

Fall | 2025

LABOUR ACTION

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LABOUR STRIKES BACK



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In a World Turned Upside Down, Labour Still Marches for Peace

We are living in an upside-down world, one shaped by uncertainty, injustice, and the curse of “interesting times.”

The events we see today – escalating wars, eroding rights, and muzzled dissent – are a long way from the peace and progress we once hoped to achieve. War is either raging or simmering around the world, although we may have escaped – for now – a potentially catastrophic escalation of a war between Israel and Iran.

But no matter how dramatically the global landscape might shift, we in the labour movement are standing firm as part of the global peace movement.

We speak out because we know that war is weaponized as a distraction and an opportunity for those seeking to dismantle worker power and discredit our resistance. They try to paint us as something we’re not and discredit us with false intentions and faux allies.

But advocating for peace is not fringe politics. It is foundational to the values of the labour movement and of so many union members who themselves have roots in parts of the world wracked by war, tensions and violence. These members also belong to communities and organizations that are allies in marching for peace.

We reject war, not as idealists but as realists. We know that it is always working-class people who are the first who are called on to fight and die. And it is always our families, friends and communities who suffer the cost of militarism and conflict.

We’ve been here before. Recall the US war on Iraq in the early years of this century: the voices of labour were among those urging the federal government to resist joining a doomed intervention that was based on untruths and unleashed more than two decades of violence and upheaval.

We knew then as we know now: rather than calls to expand wars, we need ceasefires, peace negotiations, and just solutions to conflicts.

In 2023, labour organizations were among the first to call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. And now, with the threat of a regional war in the Middle East, we continue to make the call for peace.

Because peace is not passive. It’s active. It’s organized. It’s radical. And our fight for peace honours the vision and aspirations of those in the labour movement who became settlers in this country because they or their forebears were victims of war and violence elsewhere.

We know governments everywhere use war as an excuse to take away civil liberties, cut our services, and funnel billions into weaponry. In Ontario, our schools are crumbling and our hospitals struggling. Every dollar spent on missiles is a dollar stolen from housing, education, health care and social services. We must demand a future that prioritizes people over profit – and that starts by opposing the machinery of war.

In a time of multiple global crises, it’s easy to believe that someone else will do the work. That it’s not our fight. But peace isn’t someone else’s work – it’s everyone’s. The likelihood of a third world war increases with every new war and the call to stop these wars is louder and more urgent now than ever.

We are treaty people. We are global citizens. And we are trade unionists. And all of these roles come with the responsibility to build bridges, not bombs; to organize, not militarize; to invest in life, not in weapons of destruction.

Let there be no ambiguity: Labour should have no objection to any call that urges governments to spend on care, not killing. On housing, not bombs. On education, not escalation.

We stand for peace not because it is easy or popular, but because it is right. Because as union members, we know the only war worth fighting is the war against poverty, inequality, and injustice.



*Labour Council President
Andria Babbington at a
Dec 2024 CUPW Rally*

This Op-ed was published in the Hamilton Spectator on July 5th, 2025.

*By Andria Babbington, President, Toronto & York Region Labour Council, and
Carolyn Egan, President, Steelworkers Toronto Area Council*



Labour Strikes Back

In the fall of 2022, bargaining broke down between Ontario School Board Council of Unions (OSBCU) workers and the Ford Government — a strike was brewing.

When the dust had settled on that strike — which saw the first ever use of the notwithstanding clause to end a labour dispute — OSBCU's defiance to Conservative Premier Doug Ford's back-to-work order had become a country-wide struggle. Working people from coast-to-coast pledged solidarity, and the labour movement in Ontario had tilted toward a general strike.

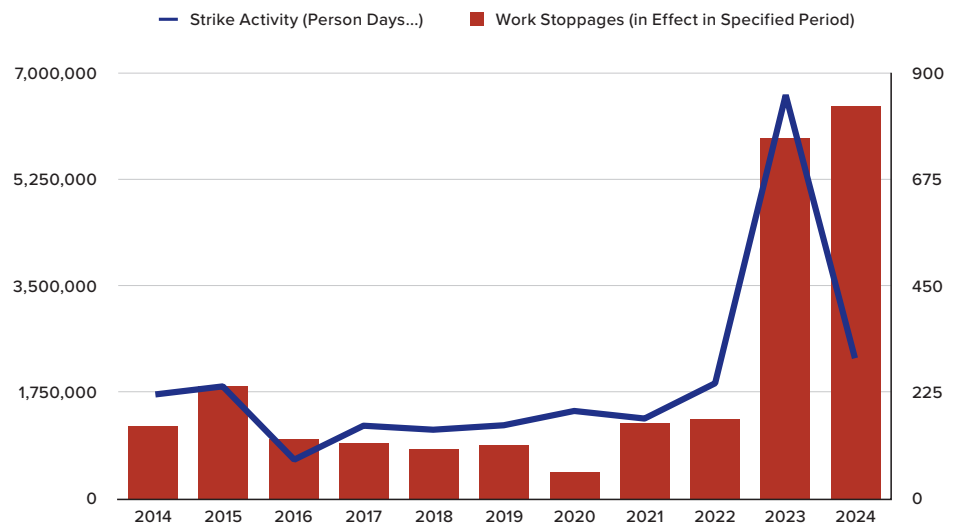
Much to the chagrin of corporate Canada, the 2022 OSBCU strike would not be an outlier, and would instead become part of a growing strike wave in Canada. Since that weeklong fall strike in 2022, more working people in Canada have walked off the job and onto the picket line than they have in nearly 40 years.

Why We Struck

The cost-of-living-crisis still looms large for the working class in Canada. While inflation has ticked down from its peak, working people have still seen a marked decline in living standards. The Index of Consumer Confidence recorded its second lowest level this century in November 2023 and remains low. Overall, the outlook for the average worker's personal financial situation remains bleak.

Prior to Trump, politicians and the media had spoken glowingly about an economy on the rebound. But the reality is, while shareholders counted record profits, more working people are having to choose between basic necessities like food or rent. Credit card debt in Canada ballooned to a record \$113.4b, as Canadians opened more than a whopping 6 million new credit cards in 2023 alone in an attempt to make ends meet. As the debt became unmanageable, many chose to shift their credit card debt onto their mortgages. Mortgage delinquency rates in Toronto have now reached levels seen at the height of the '08-'09 crisis.

