

SUMMER | 2020

# LABOUR ACTION

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# Introducing the Toronto & York Region Labour Council Executive, 2020-2022

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- Ainsworth Spence - SEIU Healthcare
- Ralph Chatoor - SUP Local 160
- Joy Davis - CUPE Local 4400
- Gobishankar Sooriyakumar - CUPE 4948
- Velma Wisdom - CUPE 4400
- Keith Menezes - USW 9197
- Attasha Jordan - OPSEU 510
- Bill Signal - UA 46

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- Brendon Hayes - CUPE 4948
- Hendrik Bruyn - USW 8300
- Melissa Sobers - UNITEHERE 75
- Jason Da Silva - ATU 113
- Chris Campbell - Carpenters 27
- Leslie Bremner - CUPE 416

### EDUCATION

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- Pam Beetlestone - ETFO York Region
- Diana Corazza - OECTA York Region
- Marie Coulter - CUPE 4400
- Rob Bauer - TECT
- Mike Platt - OSSTF D12
- James Mackasey - TECT
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- Laura Thompson - OPSEU Local 503
- Susan Barker - SEIU Healthcare
- Cara Brideau - IBEW 353
- Emma Lee - CUPE 4948
- Lynda MacLellan - PSAC 638
- Alex Thompson - USW 1998

# Priority Responses to COVID-19

Uncertain times are never easy. Our history as a labour movement and as Canadians shows time and again how together we can meet adversity. We have shared with neighbours and with complete strangers, protected the vulnerable, and sheltered those without a home. During the present COVID-19 health crisis, every one of us will be challenged to be the best that we can – generous, thoughtful and selfless.

Our movement believes in solidarity and the power of collective action. Labour's expertise is needed to shape the right decisions during this crisis. We have seen healthcare unions at the forefront of the fight for workplace safety. The Canadian Labour Congress has taken a lead role in winning crucial programs for income support, and has outlined a series of steps required to ensure economic recovery. At every level, labour emphasizes the need for continued social solidarity with the goal that no one is left behind during the crisis or afterwards.

It is important to recognize that Canadians don't all start from the same place – we have a high level of inequality including the racialization of poverty, child poverty, and exploitation of migrants. While most people are gaining a new appreciation for the essential role of public services in providing for the common good, it will take immense effort to secure lasting improvements. Labour Council is mobilizing around key priorities:

<b>1. HEALTH &amp; SAFETY</b> 	<p><b>Ensure health and safety of workers</b></p>
<b>2. PAID SICK LEAVE</b> 	<p><b>Ensure paid, protected sick leave</b></p>
<b>3. EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE</b> 	<p><b>Fill gaps in the social safety net</b></p>
<b>4. PUBLIC SERVICES</b> 	<p><b>Ensure public services are available for all workers, particularly those on the front lines</b></p>
<b>5. ECONOMIC STABILIZERS</b> 	<p><b>Enact policies and programs that meet community needs and create/retain jobs</b></p>

<b>6. PROTECTING WORKERS</b> 	<p><b>Protect Canadians from bankruptcy, homelessness, and impoverishment</b></p>
<b>7. IMPACTED COMMUNITIES</b> 	<p><b>Ensure the differential impact on diverse communities is addressed</b></p>
<b>8. AVOID AUSTERITY POLITICS</b> 	<p><b>Reject a return to an austerity agenda or worse</b></p>

Unions and our allies must be prepared for the ruthless politics described in Naomi Klein's book *Shock Doctrine*. Public services have suffered due to declining revenues from massive tax cuts for corporations and wealthy individuals, while workers' rights have been steadily eroded in the globalized economy. Today a handful of billionaires control more wealth than half of humanity.

Speaking to Labour Council Delegates in May, economist Jim Stanford noted that while there are many economic and political dangers ahead, there is also an opportunity to build a new political framework to: recognise the value of all jobs; rediscover the importance of public services and infrastructure; create a new model of growth: public-led, democratic, and focused on meeting human needs; and permanently shift economic leadership.

That is our collective challenge. Let's work together to fight for a world that is more equal – not less – coming out of this crisis.

Read more at [labourcouncil.ca/priority\\_responses\\_to\\_covid-19](https://labourcouncil.ca/priority_responses_to_covid-19), where you can also find our April 2020 Statement and advocacy letters to our elected representatives.

# Frontline Worker Voices Demonstrate How COVID-19 Is Revealing the Best of Us... and the Worst

In early May, the Labour Council embarked on a webinar series that brought front line workers and their union representatives together to talk about their experiences handling COVID-19.



**Episode 1** of Voices from the Frontline focused on healthcare workers and featured three speakers: Joy Borrás, a long term care nurse and member of SEIU; Charlotte Clarke, a paramedic and member of CUPE Local 416; and Jen Rajkumar, a respiratory therapist and member of OPSEU Local 575.

What became very clear is how the consequences of bad public policy are now exacerbating the pandemic crisis – leading directly to many preventable deaths.

Most private long term care homes employ part time staff, and typically pay significantly lower than staff working in hospitals. Many newer immigrants work in long term homes or visiting home care positions because of the greater ease of access. Jackie Walker, President of the

Nursing Division for SEIU Healthcare, noted: “As of 2019, 56% of the all the Registered Practical Nurses in Ontario work part time.”

