

September 11, 2020



**GENERIC COPY OF LETTER SENT TO ALL MP's IN THE
TORONTO & YORK REGION LABOUR COUNCIL AND THE PRIME
MINISTER**

As the government of Canada makes key decisions about how our economy and our society addresses the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the labour movement is proposing a comprehensive plan for the coming months. I urge you to read the details at Forward Together: A Canadian Plan. Below, we highlight some areas that are of particular interest to workers and their families in the greater Toronto region.

COVID-19 exposed deep disparities within our economy, in public health care, and in our social safety net. We must keep working together to lay the groundwork for a strong, inclusive and sustainable economic recovery that ensures no one is left behind in this crisis. Economic recovery must be accompanied by enhancements to public health care, and creation of a disaster-proof social safety net for everyone who needs it.

Where municipalities play a role in delivery or regulation, they need the resources to do so effectively. On top of the recent emergency funding provided, cities will need funding to ensure public services are expanded during the recovery process, long-term funding for transit, childcare, housing and social services is secured, and local public investment decisions can be made with a climate and equity lens.

BETTER JOBS

Canada's economic shutdown hit low-wage workers the hardest – especially people of colour, and women, youth and other vulnerable workers in precarious forms of employment. In the Toronto region, we saw these same communities were also hardest hit by COVID.

With over two million jobs lost to the pandemic, we need a plan to replace those jobs with better ones. Canada's economic recovery plan must include major public investments in infrastructure, public services and procurement. We need investments in green and climate-resilient infrastructure projects to generate decent jobs and allow Canada to achieve its climate change targets.

Working with local governments, the federal government should identify shovel-ready, shovel-worthy physical infrastructure projects for public investment. Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs) should be a key component of these projects. We need investments in social infrastructure, including in long-term care, home care, child care, employment services, skills training, post-secondary education, recreation centres, and arts and cultural institutions. Investing in and expanding quality public services will reduce inequality and ensure a broad-based, inclusive economic recovery. Many of these jobs are important sources of employment for women and also considered to be "green jobs".

We need governments to use procurement policy to foster domestic manufacturing capacity, including the conversion of shuttered plants, to produce much needed PE, steel products, light-rail transit, and zero-emissions vehicles. Strategic public procurement with a focus on Canadian-made products should be a priority.

We need government actions to help workers in sectors particularly hard-hit by COVID recover from the economic lockdown. In the Toronto region, this means workers in the hospitality, tourism and creative industries. Government actions must protect jobs and collective bargaining rights, and guarantee that financial support from the government will go first to support workers.

STRENGTHEN HEALTH CARE

This spring, Canadians were shocked to witness the consequences of underfunding and privatization of our public services, in the tragic loss of life in long-term care homes. Evidence shows that for-profit homes had a significantly greater number of COVID-19 outbreaks and deaths than non-profit homes. Clearly, there is no room for profit in long-term care. The federal government must bring long-term care into the public system and regulate it under the Canada Health Act.

Canada is the only industrialized country that has universal public health care but not paid prescription drugs. Those with chronic health conditions are most at risk of COVID. Many lack paid health benefits. We need a national Pharmacare program.

DISASTER-PROOF CANADA

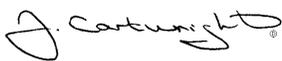
The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated just how essential child care is for working families and our economy. Women are still the primary caregivers. There can be no recovery without high-quality, accessible, public child care. To address the child care crisis, the federal government must provide \$2.5 billion of targeted funding and increase targeted transfers over time to help move Canada towards a fully publicly-funded, accessible, affordable and inclusive child care system.

Safe and affordable housing is essential. In the Toronto region, those in adequate housing cannot isolate if they become ill. Shelters were pushed to their capacities and families experiencing domestic violence were prisoners in their own homes. In addition to accelerating and expanding construction of high quality, high efficiency, affordable housing, programs are needed to increase the supply of affordable rental housing. Those programs need to give priority to public, non-profit, and co-operative housing.

Canada's low-wage workers were also hit the fastest and hardest in the pandemic. Canada got it right by creating the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB). But as we head into recovery, workers will need an inclusive, streamlined, and simplified Employment Insurance program that doesn't disadvantage low-paid workers in non-standard employment.

In closing, we must reject calls for austerity and privatization. Instead, we need a Canadian plan that is rooted in our way of doing things by working together and supporting each other. We need new, bold investments in infrastructure, public services, manufacturing and a clean energy economy. That is how we will move Canada forward together and build a stronger, more inclusive and sustainable economy for our families and the next generation.

Yours truly,



John Cartwright
President

c.c. Hassan Yussuff, President, Canadian Labour Congress