Importantly, while inflation may have slowed, workers wages have still not caught up to the beating they took in the post-pandemic period. While average wages grew, that growth has only been in the top 20% of income earners, with most concentrated in the top 10%, while all other workers saw stagnation or decline compared to their pre-pandemic wages. Worse yet, reporting from the *Toronto*





Star confirmed that workers in some of our most vital public sectors, like healthcare and education, are falling behind at an even faster rate.

How We Fought Back

Mounting pressure left working people in the country with few options, and after being emboldened by the Ontario education workers strike in the fall of 2022, it became clear that it was time to fight. And by any metric, one thing is clear: working people fought - hard.

Strike activity has increased across the board. In 2023, Canadian employers were gripped by some of the biggest strikes in Canadian history, including the largest single employer strike in Canadian history waged by PSAC, and the Common Front in Quebec, which saw 400,000 public sector workers walk off the job in rotating strikes. There were also militant walk-outs ranging from the dozens to the thousands in the logistics industry, manufacturing, the service sector, healthcare, and education workers, among others. Such a broad level of activity across the economy meant that more workers, likely over a million in total, went out on strike in 2023 spending over 6,500,000 person days out on the picket line, the highest amount since 1986.

Militancy continued into 2024, with strikes across the country in a variety of sectors. Notably, strikes were considerably shorter in 2024, despite making similar gains at the table. One reason for the reduction in strike duration is a recognition from employers that working people mean business, and could not simply be waited out on the picket lines, as was attempted in 2023.

The other reason for shorter strikes was a marked increase in state interference in bargaining. Most egregious of these interferences was the Liberal government's use of Section 107 of the Labour Code to impose unconstitutional back-to-work orders. While rarely used before 2024, Section 107 was employed 7 times in 2024, on workers at ports, railways, and airlines, and, infamously, to end the weeks long CUPW strike at Canada Post. More back to work orders were handed down in 2024 than any other year in Canadian history.

Government interference continued into 2025, with another Section 107 order imposed on CUPE Air Canada Component workers in August. With a 99% strike mandate, CUPE ACC

workers hit the picket line with ferocity, only to see a cowardly Section 107 order come from the Liberal government 12 hours later. Undeterred, CUPE ACC workers, with support of CUPE National and the Canadian public, defied the order and achieved a tentative agreement within 72 hours of walking off the job.

What We Won

While data for 2025 is yet to be released, it's clear that these last few years will be marked by a return to labour militancy not seen in a generation. This militancy is winning improvements to wages and working conditions, and seeing popular opinion of organized labour at its highest point this century. What is key now, is to turn this energy into a sustainable, organized movement which can win economic struggles in the workplace, and political struggles for the working class as a whole.

The most immediate threat to our movement comes from further intervention from the state and the employer. As strike activity increases, so too will tactics which seek to upend and interfere with the collective bargaining process. This means unions and members will need to prepare for interference, and have frank discussions about when, and how, to defy, and how to escalate tactics to pressure elected officials to stay out of the bargaining process.

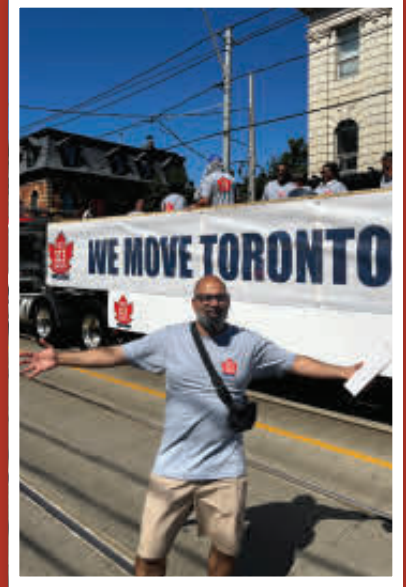
In addition, care must be taken to ensure that the growing strike movement does not become isolated, that workplace level struggles do not focus solely on economics, and that strikes are able to be expanded to include political bargaining as well.

Regardless of how the movement progresses, and regardless of the settlement of one particular contract or another, what this wave of struggle has done is teach us how to fight again. Strikes teach working people how to unite, and the strength of that unity. Now, our goal must be to build on the gains made and lessons learned from these struggles and ensure that we look back on this as the start of a major renewal in our movement, and not merely a statistical outlier.

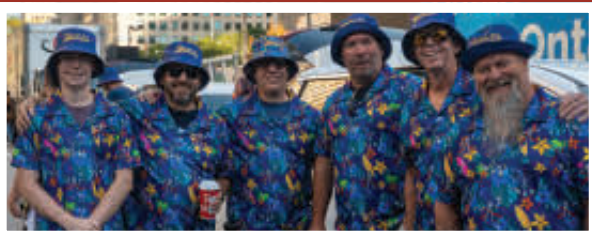
By Jack Copple, Organizer, Toronto & York Region Labour Council



LABOUR DAY PARADE 2025:



A Canada for Workers; Made Here, Paid Here!



Toronto Protest Bubble Zones

In May 2025, the City of Toronto passed a by-law threatening massive restrictions to our charter rights to free speech and free assembly.

The “Bubble Zone” by-law restricts protests at a variety of sites across the city. This follows the development and implementation of other by-laws aimed at restricting charter protected activity in municipalities including: Vaughan, Brampton, Richmond Hill, Ottawa, and Calgary, among others.



While these by-laws vary in their approach, from restricting all demonstrations to restricting certain types, their purpose is to limit the ability for groups to exercise their right to free assembly and free speech. At least one of these by-laws is now facing a charter-challenge questioning its legality under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Toronto’s by-law might face the same scrutiny shortly.

In February, Toronto Councillor James Pasternak explicitly stated the purpose of by-laws of this type should be to restrict union activity. Commenting on an Ontario Nurses Association bargaining rally on Queen St. Pasternak asked, “Why on earth would they be set up in the street?” Throughout his remarks he made it clear: unions should be targeted by these by-laws.

