



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.**

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## 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.

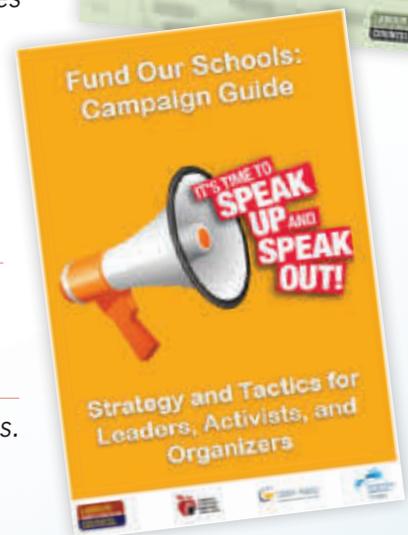
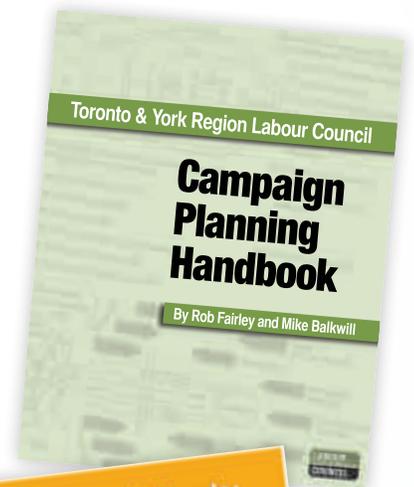
**OUR AIM** - Secure “good jobs for all” and expose and resist the Conservative strategy of race-to-the-bottom and austerity.

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## 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

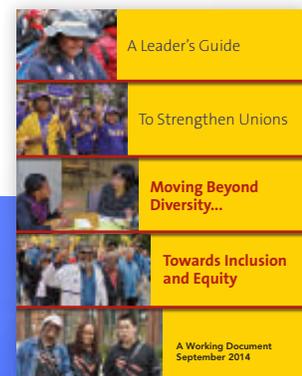
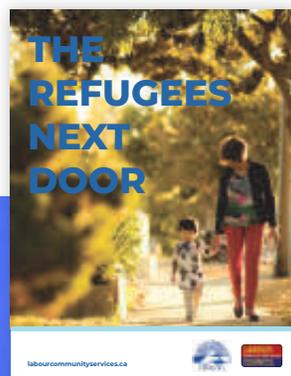
Deepening equity and fostering solidarity among our affiliates is essential in the current climate, where the far-right has leveraged simplistic narratives to blame migrants and refugees for the cost of living crisis and gun violence. These divisive messages have attracted some workers to vote against 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.**

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## 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



# Prioritize Climate Action

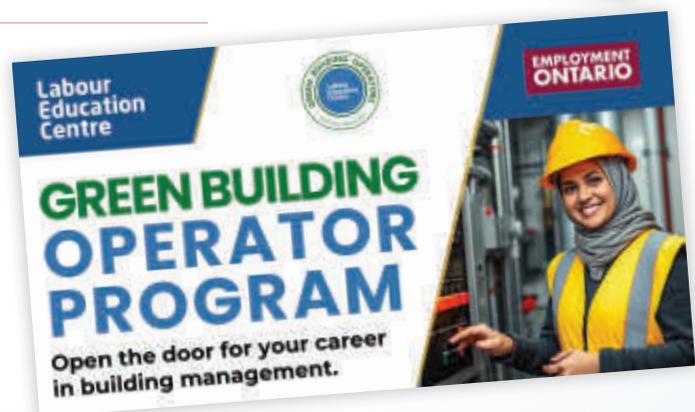
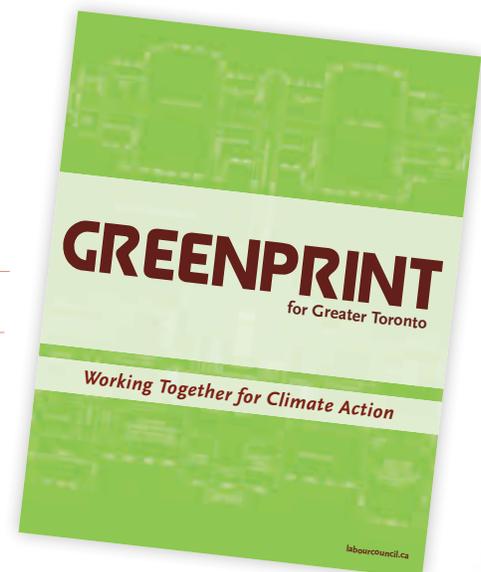
We are in a climate emergency, with limited time to act before reaching a point of irreversible harm. But the facts of this crisis have been clouded by corporations who profit from fossil fuels, mired in right wing arguments about taxes, and lost to workers who are understandably focused on their pocketbooks. 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.





**LABOUR**  
TORONTO & YORK REGION  
**COUNCIL**

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**COUNCIL**  
Standing Up  
Against Cuts  
to  
Education!

**LABOUR**  
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**COUNCIL**  
My children's  
Education  
is worth  
defending!

**MAX**  
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BEGINNING

**CLASS  
SIZE  
MATTERS**

**ON  
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**PROTECT  
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**CLASS  
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# LABOUR TORONTO & YORK REGION COUNCIL

Established in 1871, the Toronto & York Region Labour Council represents over 150 unions and locals, with 200,000 workers from diverse backgrounds and in all sectors of the economy across the Toronto region. We are committed to fighting for economic, social, racial and climate justice. We work for justice in workplaces, politics, our communities, and in the world. The Council works tirelessly to create a fair and equitable future for all.