour Community Services and the Labour Education Centre are valuable assets of the labour movement, and we should grow their reputation and services among affiliates and community activists. LCS is positioned to have an important role around equity and inclusion as well as ongoing community engagement.

The capacity to communicate labour’s values and achievements to both union members and the public should be improved significantly. Using social media, video content, and simple but powerful images will be essential to reaching an expanded audience on any issue. We will continue to explore the use of various languages to engage members and diverse communities in greater Toronto.

To succeed in the four key areas identified in this plan our movement requires skilled leaders. Leadership development through the Leadership Institute and the annual Aboriginal and Workers of Colour Conference should be extended to other forums involving women, young workers, and members from newcomer communities. New training opportunities will be developed to ensure that the labour movement will have strong, seasoned leaders to step forward in the future.

For nearly a century and a half working people in Toronto have strived to build a more just society, working for peace, equality and shared prosperity. Labour Council has been the collective voice of workers in Canada’s largest urban centre, often breaking ground on key issues for this region, and the country as a whole. Meeting the challenges of this decade will depend on our ability to engage affiliates, build alliances and increase the participation of leaders, delegates, union staff and activists in all aspects of the work of Labour Council.