Thanks to strong organizing by some individual unions and the Labour Council, the by-law was heavily amended to protect labour—bans on union picketing and labour solidarity rallies were exempt. However, the remaining by-law that passed is still a concern. Amendments in the future could renew the targeting of labour pickets, and a similar law is being proposed at the Federal level which could further tighten the screws and try to restrict protest.

Perhaps more worrying is the potential chill the law might put on those looking to protest. Due to the ability provided to religious institutions, churches accused of covering up child abuse could apply to have protests restricted. Other religious institutions accused of supporting terrorism or human rights violations, hospitals accused of racist care: they could all apply to restrict protest. While these might not survive a legal challenge, the public might think twice before organizing something, anticipating the risk of being shut down.

Bill 5 Dead Zones

Ontario’s Bill 5 passed in June 2025 causing an uproar among workers, environmentalists and Indigenous leaders. While the Bill came with political slogans like “Unleashing Our Economy” and “Special Economic Zones” the bill simply creates “Dead Zones” - killing worker protections, the environment or Indigenous rights by allowing the government to suspend provincial laws in almost any area or for any project.

Workers were quick to point out the danger of giving this power to the Ford government given the numerous development scandals that have embroiled the government including the Greenbelt, Highway 413, the Ontario Science Centre and Ontario Place. The concern is that benefiting developer friends will take precedence over environmental laws, labour protections and duties to consult with Indigenous nations.

Bill 5 is unpopular publicly and due to its extreme nature of suspending laws, it’s unclear if the bill will survive legal challenges.

Ford, who apologized that same month for racist remarks towards Indigenous communities, is widely seen as wanting to use Bill 5 to develop the ‘Ring of Fire’ area of Ontario for mining interests. While he’s stated the main aim of the Bill is to “Speed up projects” it will likely lead to the opposite.

Indigenous communities have vowed to oppose any project that doesn’t procure their consent. Similarly, unions have vowed to obstruct any project that attempts to suspend labour protections while environmentalists have broadly vowed to protest against any suspensions of environmental protections.





STRATEGIC PLAN
2025-2028

Building a More Powerful Labour Movement Together



The Toronto & York Region Labour Council, founded in 1871, has worked tirelessly toward a socially, racially, economically, and climate-just society. Our past victories have come through the relentless struggles of working people challenging the status quo. However, since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, underlying issues have intensified. Our struggles must intensify too, fighting both against challenges and for a better future.

The pandemic illuminated the critical roles of essential workers while also revealing vulnerabilities. In this climate, the far-right has seized the opportunity to sow division with simple narratives that blame vaccine mandates, migrants, and union leaders for the problems experienced by workers. Conservatives have “discovered” the working class, here and around the world, and their narratives attract some workers, who may have become alienated from their families, communities, and unions. In the U.S., Donald Trump was re-elected including by workers concerned about their jobs and their incomes.

Doug Ford was re-elected in Ontario, with workers lured by his Captain Canada schtick. Mark Carney’s Liberals used their old trick: make vague campaign proposals and govern from the right.

The Labour Council was part of a huge campaign to ensure there was a solid safety net during COVID that prevented countless workers from losing their livelihoods and thousands of businesses from going bankrupt. Yet, emerging from the pandemic, inflation soars and the cost of living crisis deepens. Even full-time workers find it increasingly difficult to afford basic necessities like housing and groceries. At the same time that the labour movement and progressive allies fought to “build back better,” corporate bosses and their allies in government acted on their plans to claw back any gains workers had made in order to increase profits.

Conservative Premier Ford’s repeated attacks on workers’ rights, including the use of the notwithstanding clause in November 2022 to impose an illegal collective agreement on education workers, prompted a powerful unification of the labour movement. This demonstrated the immense power of solidarity.

Ford and then-Mayor John Tory also attempted a political maneuver, bringing in “strong mayor powers” to counter the election of a progressive Toronto City Council in 2022. While that might be behind us with Mayor Olivia Chow’s leadership shifting the balance in Toronto’s governance, the Labour Council must continue uniting workers in solidarity, challenging corporate interests and advocating for justice at all levels of government across Toronto and York Region.

Unions are the strongest way forward - we are broad-based and organized. As we move into the second quarter of the 21st century, the Labour Council must focus on building a cohesive and powerful labour movement to resist ongoing corporate attacks and to shine a light on the reality of right-wing narratives. To do this, we – each union, every campaign, as well as all of us collectively – must plan strategically, engage with our members, and act on well thought out alliance policies. Working people must be organized and use our combined power.

If our struggle is smart and tough – and combines the lessons of our past with the diverse skills of the present and future – we can demonstrate a solidarity that goes beyond what we have ever experienced. Together, we can forge a resilient and better future for all workers, our families, and our communities.

Strategic Objectives

1
Challenge the New
Political Realities and
the Danger of the Far
Right & Neoliberalism

2
Defend and Fight for Good
Jobs and Public Services

3
Deepen Equity and
Forge Solidarity

4
Deepen Ties and
Collaboration
with Affiliates

5
Expand Diverse
Leadership

6
Prioritize
Climate Action

Challenge the New Political Realities and the Danger of the Far Right & Neoliberalism

The ongoing implementation of neoliberalism and the subsequent rise of right-wing populism as a consequence across the world is a threat to working people. Its attraction of some alienated workers makes it doubly alarming. But we face a different challenge than that of the Mike Harris, Tim Hudak and Stephen Harper eras, because today's right-wingers have learned to conceal their goals and speak like friends of working class people. They use divide-and-conquer tactics that point at "others" (e.g., migrants, 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, the media, union leaders, etc.) as the cause of workers' problems. Winning the hearts and minds of many of these workers, as well as countering the Conservative strategy of targeting private sector unions and their members, is key for our future wellbeing. Elections matter, but we need to act now and engage in "political bargaining" at all times so we make gains and fight off attacks at all three levels of government.

OUR AIM - Grow our impact by winning as many progressive seats as possible at the municipal level and defeating right-wing politicians and their agendas at municipal, provincial and federal levels.

