

Using Unionized Labour and Community Benefits for FIFA and Future Major Events

JULY 2, 2026



As FIFA's final matches conclude in North America, with Toronto hosting six of the tournament's 104 games, it is time to reflect on what this event has meant for workers and communities across our city.

The FIFA tournament has come at a staggering cost of approximately \$380 million, with nearly half of that amount borne by the City of Toronto. Yet for many working people, the promised benefits failed to materialize. Ticket prices ranging from \$1,300 to \$3,000 placed the games out of reach for most residents, whose median employment income sits between \$65,000 and \$66,500 annually. While some hotels and restaurants in the downtown core saw increased business, there has been little lasting infrastructure and far too few quality employment opportunities for local workers.

Importantly, FIFA itself demonstrated that another approach is possible. Across all host locations in North America, FIFA signed an agreement with an IATSE signatory contractor, RockForce, to ensure that unionized labour would be used, regardless of whether venues were unionized or not. The City of Toronto, however, chose a different path. The Fan Fest at Fort York was not tendered in a way that prioritized union labour, and approximately 90 per cent of the City's public events continue to be delivered through third-party contracting arrangements that are overwhelmingly non-union.

The Toronto and York Region Labour Council is deeply disappointed that, despite significant public investment, the City failed to make the use of unionized labour a priority. The fair wage principles that once guided municipal public events during the David Miller administration have been steadily eroded through subsequent Ford and Tory administrations. Public dollars should create good jobs, support local workers and leave a positive legacy in our communities.

As FIFA moves into the rear-view mirror, affiliates should call on the City of Toronto to commit to a different model for future major events, festivals and infrastructure projects.

On July 2, 2026, the Labour Council resolved to:

1. Prioritize the use of unionized labour in all publicly funded events and infrastructure projects, recognizing the skill, safety and expertise that unionized workers bring to city-building.
2. Establish robust community benefits frameworks with meaningful oversight and public accountability whenever public funds are allocated.
3. Update its Bidding and Hosting Strategy to include considerations/requirements for using uniformed labour, upholding human rights and local labour laws and embedding community benefits frameworks when hosting mega events like FIFA.
4. Commit to diverse hiring, including recruitment in priority neighbourhoods, and invest in lasting, accessible infrastructure and programming that benefits residents across all income

levels.

5. Enforce the Employment Standards Act, the Ontario Labour Relations Act and the Occupational Health and Safety Act for all workers, regardless of status.
6. Uphold human rights, non-discrimination and anti-harassment standards in all event planning and delivery.

Large-scale public events must leave behind more than temporary excitement. They must create good union jobs, strengthen communities and deliver lasting public benefits. Toronto's workers deserve nothing less.