

SUMMER | 2023

# LABOUR ACTION

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COUNCIL

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## WHAT IS GOOD FOR THE



## TORONTO MAYORAL ELECTION

# JUNE 26, 2023

ELECTORAL BARGAINING FOR WORKING PEOPLE

# Message from the President

Dear Comrades, Sisters, Brothers,

On Monday, June 26<sup>th</sup>, let's elect a mayor of Toronto who will work for - and with - working people.



The abrupt exit of John Tory has created a truly open race for the mayor's seat. For regular people, we have the opportunity to reflect on our values and aspirations for Toronto

I would like us to ask ourselves: What is good for the city and the people in it? What is good for workers? What makes this a livable city for our youth, seniors and disabled community members, and equity-deserving communities?

It may seem impossible to imagine a future in which all of us can get what we need, but now is the time to dream big.

We already know that John Tory look-alikes are not the answer. We don't need another mayor who represents only the wealthiest and most connected among us while gutting the social and cultural fabric that made Toronto a unique and special place for many of us.

This is not just about what a new mayor can do in the present, it's also about what a new mayor can do *with* Torontonians, including workers, to create new avenues for a better future. We need a mayor who fits well with the progressive councillors we worked hard to elect last year.

After more than a decade of conservative governance that introduced austerity measures and service cuts, as well as a global health crisis and direct attacks on local democracy, the stakes for working people are higher than ever. I urge you to participate: vote by mail, in advance polls, or on Election Day. We need to vote; to have our voices counted.

You may ask: Who is the Labour Council endorsing for Mayor in 2023? Our Labour Council's Election Planning Committee (EPC) has gone through a rigorous process of interviewing mayoral candidates, reviewing their records, and weighing their merits. As of publication, the EPC has not reached consensus although we have considerably narrowed our focus. Read more on [page 6](#).

We're excited to be running an issues-focused campaign this election to draw attention to key values of working people. We want the new mayor to move swiftly, and with the confidence of a majority of Torontonians, to implement bold, progressive solutions to Toronto's biggest problems. See the issues on [page 7](#) and get involved (check out the back page).

We are all in this together. It's our big chance to change Toronto's course for the better. Let's seize the moment! During any of the advance voting days - June 8th to 13th - eligible voters can vote at any poll stations across the city. Learn more at [toronto.ca/by-election](https://toronto.ca/by-election).

This is not the year to be too tired to get to the polls. Talk to your friends, your family, your neighbours and other community members. Remind them that we vote for the betterment of everyone. On Monday, June 26<sup>th</sup> – VOTE!

In solidarity,

*Andria Bibbitt*

President



# Toronto's Key Issues in 2023 and Beyond

## Affordability

Since the pandemic, the cost of living has risen out of control. Food, housing, and transportation costs are rising faster than workers' wages. **Grocery inflation was over 11% year-over-year and the average cost for a one bedroom apartment in Toronto is nearly \$3,000 per month, while median household income remains around \$84,000 after tax.**

This has real life consequences: the overall homeless population has increased nearly 800%, with nearly 11,000 people without safe and secure housing in the city of Toronto. On average, Toronto shelters are turning away 168 people a day due to lack of space. This cannot continue.

## Climate Change

The crisis of climate is here and the reality is, Toronto is getting hotter. It is predicted that even in a low-carbon scenario, Toronto will still experience more than three times as many very hot days (exceeding 30° C) by 2050 as it did in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Each year, we continue to break historical records as temperatures get warmer and Toronto isn't prepared for today's heat. As heat waves become more common, low-income and racialized communities, including in inner-suburban areas like Scarborough, North York and parts of Etobicoke suffer disproportionately.

## Declining Services from Decades of Austerity

There is no more obvious example of austerity than our public transit system. The TTC is one of the most expensive operating transit systems in North America but since the 1990s, provincial funding and subsidies have been pulled from the TTC's budget. This means that riders inevitably must make up the gap of funding and day to day operations, and the city's public transit continues to be limited despite record growth in population.