Strategic Initiatives

We will:

- *Work with affiliates and community allies to develop a vision for cities that challenges the austerity agenda, advocates for a new deal for cities, and makes it clear that future governments must reverse damage to local economies and public services.*
- *Mount campaigns to oppose regressive policies while raising consciousness among working people about the class nature of politics.*
- *Deepen the understanding among affiliates, union leaders and members of how and why we all should carry out "political bargaining" to achieve our goals of social, economic, racial and climate justice and grow our impacts.*
- *Develop stronger relationships with local elected officials to help achieve our policy goals.*
- *Expand our engagement of affiliates and activists in York Region.*
- *Work relentlessly to defeat the politics of fear, racism and hate.*
- *Engage affiliates to develop plans for 2026 municipal and provincial elections.*
- *Encourage election participation and voting, while promoting political engagement year round.*
- *Continue building lasting partnerships with community allies to influence policies and elections.*



Defend and Fight for Good Jobs and Public Services

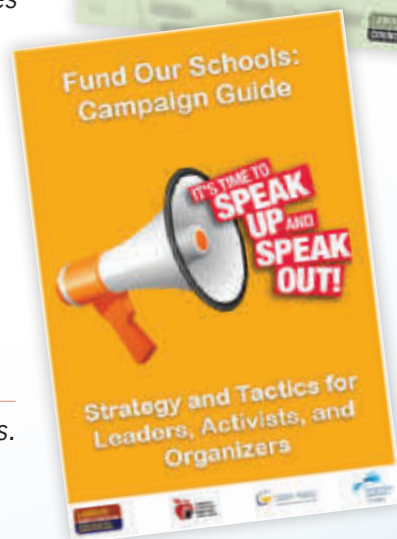
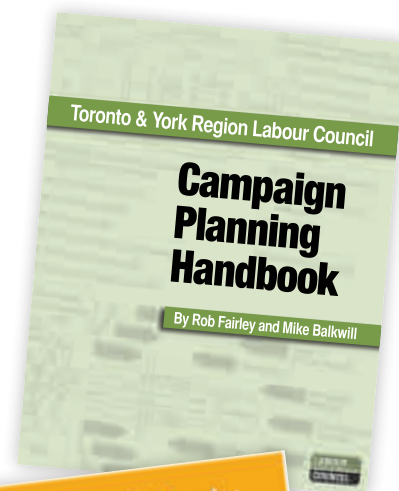
As precarious work and poverty wage jobs rise alongside inflation and a cost of living crisis, the need for good unionized work has never been more obvious. Union density has declined, particularly in the private sector, increasing the racialization of poverty. At the same time, there are opportunities to institute progressive policies and programs at the municipal level, especially in Toronto after years of austerity. It is crucial we defend and fight for “good jobs for all” and resist Bay Street and Ford’s forced attempts to undermine our public services by chronically underfunding public healthcare and publicly-funded education, which only fuels a dangerous appetite for privatization. The Conservative agenda is always in play, but we must be ready for their heightened attacks when the economic downturn and slowdown hits.

OUR AIM - Secure “good jobs for all” and expose and resist the Conservative strategy of race-to-the-bottom and austerity.

Strategic Initiatives

We will:

- Work with community allies and partners to build powerful coalitions that demand more and fight against Conservative “death by a thousand cuts”, restructuring of services, privatization, and reduced accountability across every sector including healthcare and education.
- Expose the true nature of Conservative policies and why they fail working families and the working class across all communities in the region.
- Ask affiliates to join campaigns and inform their members about labour’s allies and campaigns so they can become active and engaged.
- Develop new and diverse spokespeople in defense of good jobs and public services, as well as engage retirees.
- Continue the fight for better labour laws and regulations to govern corporate behaviour.
- Support precarious workers, such as gig workers, in their efforts to organize and bargain collectively, and encourage affiliates to organize non-union workers.
- Challenge threats that undermine the role of school boards and municipalities.



Deepen Equity and Forge Solidarity

Deepening equity and fostering solidarity among our affiliates is essential in the current climate, where the far-right has leveraged simplistic narratives to blame migrants and refugees for the cost of living crisis and gun violence. These divisive messages have attracted some workers to vote against their own class interests, both in Canada and globally. Islamophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, and intolerance toward equity-deserving groups are escalating. The Truth and Reconciliation recommendations are only slowly being addressed. Gender-based discrimination and violence continue, uniquely for transgender persons. For both principled and practical reasons, we must prioritize inclusion and respect, and celebration of contributions, reinforcing our collective strength against these injustices.

OUR AIM - Ensure that equity is a core practice of every organization in Toronto and York Region.

Strategic Initiatives

We will:

- Ask every union to become engaged in Labour Council's overarching campaign against systemic racism.
- Ask every union to promote the Refugee Project of Labour Community Services.
- Strengthen the collective support for partners engaged in tackling economic inequality, discrimination, and racism, including the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.
- Ask affiliates to support the Labour Council to reach workers in key newcomer and Indigenous communities as well as support them as leaders in our movement.
- Celebrate the activism and leadership of workers from diverse communities within labour and allied movements, and affirm our commitment to gender equity.
- Embrace the recommendations outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Report and the Task Force on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.
- Support the expansion of Community Benefits Agreements and Labour Education Centre's activities to ensure diverse communities get access to solid careers in trades and other occupations.



Deepen Ties and Collaboration with Affiliates

While unions and workers demonstrated incredible solidarity in response to Ford's anti-democratic 2022 attack on education workers, as we continue to emerge from the pandemic there seems to be reduced awareness of each other's unions' and sectors' specific issues and priorities. Some unions are losing members as the economy is reshaped by powerful corporate forces. At the same time, hundreds of thousands of working people are still union members in the Toronto region, working in every sector of the economy. Union leaders helped navigate their membership through the pandemic. Now we need to harness the energy of union members, many of whom are eager to step up and get involved.

We can also organize more workers into unions. And we can help others understand the possibilities for joint mobilization and the Labour Council's role in shaping that. We will all benefit from shaping a better future together.



OUR AIM - Harness the power and energy of workers, unions, and the labour movement to shape a better future together.

