

**TORONTO & YORK REGION LABOUR COUNCIL
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2005**



“A MILLION REASONS TO SUPPORT HOTEL WORKERS”

There are times in our past when the labour movement has been involved in the kind of struggles that make history. The organizing of mass industries at the end of the Great Depression; the United Farm Workers struggle in the early 70's; the Eatons campaign in the mid 80's. These were times when union activists and leaders from every background came together in monumental efforts to fulfill the vision of Cesar Chavez – *Si Se Puede* – It can be done.

Across North America, a new epic struggle is unfolding. UNITE-HERE is undertaking a tremendous continent-wide campaign to raise the standards of hotel workers. In 2006 they have lined up bargaining for the major hotel cities in North America, starting with Toronto. The union is preparing for an all-out confrontation with the multi-national hotel chains in order to achieve three goals:

- Raise wages throughout the entire industry
- Ease the workload that is causing severe health problems for housekeeping staff
- Win employer neutrality during organizing drives in non-union hotels

These will only be achieved through massive mobilization of hotel workers, community allies, and the labour movement in each affected city. Local 75 in Toronto is in the forefront, as their 23 contracts covering over 4,000 members all expire on January 31st, with the exception of the Fairmont Royal York. The Royal York is up this fall, and the union is now bargaining and engaging in extensive strike/lockout preparation.

There is no doubt that this will be a tough struggle. It is a challenge, in fact, to our entire movement. Can we create an effective support movement that can deliver real power in behind this union? Can we involve faith leaders, politicians, and well-respected voices from society to stand in solidarity with these workers? Can we reach out to newcomer communities and show them that unions are crucially important to immigrant workers and their families?

All of these questions are part of our broader challenge, the one that we posed when launching the Million Reasons campaign. In the face of globalization and technological change, many middle income jobs are disappearing. Even professionals at Hydro One and the CBC find themselves in bitter disputes to protect their conditions, while the use of temporary agency workers is exploding.

The kind of effort needed to help raise the standards of a million workers in the Toronto area may seem overwhelming – yet this is what past generations did to win a decent existence for manufacturing, construction and public sector workers. And its what we must commit to if we are to make a difference for working families in the future.

The Executive Board recommends that:

1. Labour Council work with UNITE-HERE to create a strategy that will mobilize key groups of labour and community activists around this historic struggle.
2. The need to support hotel workers be incorporated into the “Million Reasons” campaign.
3. Affiliates be urged to use this campaign to help develop a new generation of activists who can carry on the spirit of solidarity that is the powerful legacy of Toronto’s labour movement.