

# ACTION PLAN FOR THE 2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION

Mar 5th, 2026



Each election cycle, Labour Council works to support the election of progressive candidates for city councils and school boards across Toronto and York Region. Toronto City Council races have had the highest profile. In previous municipal elections, Labour Council has been successful in growing support to win votes on a number of important issues. Working with our affiliates, community partners, and Council allies we have started to reverse privatization and contracting-out, to respect public services including transit, support marginalized communities, and have achieved many issue-based wins working with our Councillors and Mayor.

In 2018, despite Doug Ford's Bill 5 (which reduced Toronto City Council to 25 Councillors plus the Mayor, in an effort to prevent a progressive, diverse City Council) eight of 25 elected City Councillors were endorsed by the Labour Council. In 2022 nine of those elected were endorsed, increasing an important base. We also met our strategic goal of retaining Spadina-Fort York as a progressive stronghold (and elected 10 labour-endorsed TDSB trustees). The trend continued in by-elections since 2022, as we helped defeat far-right Sun Media editor Anthony Furey, elected progressive ally Neethan Shan, and many of our unions helped elect Olivia Chow as Mayor. Still, many right-wing candidates were also elected and re-elected in 2022.

We contributed to important fights on issues including reversing austerity, protecting crucial employment lands, getting workers at the table for Transform TO's climate ambitious plans, and keeping many City workers on the job during COVID. At the same time, there are issues we must keep fighting for: While Mayor Chow has saved us billions for highway maintenance, we still need an entire "new deal" for cities. Gapping – using staff vacancies to fill budget shortfalls at City Hall – must be addressed.

Gains have been made in large part because of Toronto Council's current composition, and our elected representatives' hard work, which we helped shape. Our 2026 goal will be to protect these gains, and keep moving labour's goalpost forward. We can't return to the austerity agenda of John Tory, if he throws his hat in the ring again, or the increasingly right-wing anti-worker agenda of Brad Bradford. If there are school board opportunities, we will maximize them, including through our Fund Our Schools campaign. We believe the progressive, pro-labour trendline has an opportunity to become even more working-class oriented. In 2026, Labour Council will assess candidates who show promise as progressive, pro-labour leaders, when potentially strong campaigns emerge. We will be supporting campaigns for council and mayoral candidates that share our goals.

- Up for election in Toronto will be 25 Council seats and the Mayor, the third time Toronto's municipal elections take place in super-sized wards. Incumbency will be powerful. Campaigns need to be strategic, well-funded, highly organized and assertive to create movement. The number of individual conversations required to create movement will be great in each race.
- Uncertainty around whether the province will permit or prevent school board elections is destabilizing. The province's meddling with the TDSB, TCDSB and YCDSB may see a number of current school trustees run for Council seats.
- The possible departure of one or more labour-friendly Councillors will leave races in those seats with no incumbents. Possible retirement of one or more right-leaning Councillors may also leave seats open.
- As we experienced in 2018 with Bill 5, in 2020 with the pandemic, with the ongoing uncertainty south of the border, and with Ford's continued undemocratic interventions, we cannot rule out the possibility of major disruptions.
- Progress Toronto is a key ally on municipal issues and organizing, and has become an established city-wide force through 9 years of on-the-ground capacity building, but it could use more labour support.

- Taking Progress Toronto as a model, Integrity TO and ABC Toronto have set themselves up as a right-wing counter to Progress Toronto, with it remaining to be seen whether they have the funding or people to be a serious threat.
- Some of Mayor Chow's programs have positively shaped voters' everyday lives and their interactions with their municipal government, which may help them consider that level of government for the better.

All of these factors will present unique opportunities and difficulties for City Council and TDSB races, and may result in a change in voting behaviour. In York Region, we are still in the early stages of building capacity on municipal and school board races. The same is true for the TCDSB.

### **Strategic goals:**

1. To solidify the re-election of labour-endorsed candidates; retain (if any) wards vacated by progressive Councillors by ensuring the election of a suitable replacement; and continue to increase seats on Toronto City Council by labour-endorsed candidates, especially where right wing Councillors had close races or scandals.
2. To solidify the re-election of labour-endorsed Trustees at the TDSB and win a majority of seats held by labour-supportive Trustees, if there are no steps by Ford to eliminate school boards.
3. Similarly, increase the number of labour-endorsed candidates elected to the TCDSB.
4. In York Region, we are working to keep school board elections on the ballot. Whether successful or not on the school board front, the remaining focus will be on endorsing progressive York Region Mayors and regional Councillors, with potential consideration to endorsing candidates in a local election if strong targets are available.
5. To deny a foothold at the municipal level by right-wing organizations such as IntegrityTO and ABC Toronto, or candidates such as Bradford.

### **Road to achieving the goals:**

- Ensure labour endorsed candidates have strong teams on the ground and are doing their pre-election work.
- Identify and recruit strong progressive candidates in key areas with no incumbents, with a specific eye to diverse candidates.
- Identify and provide solid training to skilled campaign workers from diverse communities.
- Mobilize union members to support and vote for labour-endorsed candidates
- Popularize labour-friendly municipal programs and policies

### **Game plan:**

- Assess what is happening on the ground in key wards in Toronto and York Region.
- Work with affiliates, key political staff and other contacts, and like-minded organizations, such as the Campaign for Public Education, Progress Toronto, Diverse Workers Networks, Social Planning Council of York Region (SPCYR), York Communities for Public Education (YCFPE), and others, to assist in identifying and recruiting strong candidates. Establish a York Region planning committee in collaboration with local affiliates.
- Develop training curriculum for potential candidates and workers.

- Deliver training in the spring and late summer of 2026.
- Prepare endorsement information and evaluation and engagement tools for affiliates to share with their members based on a postal code/ward breakdown

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