



## Taking steps for violence prevention, creating hope for our communities

July 24, 2018

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

On Sunday night Torontonians were shocked to learn of the horrific shooting spree on Danforth Avenue that killed two innocent victims and wounded a dozen others. Our thoughts go out to the victims of this tragic event and their families and loved ones. This is not the first such incident, nor, sadly, will it be the last. As each tragedy strikes, we will all be faced with a responsibility to search for solutions while showing resilience as a society. It is vital that our response starts with embracing our common humanity and building social solidarity rather than division.

After the shootings on Danzig Street in 2012, Labour Council was deeply involved in an effort to bring together people from all walks of life to fashion a comprehensive strategy to tackle gun violence and its root causes. That included calling for stronger gun control, as access to guns is a basic factor in the scale of harm which can be inflicted on others. Recently it has come to light that since the federal government scrapped the gun registry and associated controls, the number of firearms imported into Canada has skyrocketed. This is simply unacceptable.

Six years ago we sent every elected official in Toronto a comprehensive list of recommendations to address the complex nature of the roots of youth violence. The list of recommendations puts forward a hopeful vision for Toronto with a focus on three main areas: the desperate need for good jobs for both young people and their parents, investing in strong community services, and addressing systemic barriers faced by racialized and marginalized communities. We also called for greater control of firearms. While these may not have solved the mental health crisis of the alleged shooter on Sunday, they are important elements in dealing with the bigger crisis of gun violence.

Labour Council joined many others in calling on the Province of Ontario to complete the implementation of the 2008 *Roots of Youth Violence* report. In the long term, creating decent, stable employment and hiring residents of low-income neighbourhoods are essential elements to giving hope to young men who may otherwise be drawn into destructive relationships. We have seen the success of the Community Benefits approach combined with pre-apprenticeship programs in offering such opportunities.

We know there is no one action that will solve the problem of gun violence. But we can start immediately by demanding that the Federal government restore all restrictions on gun purchase and registration, and bringing a complete ban to handguns and assault weapons into effect. I urge the City of Toronto to take the lead in that call.

Sincerely,  
John Cartwright  
President



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION

The following recommendations are made in order to address the complex and multi-faceted nature of the roots of youth violence in greater Toronto. They are to be considered within the context of the statement “Good Jobs, Strong Services and Respect”.

### Province of Ontario:

- Complete the implementation of the recommendations of the Roots of Youth Violence report
- Invest in strategies to reduce levels of recidivism among young offenders, with a focus on those previously connected with gang culture
- Increase funding for African-Canadian community programs, and commit to continue funding for community services sector that matches cost-of-living increases
- Amend the education funding formula to include educational assistants, after-school programs, student nutrition programs and re-establishing technical shops in local schools
- Amend labour law to allow workers to join unions without intimidation or reprisal, and for contract service workers to maintain the same level of successor rights as others
- Amend employment standards to restrict the growth of employment agency work and encourage the hiring of workers into full-time permanent positions
- Require all agencies, boards and commissions to develop and implement plans for equitable hiring and promotion, and require Metrolinx to enter into project labour agreements with building trades unions that include partnering with programs such as Hammerheads and Choices to achieve local and equitable hiring provisions for all transit projects in the GTA
- Ensure that Government of Ontario summer student hiring opportunities are targeted at youth from low-income families.
- Raise the minimum wage to \$12.00/hour

### Federal Government

- Restore the full complement of Border Security Agents, and undertake a comprehensive strategy to curtail gun smuggling into Canada
- Ban hand gun ownership
- Allow Ontario and other provinces to retain data from the Gun Registry program to assist police in efforts to reduce gun violence
- Repeal recent changes to Foreign Temporary Worker programs that allow employers to utilize low-wage indentured workers instead of securing living-wage jobs for local residents

### City of Toronto:

- Deepen investment in community recreation services and youth outreach programs
- Re-instate free programs for all ages at recreation programs in all low income neighbourhoods

- Reverse outsourcing of cleaning positions and cease further outsourcing
- Adopt the recommendations of the Board of Health 2012 report on student nutrition
- Require Toronto Community Housing to deepen its commitment to engagement of tenants and front-line workers in developing healthy communities in all housing areas
- Encourage the Toronto Police Services to deepen its commitment to community policing practices, diverse hiring strategies including summer youth hiring, and pro-active engagement with residents and youth of every neighbourhood
- Require Toronto Hydro, TTC and other ABC's to fully implement equitable hiring practices
- Update the Fair Wage schedule, and ensure that no positions are paid less than a living wage of \$16.50/hour

#### School Boards

- Expand the TDSB Model Schools initiative to all schools with a high number of students from low-income or recent newcomer families
- Re-establish technical shops and life skills courses in schools across the Boards' jurisdiction
- Ensure culture awareness training for teachers in relation to student population of each school
- Maximize opportunities for new teachers with varied language skills and ethno-cultural backgrounds to be hired into permanent positions

#### Private Sector Employers

- Review staffing practices to maximize the number of full-time permanent positions in all areas of corporate operation, and making them reflective of the current demographic of the city
- Wherever using temporary agencies for staffing, ensure that those workers receive the same wages and benefits as permanent employees
- Implement equitable hiring processes that provide authentic opportunities to residents of neighbourhoods that are or have been stigmatized in the past
- Reverse practices that have led to outsourcing of jobs to either low-wage countries or low-wage contractors
- Adopt and implement meaningful human rights policies and procedures
- Allow employees to exercise their democratic right to join a union, without fear of reprisal
- In the service sector, partner with various levels of government to develop a "high-road" strategy for business that invests in employee training and skills development, career advancement and a living wage for all workers

#### Charitable Foundations

- Continue to develop effective place-based strategies to invest in at-risk communities
- Draw attention to the need to address systemic problems facing low-income families and youth, including the need for meaningful employment with a living wage
- Support a youth-focused strategy that revolves around youth-led organizations
- Ensure future grant opportunities are accountable to the communities they are serving

## Labour Unions

- Partner with community organizations to defend public services and social programs that benefit and improve the lives all families and neighbourhoods
- Request employers to commit to internal apprenticeship or skills training programs that maximize the opportunities for youth hiring
- Request employers to commit to hiring strategies that offer meaningful job opportunities to racialized youth
- Review collective agreements with a view to closing loopholes used by employers to replace permanent positions with temp agency work
- Implement equitable recruitment processes in order to diversify union staff at all levels.
- Speak our forcefully for social justice and equity, including employment equity

An immediate question will be raised about the financial implications of the above recommendations. The issues of required funding are adequately addressed in the various Alternative Budgets and other work developed by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and a number of progressive economists.