Joy Borrás also noted that many workers were not receiving proper personal protective equipment (PPE), with some given kitchen gloves and – until at least April 21 – none of the frontline staff who were directly working with their elderly patients received N95 masks. Walker added, “We wouldn’t have seen such a spread in long term care homes, if only the government and our health care system would have provided the proper PPE.”

The financial model of part-time labour, with limited supply of equipment and little stability, has been one that has produced massive profits

**“We wouldn’t have seen such a spread in long term care homes, if only the government and our health care system would have provided the proper PPE.”**



for corporations like Chartwell, the largest long term care facility owner in Ontario. The current board chair of Chartwell is former Ontario premier Mike Harris who was also responsible for expanding private ownership of health care.

**Episode 2** of Voices looked at the service sector and featured Josie Barbieri, a grocery worker and steward of UFCW 1006A; Gagandeep Kaur of the Warehouse Workers Centre; and Ivan Ostos from Foodsters United.

Josie Barbieri noted that even after the first confirmed case of COVID 19 at her grocery store, the facility was kept open and there were no limitations on space, nor the number of customers allowed into a store, and no PPE provided. Over 10 employees

from Barbieri's store contracted COVID including Barbieri herself. Even though she was isolating and recovering, when asked what she was most focused on Barbieri said simply, "I think about my members in the store, and every day worry about whether they are staying safe."

**Episode 3** of the series featured Mary Marcello, an elementary teacher and member of OECTA York Region; Ed Cunningham, a transit worker from ATU 113; and Camella Brown, a shelter worker from CUPE Local 79. Camella noted that the pandemic is dramatically affecting poor people, she said, "we had one client who previously lived in a rooming house along with 25 other people, and then when one person got COVID,

everybody else was kicked out of the house ... and we couldn't give him a bed because we didn't have one."

All three of the episodes noted the incredibly bravery and difficulties of our frontline workers, but also highlighted the deficiencies that have been created by chronic underfunding, corporate greed or poor public policy and dramatically amplified by COVID19.

The Labour Council plans to address many of these issues through our work with government and community partners, and will be working with our affiliates to bolster their campaigns as they take on many of these challenges.

By Mohammed Hashim

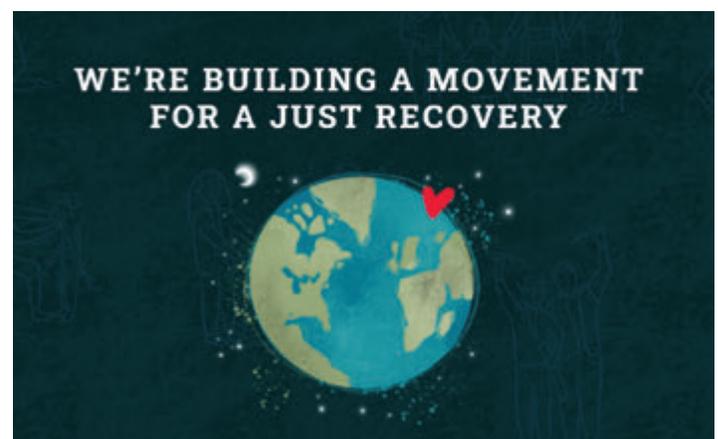


## Just Recovery Canada

A network of over 200 community organizations across Canada, including Labour Council, have signed onto a declaration that frames six principles for recovery:

1. Put People's Health and Wellbeing First, No Exceptions
2. Strengthen The Social Safety Net And Provide Relief Directly To People
3. Prioritize the Needs of Workers and Communities
4. Build Resilience to Prevent Future Crises
5. Build Solidarity and Equity Across Communities, Generations and Borders
6. Uphold Indigenous Rights And Work In Partnership With Indigenous Peoples

Learn more at [www.justrecoveryforall.ca](http://www.justrecoveryforall.ca).





# How COVID-19 has re-contextualized gig work

Gig workers have been fighting for recognition and rights, but have faced an uphill battle both legally and in the public eye. But 2020 has brought surprising changes that have reframed our understanding of how gig work fits into our larger economic system.

At the start of this year, we were observing a key battleground in the fight for gig economy rights: Foodsters United's Ontario Labour Relations Board challenge that the employer had misclassified its food couriers as independent contractors. On February 25, the decision came down: the Foodsters had won. This was a historic moment and decision not only for Foodora couriers, but for the thousands of newly-organized UBER drivers and others wanting to mount a similar challenge.

Just three weeks later, the world turned upside down as Ontario went into semi-lockdown. Suddenly food delivery, shipping warehouses, and industrial bakeries were identified as "essential" – not only by the Ontario government, but in the minds of millions of Ontarians who began to understand how crucial these jobs are to maintaining our way of life.

Nevertheless, gig workers – whether app-based, temp agency hired, or simply precariously employed – are among the least likely to have access to paid sick or emergency leave. They have little or no access to PPE, are more likely to rely on public transit to get to work, and in many cases would be ineligible for CERB.

Some have received "pandemic pay" increases; but given that these miserly increases barely achieve a living wage standard and are not permanent, the knowledge that the slight pay raise can be yanked at any time is salt in the wound to workers who have no option but to continue to show up for work.