Strategic Initiatives

We will:

- *Help shape a shared vision for labour and community in Toronto and York Region.*
- *Continue to plan joint actions with affiliates and allies, such as parades, protests, and events.*
- *Increase awareness and capacity of Labour Council as a place for unions, leaders and delegates to share experiences and methodology for building powerful unions, continuing to make space for members from racialized and other equity-seeking communities.*
- *Conduct an affiliation campaign to expand and strengthen Labour Council affiliation.*
- *Create a culture of organizing.*
- *Help prepare for mobilization of members through developing a state of readiness.*

Expand Diverse Leadership

Every day we see signs of major demographic, societal and technological changes underway in our society, moving even faster than before. In response to this rapidly changing world, our labour movement needs leaders dedicated to strengthening and transforming their organizations and building a movement that empowers working people, including workers from equity-deserving communities. Empowering workers means developing their working class analysis and helping them understand our shared values as working people. This requires using real-life experiences and struggles – yesterday's and today's – to develop new and existing leaders who can readily confront these challenges.

OUR AIM - Offer effective tools that ensure new, diverse, labour leaders are well-equipped for the struggle ahead.

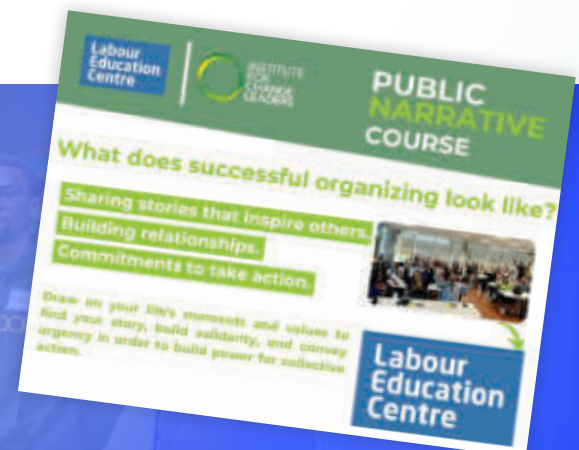
Strategic Initiatives

We will:

- Hold the John Cartwright Leadership Institute on a regular basis, and incorporate campaign planning workshops.
- Ask affiliates to identify new, diverse activists and emerging leaders, and support capacity building including a mentoring process involving veteran leaders.
- Recruit young workers to join and participate in Labour Council activities.
- Increase awareness of the region's labour history and lessons from significant past struggles, including creating a handbook of leadership case studies.
- Explore ways of incorporating culture and social events to build deeper relationships.
- Partner with Labour Education Centre and allied progressive organizations in ongoing leadership development.
- Encourage our committees to provide analysis and strategic guidance on key issues.

The John Cartwright Leadership Institute

STRATEGIC PLAN - 2025-2028



Prioritize Climate Action

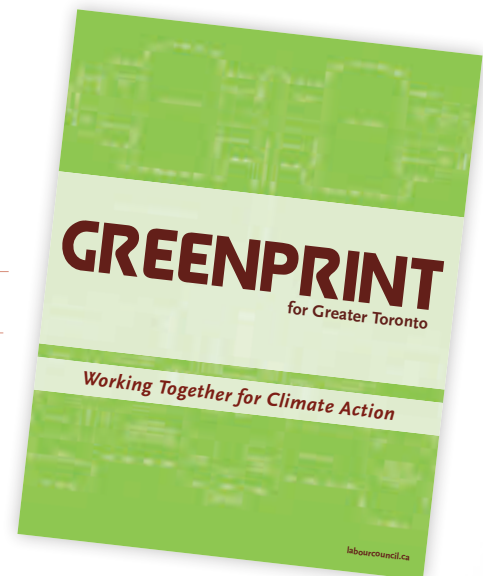
We are in a climate emergency, with limited time to act before reaching a point of irreversible harm. But the facts of this crisis have been clouded by corporations who profit from fossil fuels, mired in right wing arguments about taxes, and lost to workers who are understandably focused on their pocketbooks. It's crucial to understand that a strong or recovering economy and climate justice are not mutually exclusive; they can in fact go hand-in-hand. This message needs to resonate in every public forum and through the media. The Labour Council will support the charge for green jobs and advocate for equity and a Just Transition toward a sustainable economy. As we strive for environmental justice, we must remember: there are no jobs on a dead planet, making our fight for a livable future imperative.

OUR AIM - Build a climate justice workers' movement.

Strategic Initiatives

We will:

- Counter the efforts to sabotage climate action by polluters and conservative politicians, including their "carbon tax revolt" which is promoted by Conservative premiers and climate change deniers.
- Re-establish a climate justice labour network.
- Highlight the real cost of inaction by governments and businesses, and get young members engaged in using new, creative approaches.
- Work in coalition with Labour Education Centre's Working Green 2050 and key environmental organizations including diverse youth and student-led groups.
- Work with affiliates, local governments and school boards to adopt serious climate action policies.
- Promote the creation of Joint Labour-Management Environment Committees and ask affiliates to bargain for their establishment.
- Help to popularize the key elements of a Green New Deal for All.





Indigenous Workers of Colour Conference



In June, the TYRLC hosted two events that highlight our labour movement's diversity and struggle towards equity - The Indigenous and Workers of Colour Conference and the Bromley Armstrong Awards Gala.



The Bromley Lloyd Armstrong Awards



2025 Bromley Award winners: Norman Dixon, Rokhaya Gueye, Valerie Joseph, Shyanna Medicine, CUPE 79, Merv King, Jan Simpson

Supporting Skilled Trades Labour Supply as Canada Embarks on Historic Building Boom

Canadian governments and industries have floated launching a major expansion in infrastructure and housing construction, as part of the 'elbows up' response to uncertainty caused by US President Donald Trump's tariffs.



One potential challenge in that strategy will be ensuring adequate supply of skilled construction workers.

Centre for Future Work Director Jim Stanford recently spoke on CBC Radio's *The Current*, for an in-depth interview on the opportunities and challenges of skilled trades work as Canada gets ready to "build, baby, build."

