# THE EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT
# TO THE
# TORONTO & YORK REGION GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
# THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2016

## "The City of Toronto Finances"

After years of pretending that Canada's largest city can deliver services, maintain aging infrastructure and tackle the effects of climate change without raising money, a new consensus is emerging on the need for new sources of city revenue. It's no secret that after the provincial government downloading of programs and costs, the city has experienced tremendous constraint. Labour Council will continue to advocate for the federal and provincial governments to cover the cost of key programs such as transit operations and social housing. But there is even further pressure as Mayor Tory adds billions in costs for the Gardiner, SmartTrack and Scarborough subway.

Toronto needs new revenues — to build transit and fix roads but also to increase social programs that prevent gun violence, increase access to child care and provide safe recreational opportunities to young adults and children. The suggested cutbacks to every department including libraries and fire service are counter-productive. City Council will need to decide on new avenues for funding that can create the greatest amount of public good with the least amount of burden upon working families.

Many options outlined by City Staff deserve support, but the Mayor has focused on road tolls and refuses to support one of the largest potential sources of revenue – the commercial parking levy. The excuses provided for not considering this levy are just that – excuses for not asking the wealthiest landowners in Toronto to pay their share. In fact, the Mayor lists the powerful interest groups that oppose stepping up and contributing: the Real Estate Industry Coalition, Retail Council of Canada, Building Owners + Managers, and Building Industry + Land Development. It is no surprise that the voices of the wealthiest 1% have more sway at City Hall than working people who have to drive to work every day.

Road tolls are highly controversial and will take years to implement. Nor will they alone accomplish the scale of revenue needed to invest in the much needed infrastructure, city services, or climate change measures required in the coming years. Road tolls may be worthy of consideration as part of a basket of revenue tools, but other commuting options should be in place so working people who currently drive have affordable alternatives.

It's clear that the vast majority of Torontonians do want investment in their city if it's done fairly. The Executive Board recommends that Labour Council:

1. Endorse revenue options for the City of Toronto that includes balancing the ratio of commercial rates to residential; a small tax on alcohol sold in outlets and stores; a hotel and short-term rental tax; a modest residential rate increase.
2. Focus on winning Council to implement a Commercial Parking Tax Levy paid for by landowners, with exemptions for small business and charitable organizations.
3. Work with progressive Councillors and community groups to determine other potential revenue sources such as graduated property tax rates or other options that may require provincial approval.