Why is a worker "essential" during a pandemic, but not under normal conditions? Why is their labour, their humanity, valued any less when others are leaving their homes for work? A bakery worker or a farm labourer is still producing essential food, whether we are in a health crisis or not.

On April 28, Foodora announced it was pulling out of the Canadian market. This, despite the fact that its parent company, Delivery Hero, had just released impressive gains in the previous quarter. We can surmise that the OLRB ruling played a role in the decision to leave, which is extremely unfortunate for the newly-organized couriers who have worked so hard to self-advocate.

The future of gig worker rights cannot depend on the will of individual companies to play by the rules. The government must recognize that all Ontario workers contribute to our economy and their labour must be valued and protected equally. As we have seen, the health of our economy, and our society, depends on it.



## NEW PODCAST ON GIG WORK FROM THE STAR

The Toronto Star has produced *Hustled*, a 6-part podcast series on gig work, hosted by labour reporter Sara Mojtehdzadeh. Episodes are available to stream or download via the Toronto Star, Apple Podcasts, and Spotify.

## Education: The Struggle Continues

It took months of picket lines, workplace action and mass mobilization for education unions in Ontario to negotiate new collective agreements that limit many of the Ford government's planned cuts to education. Together with parents' groups, students and community allies, teachers and support workers have achieved a significant victory despite schools being shut down due to COVID-19. In many cases negotiations with local school boards are underway, and only once that process is finished will collective bargaining be concluded.

But this fight is a long way from being finished. The approach taken by the Ford Conservatives has burnt bridges with every employee group, and the provocative language of Education Minister Stephen Lecce has shown a profound disrespect for the people who dedicate their lives to the betterment of our society. With the massive impact of COVID on public finances, it will not be long before we see how the province addresses the flawed funding formula and legacy of crumbling buildings. And given their record, it will take ongoing pressure to force a positive outcome.

Labour Council wants to thank all affiliates who helped mobilize for rallies, picket support, leafletting parents, and speaking to their members about why publicly funded education matters to us all. And most importantly, we thank every education worker who gave so much of themselves to defend the quality of learning for every student and every community.



## Global Mayors' Recovery Task Force

Global Mayors have launched a COVID-19 Recovery Task Force to rebuild our cities & economies in a way that improves public health, reduces inequality and addresses the climate crisis. Here are some of the principles signed onto by the Mayor of Toronto and other mayors of major cities across the world.

- The recovery should not be a return to 'business as usual' – because that is a world on track for 3°C or more of over-heating;
- The recovery, above all, must be guided by an adherence to public health and scientific expertise, in order to assure the safety of those who live in our cities;
- Excellent public services, public investment and increased community resilience will form the most effective basis for the recovery;
- The recovery must address issues of equity that have been laid bare by the impact of the crisis – for example, workers who are now recognised as essential should be celebrated and compensated accordingly;
- The recovery must improve the resilience of our cities and communities.
- Climate action can help accelerate economic recovery and enhance social equity.

Learn more at [www.c40.org/other/covid-task-force](http://www.c40.org/other/covid-task-force).

# A Labour Guide to Climate Action

## A Job-rich Transition to Sustainability

**We are all in this together.** That truth has resonated across our world since the devastating impact of COVID 19. In response, governments made unprecedented decisions to protect the public, and took emergency measures not seen in our lifetime. Now we need to take equally bold steps to meet the looming threat of climate change.

The evidence of climate change – fires, floods, heat waves and droughts – is impossible to deny. The climate crisis is real, but also presents an opportunity. We can use our skills and knowledge to plan a truly sustainable, low-carbon economy with good jobs for all. Let's work together to ensure that the choices for our future are the right ones.



*Decades ago Canadian unions started building a health and safety movement to challenge the appalling level of workplace accidents and deaths. We had to confront employers and politicians, educate our members, fight for regulations, and win workplace health and safety committees. Together with allies in health professions and fair employers, we succeeded in dramatically reducing fatalities and occupational disease. We can do the same for the climate.*

## ► The Climate Emergency

**Carbon emissions have created a “greenhouse effect”** that is raising temperatures and causing extreme weather events. Canada has one of the highest per capita levels of emissions, so we have a special responsibility to help meet the United Nations goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. The human impact is greatest in the global south, in regions where many of our families came from.

By signing the 2015 Paris Agreement world leaders agreed that we need to take serious action to avert catastrophic outcomes. And young people across the world are demanding that we all take responsibility for the outcome.

## ► Responding to the Crisis

**Taking action to address the climate crisis is everyone’s business.** There is no doubt that changing our economy will take hard work, but there are clear examples of how to achieve results. The billions of public dollars mobilized in the face of COVID 19 set a new standard for public intervention in the economy and society. The climate crisis calls for nothing less.