As he often does, Stanford challenged the conventional wisdom that there is a perpetual 'shortage' of skilled labour in Canada, and that 'red tape' regarding certification and interprovincial mobility of skilled workers is holding back construction work. His main arguments were:

- Reported shortages of construction work have eased dramatically since 2022—when labour supply was severely disrupted by the pandemic. Unemployment among construction workers has averaged over 8% so far in 2025, higher than the average for the national labour market.
- Job vacancies have fallen by more than half, from over 7% of employment in 2022 to around 3% today. The slowdown in construction resulting from high interest rates and now the effects of Trump's tariffs have caused a downturn on construction employment. Shortage of jobs is currently a bigger problem in construction than shortage of workers.
- Canada already has a very effective program of interprovincial mobility for skilled trades workers, called the Red Seal. Certified tradespeople write an exam and

document their on-the-job experience to receive Red Seal credentials, which then allow them to work in any province without additional certification. (Quebec has a separate but similar program.)

- Claims by business lobbyists (such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business) that government 'red tape' has created a labour shortage are false. The main reason some businesses face problems recruiting and retaining skilled workers is their stubborn refusal to offer better wages and conditions. The CFIB's own data suggests that for 57% of their members, the biggest problem in recruiting labour is a 'disconnect' between potential employees' salary expectations, and the employers' willingness to pay.

As Canada considers a historic building boom, it is vital that apprenticeship and qualification standards for skilled trades workers be strengthened, to ensure the work is performed safely (for both workers and the public) and to the highest standards.

That means expanding the system of skilled trades certifications to include new skills (like solar and wind power installation, and advanced energy-efficient construction techniques); expanding public support for vocational colleges, apprentices, and work placements; and making publicly-funded investment projects contingent on strong labour standards (including prevailing wages, employment equity, and union representation).

This piece was originally published on the Centre for Future Work website in June 2025. It has been updated and copy edited for length.

**Scan the QR Code to
Read the Full Report**



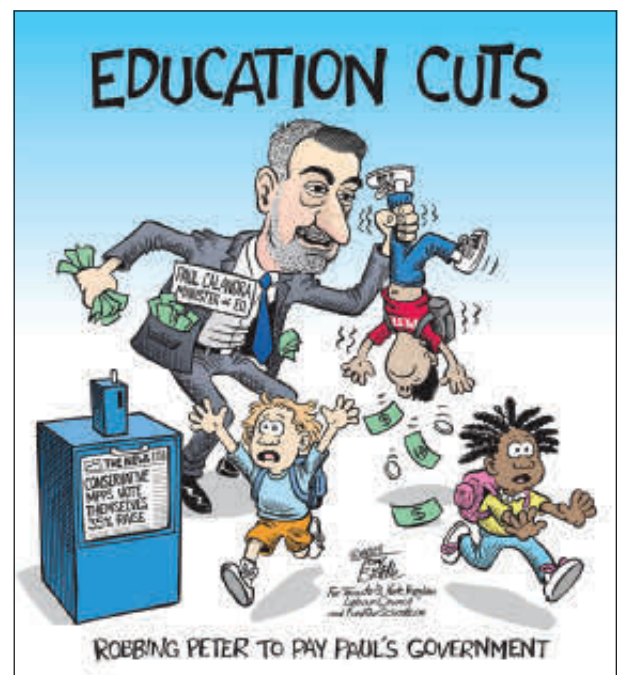


**In all Fascist and Nazi nations
the free trade union movement
has been outlawed, its property
and funds confiscated, its
leaders persecuted, in many
cases ruthlessly murdered...**

**It is essential that profiteering
and greed must be eliminated
in the production of the
sinews of war...so that there
will be an equitable
contribution on the part of
capital comparable to that of
the sacrifice of human life.**

FROM THE 55TH ANNUAL
CONVENTION OF THE TRADES
AND LABOR CONGRESS OF
CANADA - 1940

LABOUR
TORONTO & YORK REGION
COUNCIL



The Fight for a Better Future Campaign

Working people have had enough. Prices on everything have risen dramatically: food costs, mortgage payments, rent and gas? They're all up.

Wages aren't rising fast enough to keep pace though. Many of us are getting desperate - yet the rich just keep getting richer.

Working people are angry that the economy is failing us. And we should be angry! Things have been getting worse for years. At every turn, government leaders have failed to stand up for us, the working people who make this country run.

It's time to stop wealthy corporations putting profits ahead of people. It's time to stop their political friends from making it easy for them to do that.

To win this fight, we need to start in our unions. We need to win our members over to a different kind of common sense – one that's rooted in solidarity and focused on the common good. Then we need to take our fight from the workplaces to the streets. And, we need to work with elected representatives who champion working people and believe in our future.

The Fight for a Better Future Campaign envisions a future where we have:

1. **A life we can afford** - End price-gouging by corporations, and bring back rent and price controls.
2. **Health care when we need it** - Adequately fund public health care; stop and reverse privatization by corporations.
3. **Housing for people, not investment** - Stop speculation, and build permanently affordable non-market housing.
4. **Improved wages and benefits** - Build a sustainable economy that provides good jobs and decent wages for all.
5. **Solidarity, Not Hate** - Stop scapegoating the most vulnerable in our society for issues caused by corporate greed.
6. **Strong protections for working people** - Strengthen labour laws and make it easier for people to join unions.
7. **Environmental protections for our future** - Stop subsidies to fossil fuel CEOs and help working people afford energy efficiency.
8. **Make the rich pay their fair share** - If the wealthy pay their fair share, there will be enough money for strong public services in every community.

www.labourcouncil.ca/fight-for-a-better-future



The Toronto & York Region Labour Council's
Women's Committee presents

A Sisters of the Roundtable discussion



GENDER EQUITY & LABOUR IN 2025 :

Where do we go from here?

SATURDAY OCTOBER 18TH 2025

9:00AM - 1:00PM

1377 LAWRENCE AVE. EAST

REGISTER AT

**[HTTPS://WWW.LABOURCOUNCIL.CA/GEL
2025/](https://www.labourcouncil.ca/gel2025/)**

ROSEMARIE POWELL

Moderator
Executive Director
Toronto Community
Benefits Network



Registration is free! Refreshments will be provided.

