

**EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT TO THE
TORONTO & YORK REGION GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Thursday, January 7, 2014**

MAKE 2014 A YEAR OF JUSTICE

The year 2014 brings with it the opportunity for reflection and resolve. The crippling ice storm forces us all to realize how much we rely on an aging infrastructure that desperately needs new investment. Thanks to all the hydro workers and others who worked day and night repairing the damage - your effort reminds us of the importance of our public services and those who deliver them.

With elections looming, and Rob Ford already registered in the race for Mayor of Toronto, the labour movement should seize the initiative and make 2014 a year of justice. In our workplaces, in our society, and in this fragile world - the interests of working people must be given priority over corporate privilege and greed.

Workplace justice requires new laws to strengthen workers' rights to join a union and win better wages and working conditions. It will mean tougher employment standards and a minimum wage that lifts people out of poverty, instead of keeping them in it. It challenges corporate outsourcing, job blackmail and privatization, and demands that public institutions commit to a living wage policy.

In 2013 labour set out to expose the plans of Tim Hudak to import US-style legislation that would weaken unions and drive down wages. Much more remains to be done to take this conversation to members in the workplace, *before* a provincial election call expected this spring.

Social justice calls for genuine steps to tackle poverty and exclusion. It rejects the CEO's plan to devalue work and relegate the next generation to second-tier wages and benefits. It demands that gains in women's equality are maintained, and embraces 2014 as the year when World Pride comes to Toronto. It deepens our understanding of systemic discrimination, shapes action to challenge its roots and its impact; embraces diversity and builds our collective commitment to equity and inclusion. And it sees quality accessible public education – from JK to university – as an essential part of building a healthy society

Environmental justice recognizes the urgency of addressing the ecological crisis our planet is experiencing. Although big oil is spending millions to sabotage Kyoto and green-wash the tar sands and gas fracking, every day brings new evidence that climate change is real. The shameful agenda of the Harper Conservatives must be defeated, while at the local level the city needs to reclaim its role as an environmental leader. Winning community benefits as part of transit expansion is a concrete way of connecting green jobs and equity.

While Toronto's conservative Mayor Rob Ford has disgraced the city on a global scale, he still has a base that defends his every move. The elites would prefer that he be replaced with someone who will continue an austerity agenda without the scandals, and so the mayoralty race will become a de facto referendum on austerity.

Working people deserve something better – a progressive agenda that invests in our city and addresses our real needs no matter where we live. To put a progressive agenda in place, we have to win elections at City Council and in School Boards. It means building more capacity for engaging union members and working families in key municipal races, and in the provincial election. The labour movement will work hard to connect every election this year with the issues of justice outlined above. Let us join together in creating a powerful force that speaks to the values of a truly just society in 2014.

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