## ► Climate Justice is Union Business

**The labour movement has been a driving force for social progress for over a century.** From healthcare to pensions and maternity leave – unions bargained benefits for their members and then worked with allies to win them as universal programs. Climate change is the biggest threat to our future, and many unions are stepping up to the challenge. Labour efforts first started with curbing workplace toxins

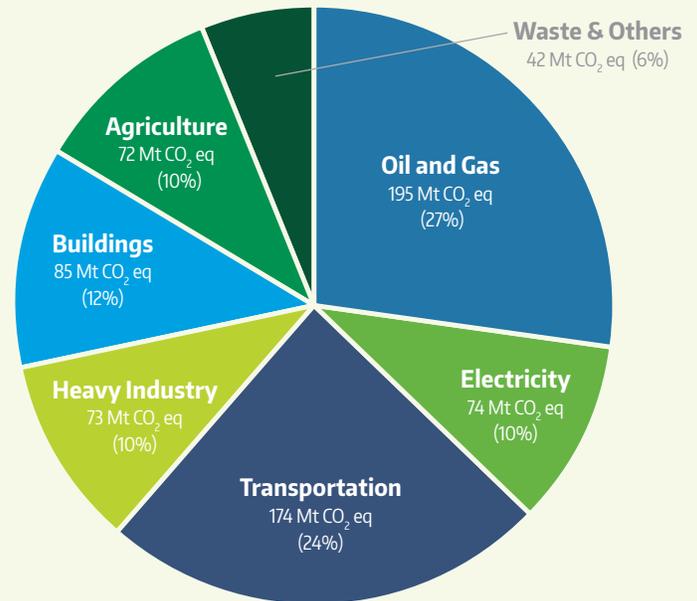


*Just Transition is an approach to environmental policy-making that aims to minimize the impact of change on workers in affected industries and communities, and to involve workers in decisions about their livelihoods. The basic principle of just transition is that the costs of climate action should be shared across society and not just by those working in certain industries.*

and pollution. Today it includes work in every sector – from retrofitting buildings, to reducing waste, to greening the curriculum in schools. Together we can create a collective path to a low-carbon future.

## Canadian Emissions by Sector 2017 (latest data)

Total: 716 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> eq



## ► Climate Justice

**Climate justice means ensuring that jobs in the new green economy are good stable jobs with benefits and a living wage.** Compared to global supply chains based on cheap labour and extreme energy projects, there can be many more jobs created by upgrading our buildings, expanding transit and public services, reducing waste, changing consumer patterns and shifting to a circular economy.

Everyone must be part of a new shared prosperity, including communities and people who didn’t always have access to good jobs in the past. We don’t want anyone left behind, which is why Just Transition is a crucial demand made by unions across the world.

We also recognize that Canada’s relationship to Indigenous peoples must start to address the legacy of injustice and discrimination that has been central to this country’s development.

## ► Workers Knowledge is Crucial

**No matter what sector of the economy, front-line workers understand the system best.** Whether in public



*At the international level, unions are approaching employers about climate-proofing the workplace . That includes secure supply chains; resilience during extreme weather events; and lowering direct carbon emissions. There are many employers striving to adopt best practices from around the world. Just like the decades-long effort building a culture of health and safety, unions can help drive meaningful change in our workplace operations.*

service or private enterprise, our members create the goods and services that are central to our economy. That point was driven home during the COVID19 pandemic, with a new-found respect offered to many whose work had been deeply undervalued. Re-designing a workplace to lower carbon intensity requires the real, gritty knowledge of the people directly involved.

Workers have much to offer about how to lower carbon levels and reduce pollution. But respect and job security are essential ingredients to a partnership on climate action. Everyone has to benefit from greening the economy.

## ► What Can Local Unions Do?

Local unions can undertake a step by step process to build a strong commitment to climate justice. That includes:

- training members to play a role on climate change
- setting up a joint committee to map and reduce emissions in the workplace
- asking employers to outline their plan to climate-proof their operations.

Start by securing a formal motion endorsed by both the local executive and the members. Information can be shared in newsletters and social media, included in steward and safety rep training, and members can be trained as advocates in the workplace or in coalition work.

Unions can also get involved in local efforts for climate justice. Cities have led the way in responding to climate change, so labour can partner with local elected officials to win effective public policies. Mobilizing members for public events and lobbying politicians are all part of how we influence decisions.

**Contact the Labour Education Centre for help in navigating these steps.**

## ► Making Change in the Workplace

Unions can start by asking questions. Employer associations have developed climate plans for each sector, but often those aren't being applied in the workplace. Asking the employer to share that plan is the first step to identifying how to lower the carbon footprint of the day-to-day operations. Just as health and safety laws require employers to ensure competent supervision of the work process, every employer should develop the ability to lower carbon emissions.

The key elements of a plan address:

- building energy use
- energy use in production processes
- waste reduction
- supply chain
- transportation of people and goods

We don't have to become experts to ask the questions. Labour activists are trained to recognize the problem areas and the opportunities for improvement, although the outcomes will be very different from site to site. In larger workplaces, our goal should be to establish a formal emissions reduction committee that can oversee this work.



## Working with Allies + Partners

Across Canada, unions have worked in coalitions on countless issues. Many of our partners in these efforts become long-time allies who appreciate labour's commitment to social and economic justice. Today young people are determined to see meaningful results instead of unfilled promises, and are climate organizing in every community.

Unions can reach out and identify solutions that also tackle economic inequality and systemic discrimination. Working effectively in our unions and communities is the way to make real progress on climate action – and on climate justice.

