

**TORONTO & YORK REGION LABOUR COUNCIL
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2005**

“VIOLENCE IN TORONTO MUST BE CONFRONTED BY ALL OF US”

Since late July, Toronto has been rocked by shootings in communities, involving young African Canadian men. Not since the violent summer of 2001, have we experienced this tragic and senseless loss of so many of our young people.

The reaction to this surge in violence by our City officials has been a welcome change to the theatrics of our former Mayor and his Chief of Police Julian Fantino. The former Chief's approach of targeted policing and military-style command were major contributing factors to the growth of alienation in many communities.

Our Mayor, David Miller and the recently appointed Chief of Police Bill Blair have shown responsible leadership. They have called for calm and urged all sectors in our community to rally in this time of crisis. They have struck a positive balance between more front-line officer presence involved in true community policing and increased economic and social resources for high need areas. The Mayor has as well renewed calls to the Prime Minister and Premier to support and fund key programs in Toronto.

Miller and Blair have resisted the instinct of so many elected representatives and public leaders to turn these tragic events into photo opportunities for the 6 o'clock news and scoring cheap ideological points to advance their political careers.

That's why, we must condemn City Councilor Michael Thompson for his outrageous calls for "racial profiling" of all young African Canadian men. In the strongest language, we must tell him that the pain and fear he has caused is unacceptable for any elected representative on Toronto's City Council.

In August 2001, the Labour Council correctly pointed out that the cause of violence was complex, rooted in poverty, unemployment, families under attack and police harassment. We called not only for real community policing but a comprehensive program of creating and funding community-based education and recreation services with particular attention to local leadership and meaningful job creation programs.

While the general thrust of our strategy is still relevant in 2005, the Labour Council needs to find ways to be more proactive with this recent surge in shootings in our city.

We need to work with our education affiliates and progressive school trustees to undo the damage of streaming and the zero tolerance policies of the Harris government and look at how we can expand racial equality and opportunities in all areas of our school systems.

We need to look at the successful models in the construction trades and engage other affiliates to pressure employers for apprenticeship programs that allow disadvantaged minority youth to finish high school and access training programs with a real economic future. We need to respond to the Mayor's call for employers (which includes unions) to offer mentoring and internship programs to disadvantaged young people. And wherever possible, we need to demand that steady, well paid employment opportunities be made available instead of companies relying on contingent work and temporary agencies.

We need to be politically active and vocal. In particular, we can not let the Martin and Mc Guinty governments fail the poor in this city, We need funding for vital social infrastructure and skills training. Education, in particular dealing with the drop out rate of students in high need areas must be a top priority. The federal and provincial governments can not be allowed to ignore the consequences of their economic and social policies in Toronto.

We need to resist the attempts of law and order advocates, best characterized by Councilor Michael Thompson, to use this crisis as a platform to return to the Fantino style of policing. We expect City Councillors to support policing programs and social infrastructure that builds healthy communities, regardless of where you live and who you are.

The Executive Board recommends that we:

1. Acknowledge the Mayor and the Police Chief for their leadership during this crisis.
2. Encourage our affiliates to look at mentoring and internship programs and how we can create apprenticeship and career development opportunities in the private and public sectors.
3. Work with our education and progressive trustees to embrace an equity agenda in our public school system.
4. Condemn the comments of Councilor Michael Thompson.