This April, the TTC introduced a 10 cent fare increase and, at the same time, implemented service reductions across the city. Working people are being asked to foot the bill on essential services while simultaneously losing access.

## Social and Racial Injustices

When the cost of living is high and our services are in decline, it is impossible to deny the connection to systemic discrimination. Hate crime rates have continued to rise, with reports showing intensified and ongoing discrimination targeted at Black, Indigenous, Asian, Muslim, Jewish, and 2SLGBTQ communities.

We are so fortunate to live in vibrant and diverse communities. Our politicians must meaningfully address the ongoing injustices faced by those who must contend with oppression and discrimination today.

## CHALLENGES

### Strong Mayor Powers

Bill 39, which came into effect November 23, 2022 provides the Mayor the following:

- 1) Power to appoint committee chairs; appoint and fire senior City staff
- 2) Power to Write the Budget, removing it from the purview of the City Manager and CFO
- 3) Power to Veto any decision made by Council that goes against "provincial priorities"
- 4) Power to Pass Votes with  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Council, which means only 8 councillors are required to pass any legislation

### Budget Pressures

The reality is that Toronto is having some serious financial troubles.

It's long been known that Toronto has a revenue issue - the City of Toronto Act (COTA) constrains how the city is able to develop revenue streams and unfortunately this has led to other issues, including reliance on reserve funding, and the Municipal Land Transfer Tax. Previous mayors have been unwilling to raise property taxes and declining TTC ridership means we are constantly trying to find more money for our growing population and services.

Toronto has a \$1.2 Billion Gap in the budget for 2023 and is looking for Provincial and Federal governments for support, which may (or may not) happen.

### Ford Government

The Ontario government continues its shenanigans against the people of the city of Toronto. Not only does COTA constrain the city's ability to grow its revenue, but with the introduction of Bill 23 ("More Homes Built Faster" Act) and Bill 39 ("Better Municipal Governance" Act), Ford continues to meddle in municipal politics.

# What's Good for Toronto?

Labour Council and community partners are defining key policies for this election. We identified six issues that are topical, progressive, and winnable. We also looked for issues that require cooperation or funding from other governments. With a crowded field of candidates and an election that is likely to produce a winner with less than 50% of the vote, our goal for this campaign is to demonstrate deep and broad support for these issues to strengthen the new mayor's mandate.

We asked all mayoral candidates to take these pledges. You can see who has signed on by visiting [labourcouncil.ca/mayoral2023](http://labourcouncil.ca/mayoral2023). YOU can help drive these issues forward too, by talking about them, sharing them on social media, and by signing up for one of three Days of Action this June (see back page for details).

TELL MAYORAL CANDIDATES:

## REVERSE TTC SERVICE CUTS



### 1. Reverse TTC Service Cuts.

Since the pandemic, TTC service has been cut drastically, with riders waiting longer between vehicles and adding significantly to commute times. Riders on more than 30 routes are facing longer commutes during off-peak and rush hours. Join us and **TTC Riders** in demanding a return to pre-2019 TTC service levels.

### 2. Improve and maintain green spaces to benefit communities.

More green space, parks, and urban forests will help absorb water, reduce carbon emissions, and protect residents as climate change accelerates and intensifies heatwaves and other extreme weather events.

We need commitment to expand local community access to parks, shade, and green spaces, and to expand access to critical amenities in public parks. Join us and **Toronto Environmental Alliance** in this call.

TELL MAYORAL CANDIDATES:

## INVEST IN & IMPROVE OUR GREEN SPACES



TELL MAYORAL CANDIDATES:

## BUILD MORE DEEPLY AFFORDABLE HOUSING



### 3. Build more deeply affordable housing.

The City stopped building housing for regular people decades ago. It's time to recognize that the market will not fill the demand for deeply affordable housing.

Join us, **Progress Toronto**, and **ACORN Toronto** to get commitment on building more affordable housing, including social, co-op, and "rent-geared-to-income" units.

#### 4. Stand up against hate.

Toronto is proudly one of the most diverse cities in the world. We welcome people of all ethnic backgrounds, languages, religions, and sexualities. The mayor of Toronto has a responsibility to stand against hate in all its forms. Together with **Urban Alliance on Race Relations**, we ask all candidates to commit to denouncing hate and hate groups.