## A Plan of Engagement

Here is a basic outline of how you can undertake this work in your union:

### 1 Win Agreement

- Recruit well-respected leaders and activists to sponsor this effort
- Ask the Executive to adopt a resolution to commit to climate action
- Take the resolution to a membership meeting for endorsement
- Announce the resolution on the website, social media and newsletter

### 2 Build Capacity

- Explore training opportunities for members to help green the workplace
- Recruit and train climate justice advocates for workplaces and public campaigns
- Establish your own Environment Committee at the local or regional level

### 3 Secure Action

- Meet with the employer to find how they plan to “climate-proof” the workplace
- Negotiate the establishment of a Workplace Emissions Reduction Committee (or expand the role of the Health and Safety Committee) to bring the expertise of your members to the table
- Engage members in reducing the carbon footprint of the entire work operation and supply chain
- Celebrate achievements and inspire others to take action!

For further information, contact [workgreen@laboureducation.org](mailto:workgreen@laboureducation.org)

**Labour  
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[laboureducation.org](http://laboureducation.org)

[labourclimatejustice.ca](http://labourclimatejustice.ca)

# In our economic recovery, a chance to emerge stronger than before

The following is excerpted from Jim Stanford's presentation to the May 7 Delegates' Meeting. Stanford, a renowned labour economist, laid the groundwork for understanding the current and future economic situation.

This is not a bread-and-butter, normal recession. And it's not going to be a normal, cyclical recovery, either. This is something we've never seen before.

It's really important for the union movement and other social movements to be out front demanding a very, very ambitious and sustained program to reconstruct Canada's economy when this is over. The traditional economic tools are not going to do the trick.

It's like we're in a war right now, a war against coronavirus. And when we fought World War II and we came out of the war, we had a big government debt. But we also recognized that government had a big job to do to lead the process of post-war reconstruction and recovery. And we're going to need the same thing this time.

We're going to need a peaceful "Marshall Plan" that will involve large amounts of government spending to reconstruct the health system. Obviously the long-term care system was the weak link in our whole system and it's going to require billions of dollars to repair and prepare that system to bring it under the medicare umbrella, to lift the quality of service and jobs. We'll need other public infrastructure investment, in public transportation, in energy, and housing. And we're going to need a permanent expansion of public services.

There's no way that private firms are going to re-hire all of the people that have been put out of work at this moment. We're going to need a government, directly and through public agencies and through human services and caring services, to put millions of Canadians back to work and for long periods of time.

*This is a chance to shift the key driver of our economy away from private profit and instead start to reorganize our reconstruction around the need for taking care of ourselves and our communities after this terrible pandemic.*

The question that's asked all over the place: How is government going to pay for all this?

We have seen a dramatic increase in the deficit. It's expected the federal deficit this year alone will be \$250 billion. That's a lot by any standards. Provincial deficits are also going to be large. And municipal governments are in terrible straits because they, in many cases, don't even have the legal right to run a deficit. So they're being forced, unless we get some sort of municipal aid package, to downsize payrolls and services when in fact we need to be increasing them.

This increase in debt should not be a worry for us. There's things in life to worry about right now: our loved ones, and washing our hands, and keeping our jobs. The debt is not something we should worry about.

The debt is the flip-side of the coin that the government is doing what it needs to do. This is how we pay for dramatic interventions to protect ourselves and our economy. We finished WWII with a much bigger debt: 130% of our GDP. Right now, the federal debt is 30% of GDP. The provinces have another 30%, so that's 60% combined. We might get to 100% in the next couple years, but that's nothing to lose sleep about.

First of all, interest rates are at zero, or even below zero in real terms relative to inflation. The Bank of Canada, correctly, has been instructed to buy government bonds, including provincial government

bonds, which is new; to keep interest rates near zero and allow governments to borrow. And there's other things that can be done to manage that debt.

In the end, when we come through this, the only thing holding back what we can do to reconstruct after the pandemic is our ability to get back to work and produce the goods and services that we need. And until everyone can get back to work, debt is the last thing that we should be worried about.

One thing that we'll have to gear up to fight is to resist the calls for austerity that are going to come from the usual sources as soon as the health emergency is over.

This is a challenging time. There's lots of risk. But if we look at history, there's many times in history where working people responded to crisis and actually came out of it stronger because working people suddenly remember why they need a union at their back. And working people understand that there's more important things than private profit and competitiveness. Right now, the most important thing is organizing our economy so people can work to protect each other, to protect our communities, and get that economy going. I think, if we're organized and ambitious, we can come out of this crisis stronger than we went in.

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 Watch Stanford's full presentation to Labour Council Delegates and catch up on meetings at [youtube.com/labourcouncil](https://youtube.com/labourcouncil).

# Immorality and Corporate Greed

Cargill. JBS. Chartwell. Southbridge. Foodora. These are just some of the names that stand out in the profiles of corporate greed brought to stark relief by the impact of COVID-19.

Cargill and JBS are meat-packing operations in Alberta and the epicentre of COVID infections within Canada's workforce. For American-owned Cargill and Brazilian-owned JBS, the business model of concentrated production into massive plants powered by migrant workers has generated obscene profits for the last decade.

It is the logical consequence of a ruthless ideology of exploitation that was highlighted by Gainers Meat owner Peter Pocklington's drive to bust the union in his Edmonton plant in 1986. The reorganization of the industry and takeovers by global multinationals has dramatically increased the pace of work and reliance on recent immigrants and temporary foreign workers. It took tough strikes to gain even a small degree of collective representation, but corporate arrogance abetted by the

Jason Kenney government has taken its toll. Over a third of the workers in each plant is now infected.