CHRISTIE PASCHAKIS

Panelist
Executive Board member,
Toronto Public Library Workers Union
Founder, SOAR Initiative Canada &
Ontario Says NO MORE



JENNY ANN

Keynote speaker
Executive Director
Ontario Confederation of
University Faculty
Associations



SHARLENE HENRY

Panelist
Chair, Black, Indigenous & Workers
of Colour Committee
UNIFOR Local 1285
Co-Chair, York South-Weston Tenant
Union



DANA FISHER

Panelist
Vice-President, Society of United
Professionals
LAO Local, IFPTE Local 160



LABOUR
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COUNCIL

Toronto Forges a New Direction Under Olivia Chow

It's been two years since Olivia Chow was elected Mayor of Toronto ending close to 13 years of Conservative mayoral rule in the City.

As a re-election campaign approaches, recent polling indicates that Chow leads the field of competitors. The importance of having a progressive mayor was highlighted over a summer that saw strong Conservative opposition to her worker-friendly policies around housing and transit.

Chow has been pushing an expansion in affordable and rental housing while homelessness has been rising steadily in Toronto since 2018. A huge part of Chow's base is made up of Toronto tenants - who represent half of the City population.

After years of advocacy by groups like TTC riders, "Bus Only" lanes passed at council. While previous mayors ignored transit riders, saddling them with higher fares and worse service, Chow has tried to reverse the trend, backing

dedicated lanes which make commutes faster and more reliable. A better transit system also means more riders, less pollution, and less congestion for everyone else.



We don't agree with all Mayor Chow's positions, but her many gains and wins are headed in a good direction. Chow has frequently clashed with Doug Ford on a variety of issues, winning major concessions in uploading the Gardiner Expressway and Don Valley Parkway to the provincial government. Toronto city council also voted under Chow to oppose the province's plans to override the city's authority and remove bike lanes. The province was successfully overruled by the courts this summer.



Federal & Provincial Elections Recap

On April 28, Canadians elected Mark Carney – a Liberal corporate banker – to oversee a minority government as Prime Minister of Canada. On February 27, Ontarians re-elected Doug Ford – a Conservative multi-millionaire business owner – as Premier of Ontario.

Both election outcomes were largely motivated by concerns about Donald Trump, his trade war, his romance with tech oligarchs and fossil fuel champions, and his disrespectful musings about Canada. Fearing undue U.S. influence in Canada, workers voted in near-record numbers federally.

Carney and Ford's elections were also influenced by fears of what would happen if Trump's ideas flourished in Canada, as some Canadian politicians were promoting.

Provincially, the NDP maintained its official opposition status to the Ford agenda. Federally, the NDP was routed - losing 12% of the vote share and 17 seats, getting completely wiped out of representation in Ontario. This was a stark change to the situation three months earlier which predicted stable NDP support in terms of seats and vote share, but a Conservative supermajority.

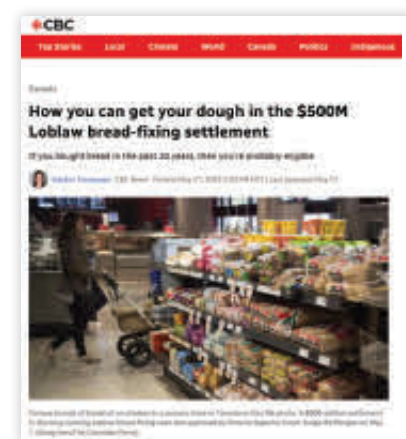


Surprisingly, through we lost federal representatives who brought us dental care, pharmacare, \$10 a day childcare, and anti-scab legislation, the result still saw the NDP maintain the balance of power in the legislature. The party lost the benefits of having party status and some of the broader support across the country, however it is still in a position to be able to deliver legislation and gains for workers.

Follow the Money: George Weston Ltd.

Price fixing by “competitors” looking to artificially increase profits steals billions from consumers every year. George Weston Ltd admitted they were part of the practice in 2015 having engaged in a scheme to rip off consumers since 2001. The scheme added about \$1.50 more per loaf of bread for an estimated 20 million customers and is alleged to have been an industry-wide scam involving Canada Bread and major grocers including Loblaw's, Metro, Sobeys, Walmart Canada, and Giant Tiger. The allegation is that they colluded to keep bread prices high.

In June 2023, Canada Bread pleaded guilty to four counts of price fixing and was fined \$50 million, the highest ever price-fixing fine in Canadian history according to the Competition Bureau. An Ontario Superior Court Judge approved a \$500-million class action settlement in May, 2025 against the George Weston company, with over 75% of the funds to be allocated to shoppers in Ontario.



Strikes & Struggles

CUPW & CUPE flight attendants - Government conjures new attacks on workers with Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code

Prior to 2024 Section 107 was little known and rarely used. In August 2024, the Minister of Labour used Section 107 to order the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) to end strikes/lockouts at two railways, and then used the same provision against CUPW workers in December and CUPE Flight attendants in August.

The Government claims that Section 107 gives it the power to ignore workers' Charter rights to bargain to "secure industrial peace", however it's clear that this is simply the latest government tool being used to side with employers - for example, the government ordered binding arbitration when Air Canada wanted it, but did not order it when Canada Post didn't want it.

Several unions are challenging the use of Section 107 in the courts while CUPE Flight attendants defied the legislation forcing the employer to negotiate a deal.

CUPE 79 - New wage floor from bargaining

In March 2025, CUPE local 79 reached a deal with the City of Toronto after contentious negotiations. Using a different approach to both organizing and bargaining, the union targeted wages for its lowest earners, demanding wage increases above the minimum wage across the board. "Raising the wage floor" put upward pressure on wages which were also raised for other workers as well.





CUPE 1750 - 1st in 100 years

Unionized Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) employees went on strike in May with 96 per cent voting in favour of a strike, and an 85-per-cent vote participation rate. Citing low morale due to work overload and the costs of inflation, the strike was notable for being the first strike action by employees in over 100 years. The strike happened to coincide with the first Provincially recognized Injured workers day in 2025, which has been held for over 40 years.