TELL MAYORAL CANDIDATES:

**STAND UP  
AGAINST  
HATE**



TELL MAYORAL CANDIDATES:

**SUPPORT  
SCHOOLS AS  
COMMUNITY  
HUBS**



#### 5. Support Schools as Community Hubs.

Schools are the heartbeat of local neighbourhoods. They help define our geographies and are gathering spaces for all ages. We need schools to stay local. And, we need better access to social services, recreation programs, and more. The City and school boards can work together to build stronger local communities. With **Social Planning Toronto**, we call on candidates to support schools as community hubs.

#### 6. Support the Labour Day Parade.

For 152 years, workers have taken to the streets to demonstrate our collective power and to fight for better working conditions for all. For most of our history, our right to march has been understood and supported by the City.

Together with the **Central Ontario Building Trades**, we demand a commitment to protecting and supporting the Labour Day Parade.

TELL MAYORAL CANDIDATES:

**SUPPORT THE  
LABOUR DAY  
PARADE**



**Find out which candidates have taken the pledge at [labourcouncil.ca/mayoral2023](https://labourcouncil.ca/mayoral2023)**

### Labour Council's Strategic Goals

These strategic goals were included in the Campaign Action Plan passed by Delegates on April 4, 2023. Find the action plan at [labourcouncil.ca/policy\\_statements](https://labourcouncil.ca/policy_statements)

1. To solidify the election of a pro-worker and pro-labour candidate who shares our values and aspirations. Who will be accountable to labour, who respects collective agreements and will champion good jobs; who wants to keep services public, and who will fight for and deliver a livable city. Who recognizes the danger of the strong-mayor power and would use it responsibly. Who would take action to reverse the damage done to our city by over a dozen years of conservative mayors and decades of austerity. Who recognizes that the status quo is unacceptable and will work collectively to rebuild it.
2. To strengthen the labour movement in Toronto through continued collaboration as we fight for the interests of all working people and hold Toronto City Council accountable.
3. To increase labour's presence in the election process and build organizational capacity around political bargaining.



# Mayoral Candidates: NARROWING THE FIELD



Josh Matlow



Ana Bailão



Olivia Chow



Mitzie Hunter



Chloe Brown



Kiri Vadivelu



Anthony Perruzza

## Assessing Candidates

Labour Council's diverse Election Planning Committee (EPC) assessed a number of candidates for mayor on their merits, which included things like their working relationship with labour, their efforts to advance progressive policies across the city, and their campaign's competitiveness.

The EPC put together an in-depth set of questions on issues ranging from the candidate's presentation, their understanding of city issues like the budget, commitment to city services, understanding of labour, and how they will run their campaign.

When it came to conducting interviews, the EPC chose to invite all candidates who approached the Labour Council for endorsement and who were registered. Seven individuals were invited. These were:

Ana Bailão

Olivia Chow

Josh Matlow

Kiri Vadivelu

Chloe Brown

Mitzie Hunter

Anthony Perruzza

Each of these candidates took the time to provide thoughtful responses to the EPC. They presented their policy ideas, talked about their expectations in working with labour, and provided their vision for the City of Toronto.

Some themes emerged from the interviews. All candidates recognize that the City's finances are in bad shape. It was clear for everyone that a shortfall of investment from other orders of government has put a squeeze on the City's ability to keep up with service. Where candidates varied was on how they would approach other governments for support.

### In past elections, Labour Council has endorsed:

**Olivia Chow**

(mayor, 2014)

**Ana Bailão**

(councillor, 2014 and 2018)

**Anthony Perruzza**

(councillor, 2010, 2014, 2018, 2022)

*Labour has enjoyed a good working relationship with these individuals over the years.*

# Position on Key Issues

Candidates have been releasing their platforms, inviting everyone to assess their vision for Toronto. Where do their plans fall? Use this table of key issues to review your candidate's platforms!