There is a similar parallel in the world of long-term care in Ontario. The Mike Harris Conservatives drove a relentless agenda of privatization, using competitive bidding to undermine traditional non-profit delivery and opening up the entire sector to private chains. Today Harris is Chair of the Board of Chartwell, earning \$237,000 a year for the part-time position, while its revenues have grown to over \$900 million. Southbridge owns two of the hardest-hit homes: Pincrest and Orchard Villa. Its website boasts of its "acquisition strategy" that has seen it grow to 37 facilities, and "investor relations" – even as its staff have faced tragic shortages of Personal Protective Equipment.



## Workers need power to win justice, no matter what kind of work we do. And we need solidarity and courage to build a better world.

Underneath the horror in long-term care lies the ideologies of privatization driven by the Conservatives, and “new public management” embraced by the McGuinty Liberals. Underfunding, weak standards, reliance on part-time positions, and the need to guarantee returns for shareholders all took their toll. But public outrage over the senseless deaths of residents, and the new-found recognition of the value of these “essential workers” may result in a profound change – if we mobilize to force an end to this flawed system.

As millions of workers stay home and the federal government pledges \$250 Billion in bail-outs, new challenges are bringing out the best and worst in our society. Newspaper ads hail the new heroes – healthcare workers, cleaners, grocery and food workers – and the delivery of everything from meals to consumer items has skyrocketed. Berlin-based Delivery Hero, the world’s leading food delivery platform, saw orders almost double to 239 million in the first quarter of 2020, with more than 3 million orders being delivered in a single day. But that did not stop them from announcing the shutdown and bankruptcy of their Canadian Foodora operation, while withholding taxes and WSIB payments.

For the past two years, Foodora workers have organized to win a union voice at work. Supported by CUPW, Foodsters United won a breakthrough decision at the Labour Board that clarifies their status as dependent contractors who can unionize. Weeks later the company shut the doors, leaving workers with nothing under Canada’s flawed bankruptcy rules. Foodora did the same in Australia when faced with a similar legal ruling. Its behaviour shows the absolute truth in the Foodsters rally chant: “Gig economy – same old crap, exploitation in an app!” Foodora should not be allowed to get away with this callous behaviour. There ought to be a law that guarantees fairness for every one of us.

Just as we salute the inherent courage of so many workers who put themselves at risk to keep our society going during these difficult times, so do we condemn the greed and immorality that is so central to the nature of 21st century capitalism. For each of the stories described above, there are others to be told in every sector of the economy. We are reminded of the core reasons for the founding of our Labour Council so many years ago. Workers need power to win justice, no matter what kind of work we do. And we need solidarity and courage to build a better world.

## CLC calls for inclusive economy

In response to the economic crisis, the Canadian Labour Congress is proposing a set of ambitious, feasible and necessary initiatives to achieve a strong, sustainable and inclusive economic recovery:

1. Workplace health and safety is the first priority
  - A green youth guarantee
2. A full employment agenda to create good jobs, reduce inequality and strengthen economic security
  - Public investment in physical, social and green infrastructure
  - Expanding and renewing affordable housing
  - Expanding manufacturing as well as public coordination and planning capacity
3. A program for overhauling home care, retirement homes and long-term care facilities
4. Accelerating the move to universal public Pharmacare
5. Strengthening income support for working people and retirees
6. A program for fair taxation

# Stopping anti-Asian racism in its tracks

May is Asian Heritage Month. As we sit inside our homes with eyes glued to our screens on the latest news around COVID-19, the stories of anti-Chinese racism are surfacing more frequently.

In our daily news feed, we are seeing increasing incidents of anti-Asian racism – either in the form of physical attacks or verbal slurs. A 92-year-old Chinese man with severe dementia is attacked in a Vancouver convenience store. A Chinese couple who own an East York flower shop experiences verbal abuse by would-be customers. The stories go on.

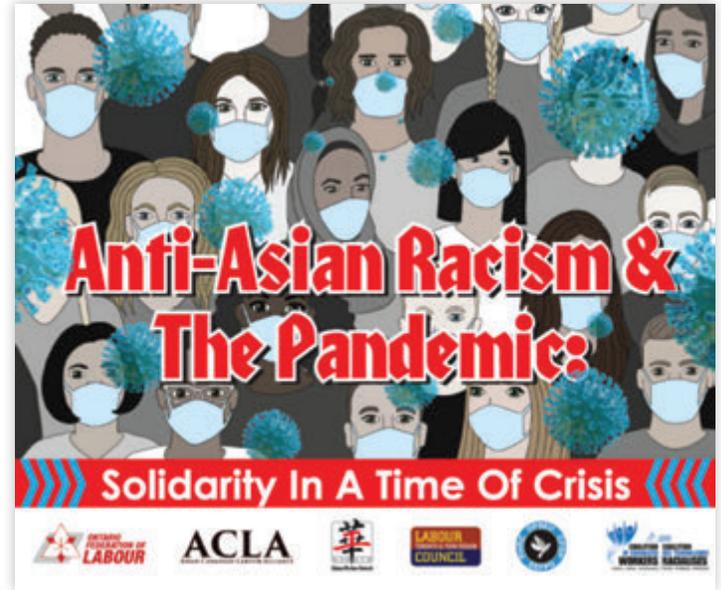
Donald Trump insists on calling COVID-19 “the Chinese virus,” fanning the flames of widespread anxiety and despair with a good scapegoat to blame. Unfortunately, this wave of anti-Chinese discrimination is déjà vu for many Asian-Canadians.