Unions Who Took a Stand

CUPW

Air Canada

CUPE 3902

CUPE 5525

CUPE 2073

United Association Local 46
High Rise Residential Plumbers

IBEW Local 353 strike Toronto

Carpenters UBC Local 27

USW Local 8328 (lockout)

Unifor 4271 CN Tower (lock out)

Unifor Locals 40 and
240 - HBC logistics

Unifor at DHL

Unite HERE 75 1 King W
(Bargaining protests)

OPSEU Ontario Hospital
Association (Bargaining)



Fund Our Schools

On the last day of school (June 27), the Education Minister Paul Calandra announced that four school boards, including the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB), would be taken under supervision. Calandra alleged that these school boards lack financial responsibility and needed supervisors in order to provide balanced budgets.

In fact, the root of the issue is underfunding. In Canada, education is funded by the provincial government, which provides money at levels the province considers adequate to local school boards; and by law, all school boards have to submit a balanced budget by the end of June each year. Because of this legislative requirement, school boards like the TDSB and TCDSB have been balancing budgets by implementing numerous cuts over the last seven years.

Under the guise of “balanced budgets,” these cuts are invisible to parents and community members. But they are felt every day by education workers and teachers, as well as students, inside our schools. The cost of underfunding



isn't just financial—it is driving increases in violent incidents, illnesses, mental health concerns, and burnout. As a result, publicly-funded education is hanging on by a thread.

Let's be clear: Ford and his Conservative MPPs are to blame for underfunding education, NOT school boards or school trustees.



Labour Community Advocate Training

LEVEL 1 REGISTRATION

Become a Labour Community Advocate this September!

Learn more and register by visiting
www.labourcommunityservices.ca/lcat

Canadian Workers Under Pressure as Carney Forsakes Climate

With the Trump-induced trade/tariff economic crises affecting all regions of Canada, Prime Minister Carney is weighing proposals from Premiers for “nation building” projects. There is great danger that Carney will squander tens of billions of our money on fossil fuel projects that will increase carbon pollution and become white elephants as the inevitable switch from fossil fuels takes hold. Many observers including the International Energy Agency believe global demand for fossil fuels will peak in 2030, just 5 years away.

Carney should instead invest in accelerating the transition into an electric-based economy. The consequences of prolonging our dependence on fossil fuels are evident across Canada, the increasing frequency and intensity of forest fires being one symptom.

This summer, every province had forest fires burning, and the last three years have the most hectares burned on record. The fires forced the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of Canadians (232,000 in 2023 alone) with many losing homes and business, millions suffering from breathing toxic smoke, and stress. We have lost all or a major part of Slave Lake (2012), Fort McMurray (2016), Lytton (2021), and Jasper (2024).

In the US, we have watched severe fires in Hawaii and California. Across Europe the story is the same, especially in Greece, Spain and Portugal.

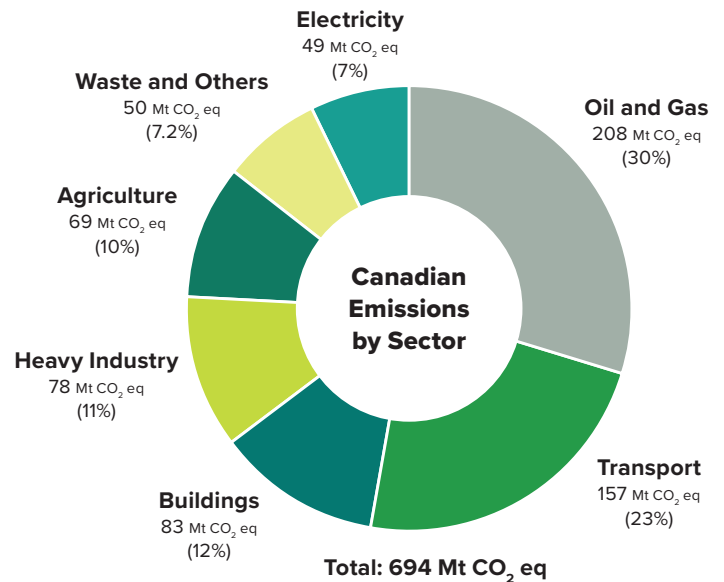
All these fires cause the release of huge amounts of carbon. NASA scientists reported the 2023 Canadian fires released about 640 million metric tons of carbon, essentially doubling our national emissions.

The good news is that Canadian carbon emissions from human activity have peaked and are starting to go down. The bad news is that we need to move faster, much faster.

The same can be said of China, the world’s largest emitter, whose carbon emissions started to decline in March 2024. In the US, the world’s second largest emitter, emissions fell by just 0.2% in 2024. Overall since 2005 American emissions have declined by about 20%.

The problem with fire emissions is that they act as accelerants to a warming planet, the more fires that burn, the more carbon emitted, which increases temperatures which causes greater intensity of fires, no matter how they are started.

Which brings us back to the projects Carney should and should not fund. Canada is the 4th largest producer of oil,



and 5th largest of natural gas. These are not assets, but vulnerabilities. As fossil fuel use declines globally, pipelines we build now will become stranded assets. While pipelines can generate jobs in our tariff-beleaguered steel industry, we should be using that steel to greatly increase the capacity of our electrical grid, which is needed to move electricity no matter how it is generated.

Specifically, we should not put public money into subsidizing oil-sand production. Put simply, the oil sands are about the dirtiest way to produce a barrel of oil, with very high emissions before the product leaves Alberta to be refined, let alone what comes out of the tailpipe.

Nor should there be public investment in carbon capture and storage. The failure of this technology has been proven internationally, with more projects cancelled than completed.

As overall Canadian emissions are starting to decline, the oil and gas sector emissions continue to rise, as of 2023 they represent 30% of national emissions. Alberta is by far the largest emitter of the provinces and territories, because of oil and gas and specifically the oil sands.

Solar is now the cheapest way to generate electricity, with panels becoming both cheaper and more efficient. Investments are needed to install more solar, and to build up energy storage capacity. Regulations should require all new buildings to have installed solar built into building rooftops and frames.

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By Steve Shallhorn, Executive Director at Labour Education Centre

UPCOMING EVENTS

October

- 18** Women's Committee Roundtable on Gender Equity
- 29** Good Jobs or All: End The War on Good Jobs

November

- 6** Delegates meeting
- 14** Health & Safety Banquet