Note: this summary is not exhaustive. Candidates are releasing platforms on a rolling basis. For up-to-date policy, check with candidates directly.

Candidate / Policy	Ana Bailão	Olivia Chow	Candidate 3
1. Has a plan to reverse declining TTC ridership and improve service levels.	Committed to reversing TTC cuts; cell service in subways; more cameras on TTC; transit workers in stations.	Committed to reversing the recent service cuts; cell service in subways; transit workers in stations; dedicated busway to replace SRT.	
2. Takes a stand against privatization of public assets.	"I don't believe in privatization. In most cases, city workers deliver better services."	"Greed should not be a factor in doing public service." Opposes privatization of public assets. Opposes privatization of Ontario Place public lands.	
3. Will address precarious work and protect workers' rights within the civil service, in contract agreements, and with workers more generally.	Supports health and safety for all workers (and would preserve tendering requirements for unionized shops).	In response to Labour Council's statement on open tendering on City contracts: "Trying to save money on the backs of working Torontonians is wrong. I'll always stand with the workers who build our city."	
4. Has a plan to address shortfalls in the City's budget that won't cut services.	Will seek to upload responsibility for the DVP and Gardiner to the province.	Will raise the Vacant Homes Tax from 1% to 3%; raise the Municipal Land Transfer Tax on homes valued over \$3m	
5. Will ensure more community gathering and recreational spaces for young people, including expanded access and fully-staffed libraries, community centres, and parks.	Move Ontario Science Centre to Ontario Place and preserve the building for a community hub.	Opposes the provincial government moving the Ontario Science Centre out of Flemingdon and Thorncliffe neighbourhoods. Expand weekday library hours and open all branches on Sundays, fully staffed.	
6. Supports the creation of community benefits agreements in new developments and will hold CBA partners accountable on equity targets.	"I will champion community benefit agreements and work hard to bring good local jobs and services" as part of public works projects.	"I will make sure the city negotiates strong community benefits agreements that bring good job opportunities" and "advocate for more opportunities for people to join the trades."	
7. Will fund and implement a robust and responsive emergency shelter strategy.	Expand the Dufferin Grove pilot project city-wide, creating pathways out of homelessness.	Create 1,000 new rent supplements, open new 24/7 respite spaces, and create a new fund for services	
8. Has a plan to build and preserve affordable permanent housing for renters of all income levels.	Ensure 20% of all new homes built by 2031 (57,000+) are purpose-built rentals. Build 5,000 new homes (1,500 affordable) on the Ontario Science Centre parking lot (move Science Centre to Ontario Place). Create Evictions Prevention unit and temporarily freeze rental demolition.	City will build 25,000 new rent-controlled homes on city-owned land (7,500 affordable, including 2,500+ RGI) by 2031; prevent renovations and financial support for tenants to remain housed.	
9. Is committed to building a city that is accessible for seniors, people with disabilities, and others in its built infrastructure and services.	Improve traffic safety by putting red light cameras in school safety zones and enforce, with steep fines, penalties for drivers who illegally pass TTC streetcars. Expand BikeShare across the city; make Island Ferry free under 12.	Expand community crisis teams city-wide and improve 911 wait times.	
10. Approaches policy with an equity and gender-sensitive lens.	Advocated for TTC and traffic safety improvements that consider vulnerable users/pedestrians, public health outreach for seniors at home, as well as food security measures to help alleviate the impact of rising inflation on household budgets.	Strong record for centering disadvantaged groups in policy statements, especially the unhoused, seniors, survivors of domestic violence, LGBTQIA+, inner suburban families, transit-dependent riders, women, and children.	

# Upcoming Events

## Take Action

**June 5** Housing Day of Action

**June 6** Transit Day of Action

**June 13** Climate Day of Action

**June 8-13** **Advanced Voting**  
Vote anywhere in Toronto

**June 26** **Election Day**  
Vote at your assigned polling station

Find out how to get involved

**[labourcouncil.ca/events](https://labourcouncil.ca/events)**

**Election details: [toronto.ca/by-election](https://toronto.ca/by-election)**

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