It is a reminder that some people feel that Asian-Canadians don't belong in this country—no matter how long we've lived here. It is also a reminder of attitudes that go back to our first Prime Minister, Sir John A. MacDonald. At the time of Confederation, the Chinese were desired as cheap labour who would do the dangerous work of building the railroad necessary to connect the east and west (and build Canada into a nation-state). And yet, people of Chinese origins, along with Indigenous peoples, were systematically blocked from participation in the new state.

The foundational idea of a white Canada led directly to the development of shameful policies like the Chinese Head Tax, the Chinese Exclusion Act, the denied entry of passengers from the Komagata Maru, and the ongoing legacy of residential schools for Indigenous peoples.

Now, more than 150 years on, some may point to the 2006 federal government apology to Chinese-Canadians as a sign that we have moved past racist and exclusionary policies. Others may say that Canada in the 21st century is very different than the one we started in the 19th century. But to deny that colonial concepts of “whiteness” remain with us is to deny and erase the lived experiences of racialized Canadians today. We don't have to look far to see how Chinese-Canadians, and other non-white groups, are seen in recent times.

When Toronto experienced the outbreak of SARS in 2002, I personally experienced anti-Chinese prejudice. When I boarded a TTC bus, other passengers quickly shot off their seats and moved to the back of the bus, mumbling racist slurs. It was a quick lesson: what I had been told



in my happy-go-lucky elementary school days about multiculturalism and the value of other cultures would evaporate quickly in a crisis. People relapse in times of shock, society regresses, and hate resurfaces.

As we witness the recent rise of anti-Asian discrimination, we must demonstrate our solidarity with all racialized and Indigenous peoples. It does not take much to tap into our empathy: through daily reflection and meditation, we can examine and ask ourselves: “Is there anything I learned from my family of origin or culture that subconsciously informs how I speak, treat, or view others today?”

There is more work to be done by all Canadians – of every ethnicity, religion, shape, and shade – to learn about our shared humanity if we are to build a more socially and racially just society for all.

Please visit [youtube.com/labourcouncil](https://www.youtube.com/labourcouncil) to watch a recording of our webinar called “Anti-Asian Racism & the Pandemic: Solidarity in a Time of Crisis” that aired on May 28.

By Jennifer Huang

**I shouldn't need to say this**

We have to care for our healthcare workers so that they can care for us



Every day, more healthcare workers are getting infected with COVID-19. Poorly managed long term care homes and a lack of critical protective equipment are to blame. SEIU needs your help in demanding proper #CareForHealthcare.

[seiuhealthcare.ca/careforhealthcare](https://seiuhealthcare.ca/careforhealthcare)

We urgently need Health Emergency Labour Protections (H.E.L.P.): including 21 paid emergency leave days for ALL, greater access to employment insurance and an emergency fund that leaves no one behind. Demand action!

[15andfairness.org/covid19\\_help\\_now](https://15andfairness.org/covid19_help_now)

**Demand Paid Sick Days for ALL!**

- At least 7 paid sick days permanently
- An additional 14 days during outbreaks

Even **SUPERHEROES** get sick

**Take action:**  
[15andFairness.org](https://15andFairness.org)  
[#PaidSickLeaveSavesLives](https://twitter.com/PaidSickLeaveSavesLives)



**CITIES NEED HELP**



Responding to this pandemic has left municipal governments in financial crisis. Without help, cities will be forced to cut the vital local services our families and communities rely upon every day. Tell the federal and provincial governments to provide emergency operating funding for municipalities to protect the vital local services we all need.

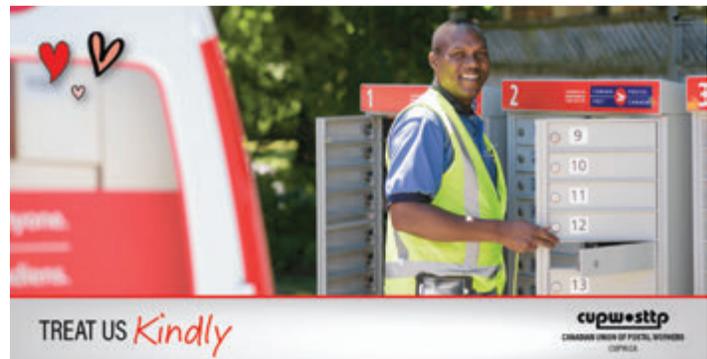
[canadianlabour.ca/cities-need-help](https://canadianlabour.ca/cities-need-help)

We want to thank everyone for your continued support during the COVID-19 crisis. Looking for something to do with the kiddos? We have just the thing! Download, print and have them colour a free, downloadable poster. Tape it to your window or mailbox to show some love for your posties!

