



March 18, 2025

Re: Item **EX21.2 – City of Toronto United States Tariff Response Action Plan**

Remarks by Andria Babbington, President, Toronto & York Region Labour Council

- The Toronto & York Region Labour Council represents more than 200,000 workers in diverse sectors across the region.
- Let me start by saying, I am glad that unions are an acknowledged part of the Mayor's Economic Action Plan Team. I am proud to be at this table. As things unfold, I hope we can bring more people representing workers into the Team and the process.
- We are experiencing an unprecedented time, with Trump's trade war on Canada. He thinks he is picking on somebody weaker than him, but he will see what we are made of. We have been through tough times before, from the 2008 financial crisis, to SARS, to the COVID pandemic. Each time, we have made it through by working together, and – I would emphasize – by unions taking strong and active positions. We work together! We can all weather this latest storm if we handle it in the right way.
- But let's be clear, workers are already being laid off. This plan you have before you had to be pulled together really quickly. As a result, there is a mix of strong and weak in the plan.
- Here are three principles that the Labour Council wants to see reflected in the response to Trump's trade war:
 - A commitment to justice, dignity, and good jobs for all
 - A commitment to move quickly to invest in public infrastructure and public services
 - Last but not least, a recommitment that "Made in Canada" matters
 - As part of this, pressing for a much more flexible EI approach is important, and so is retraining through colleges; transit; non-market housing; and reliance on Toronto's diverse population
- Here's what is strong about this plan:
 1. The plan recognizes that "Made in Canada" matters! Having a local supply chain is really important.

2. But I suggest that we need to go further to try to make sure that big spending doesn't go to bad employers or those employers who are part of an internal race to the bottom. For example, in Immediate Action 1, if we simply shift to a well-known strongly anti-union auto parts manufacturer, those will not be good jobs.
 3. We were pleased to see that "Looking forward" the plan includes attention paid to green manufacturing and retrofits; and to Toronto's creative industries.
 4. Also strong is that the plan has Toronto calling on the federal government to provide relief for workers. The Labour Council has offered advice on EI to the federal government.
- Here's what is weak about this plan and we would hope it would improve in some next rounds of changes:
 1. The plan is very business forward but only mentions good jobs in calls to action for the provincial and federal governments. A good jobs approach should also be embedded in the immediate actions that Toronto takes as well, to the extent possible.
 2. It does not include enough emphasis on the economic benefits of public investments in public infrastructure and public services.
 3. And local unions should be involved in the creation of consultations around AI to safeguard good local jobs
 - In general, we hope to see more of our three principles included in future. We know the City's approach will change and grow as we learn about what works and what doesn't.
 - Finally, equity and Justice matter as part of this. In addition to confronting the impact of this trade war on racialized communities, I urge you to take seriously the 65th anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, this Friday, March 21st.
 - Thank you Mayor and Councillors.