[cupw.ca](https://cupw.ca)

TREAT US *Kindly*

[cupwsttp](https://cupwsttp.org)  
CANADIAN UNION OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES  
CUPE 3903





# Labour Community Services

## Your Labour Voice in the Community



**United Way**  
Greater Toronto

## Local Love in a Global Crisis

As we approach another week of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown, United Way is winding down its Local Love in a Global Crisis Fund by the end of May. Thanks to your generosity, the funds were used to help the community respond during the crisis in the following key areas: seniors support; mental health – distress and crisis supports; food security; and expanding community services capacity.

Our province is slowly reopening and we are beginning to adjust to our “new normal.” Reports from community suggest the demand for community services – mental health counselling, employment-related supports and food – is up nearly 45 per cent compared to the same time last year as a result of the pandemic. Calls to crisis lines have risen sharply since the pandemic began. 211 reported a nearly 90 per cent increase in call volume. There has also been a 20-30 per cent increase in rates of gender-based violence in some parts of the country.

People in our community are going to need help getting back to work. Those who have lost their income will need support. This increased demand on community services will put a strain on the already overworked and underfunded social services sector.

UW is already planning for what their new normal will look like. They are partnering with local municipalities, leveraging the on-the-ground expertise of the network of over 270 community agencies in the GTA, and responding to the needs of local residents. The agencies are hard at work on the frontlines and their staff are often risking their own

health and safety to support our most vulnerable citizens.

Since 1956, union members have been supporting the annual fundraising efforts of UW. Year after year, workers across the GTA have responded to the need in our community by donating to UW through their workplace campaigns. UW is the largest funder of community agencies after the government. Charitable and not-for-profit organizations, that provide vital services in our communities, receive core funding from UW. This funding will ensure that the services that they provide to the most vulnerable in our neighbourhoods, continues uninterrupted and are funded at the increased level of post-pandemic need.

The 2020 UW annual fundraising campaign is already in full swing. Virtual fundraising tools will be launched in June so workplaces have what they need to run a virtual campaign. As the charity of choice for union members, your continued support of the UW fundraising campaign will be very much appreciated right now. THANK YOU! Let's make sure everyone in our community maintains overall well-being and safety.

## LCAT Program Updates

COVID-19 has transformed the way we live and work. It's important for us to prepare ourselves on how to change and respond in this trying time. To bring LCAT graduates together, LCS held a refresher course and delivered two virtual workshops

The first session helped LCAT graduates respond to the question: “What to do when the paycheck stops?” The

second provided insight into financial and credit counseling with an expert speaker from Credit Canada. Both sessions

were focused on the impact of COVID-19. They were well attended and the feedback was positive.

The LCAT program's spring Level 1 class, which was disrupted due to COVID-19, has resumed online through Zoom. The class is running at full capacity with all the expert facilitators. As usual, we have 20 participants from different affiliated unions from the Labour Council. So far we have completed a few sessions and it seems everyone is adapted to virtual reality. This class will run every

Wednesday night from 6 – 8 pm through June 17.

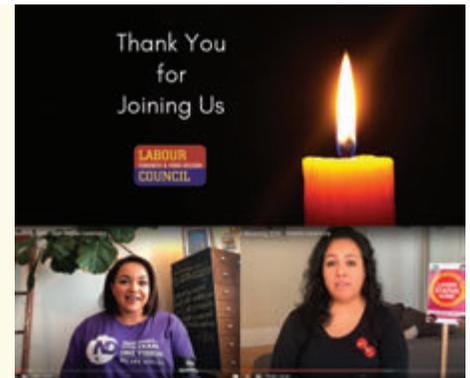
Also, with the help of OPSEU Region 5, LCS has scheduled a full course of the LCAT program online. This course began on Tuesday, May 19 and will run every Tuesday night through July 14. Even though this class was planned with OPSEU, registration was open to all union members.

If you are interested in registering for a future LCAT session, please contact Najib Soufian at [nsoufian@labourcommunityservices.ca](mailto:nsoufian@labourcommunityservices.ca).

## Events

### Virtual Ceremonies Held for Day of Mourning

On April 28, we commemorated the National Day of Mourning with online events for York Region and Toronto. If you missed it or would like to share, you can find both video recordings in full via [facebook.com/labourcouncil](https://facebook.com/labourcouncil) or [youtube.com/labourcouncil](https://youtube.com/labourcouncil).



### Commemorating Pride Month

While we won't get to gather together to celebrate Pride Month on the streets this year, Labour Council wishes a Happy Pride to all celebrating! We look forward to marching with you in Toronto and York Region in future years!



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TORONTO & YORK REGION  
**COUNCIL**

[www.labourcouncil.ca](http://www.labourcouncil.ca)

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To all

**workers**

who serve our communities  
& keep us healthy

*we see you*  
*we thank you*

[labourcouncil.ca](http://labourcouncil.ca)

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## A Note on Labour Day

The Canadian National Exhibition is officially cancelled this year, along with all major public gatherings in Toronto over the summer. As a result, the Labour Day Parade will not be held in the normal format – but that does not mean we abandon our day where workers' rights and labour pride are honoured. We are starting to consider other activities to celebrate Labour Day. Labour Council will co-ordinate with City staff and police services to examine all possible options to keep celebrating our day!

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