



LOCAL 79 VISION FOR TORONTO

This May, Local 79 gathered hundreds of members together with friends and allies to put forward a vision for the city we want and set out a plan for how to get there. We are inviting our members and the people of Toronto to sign onto our vision and for the politicians who want to lead us to commit to supporting it.

Vision

Toronto is facing a crisis. We see wealth being created all around us but people living in increasing poverty. We see new housing being built while more and more people struggle to find a home they can afford. The increasing cost of groceries and other essentials is making life harder for everyone. Weak labour protections and living wages are driving working people into poverty and precarious work. Lack of access to childcare, healthcare and other social programs is depriving people of the support they need to thrive.

Public services are our safety net. They make life more affordable and equitable. When life gets harder, public services become even more important. Too often, governments cut and weaken them as part of a deliberate strategy to promote privatization. The price for these cuts is paid by the public, with the most vulnerable falling through the cracks, and by workers trying to do more with less leading to exhaustion and deteriorating mental health.

Cities, and City workers, are on the frontline and can be at the forefront of change. All governments need to properly fund and staff our public services to meet the needs of the people of Toronto. We need to look at all aspects of creating healthy and safe communities and invest accordingly.

Incremental changes are not enough to solve this crisis. We believe deep, structural changes are needed to transform Toronto into a city that works for everyone who lives and works here. Corporations and the wealthy must contribute more, and their power over our government be diminished.

Local 79 wants to build a Toronto where everybody can live in comfort and security. Where we have the support to raise our children to flourish, to retire in dignity and to build strong, caring communities. Where we earn enough not just to survive but to thrive. Members strongly supported mobilizing to ensure elected representatives represent our priorities better, as well as taking collective action in the face of decisions that hurt workers.

Key Pillars

Public services & infrastructure

Pervasive underfunding of public services puts them at risk of further deteriorating and being privatized. Constant austerity, understaffing, gapping and job vacancies are presented to the public as responsible cost savings. The reality is that it is the public who suffer when services are not available, and workers who face burnout and exhaustion. We call for an end to privatization at all levels of government, for contracted-out work to be brought back in-house, and for funded service to actually be delivered.

Housing & tenant power

Government investment in non-profit and social housing is welcome and needs to be expanded. Building better and co-operative housing builds stronger, safer, more resilient communities. Not enough is being done to make housing affordable and secure. We are calling for real rent control for all types and ages of property, and extending over tenancies. We also need more rent geared to income, shelter space, housing for seniors in need and controls on landlord profiteering.

A living wage

The wage floor needs to rise for all workers in the city, in the public and private sectors, unionized or not. Governments must take a leadership role in becoming living wage employers, as well as bringing in regulatory change. The minimum wage should become a living wage and be extended to cover all forms of work.

Health care & staffing

Underfunding and privatizing health care is crippling our ability to care for the public. Provincial cuts also impact municipal long-term care and public health programs. We are calling for health care funding that fully meets our public health needs, extends to mental health care, and restores safe injection sites. Employer-provided mental health benefits are important, particularly for roles involving the care and support of others.

Worker power & democracy

All workers deserve the right to strike. Care workers in every sector are under-resourced and overworked. In sensitive areas such as health care, management is exploiting the lack of the right to strike to cut resources and put patients at risk. Restoring the right would force management to address these shortcomings. Legislative changes are also needed to address growing gaps in labour rights, from sick days to anti-scab legislation. Growing groups of Ontario workers, from gig workers to agricultural and temporary foreign workers deserve full labour protections.

Actions

Our immediate asks of the City of Toronto are:

Housing & shelter	Expand investment in new non-profit and public housing. Demand accountability from TCHC on maintenance, safety and livability. The repair backlog should not be allowed to grow. Housing is defined as affordable according to its cost compared to market rent. A new measure should be implemented that defines it in comparison to income. Link permanent rent control to city permitting and agreements with developers. Support an increase in shelter beds city-wide, housing for seniors in need and controls on landlord profiteering. Support increased affordable housing requirements for development on public lands Refuse to take political donations from property developers and commercial landlords. Draw feds in more.
Wages & working conditions	Advocate to the Province to increase minimum wage to reflect the regional cost of living.

	All jobs controlled by the City should pay at least a living wage. Commit to using all available tools to support living wage for city-regulated, city-contracted work Expand and update the Fair Wage policy: Increase rates to reflect the cost of living, provide resources for enforcement and identify and challenge employers who fall short.
Workplace health & safety	Examine and address the impact of extreme temperatures. Ensure all workers have mental health support at work. Implement across-the-board psychosocial risk assessment. Increase investigations into City buildings and workplaces to ensure adequate and safe light and mould levels, air quality etc. Add a city councillor to the Occupational Health & Safety Coordinating Committee.
Public safety	Innovative community safety programs have proven to be wildly successful, including crisis intervention, community care workers, outreach workers on TTC, and new training. They should be enhanced and expanded. Balance investment in community programs that enhance safety with spending on policing. Prioritizing municipal funding for people in crisis over further increasing the police budget.
Cost of living	Support the public grocery store pilot program. Support initiatives that require wealthy individuals and profitable corporations to pay their fair share of tax so that everyone can live in dignity.
Public services & infrastructure	Ensure city revenues are sufficient to support properly staffed public services. Oppose any privatization or contracting out of public services and bring contracted out work back in house.

	Not enter into any intergovernmental agreements that require privatization or alternative service delivery, or limit the City's ability to deliver quality public services. End the use of staffing agencies by the City and contractors.
Health care & staffing	Join front-line workers in pushing the Province to provide full funding for public health and long-term care. Expand mental health services beyond just crisis situations, including City-provided community mental health supports.
Worker power & democracy	Support extending the right to strike to essential workers. Pledge not to support injunctive action in the case of a strike.
Mobility	Increasing provincial and federal funding to the TTC, enabling reduced or free fares, increased hours and expanded services. Pledge to bring back Volume Incentive Passes for TTC. Improve youth passes, consider discount fares for post-secondary students (such as UPass).
Support for youth	Develop a youth employment strategy, in partnership with workers. Expand youth employment opportunities and make youth jobs a priority for filling vacancies. Improve lunch, before and after school programs.
Recreation	Promote social cohesion and healthy development by ensuring municipal indoor and outdoor recreation programs and facilities are available to all, regardless of status or income.
Education	Call on the Province to fully fund post-secondary education and restore OSAP grants.
Child care	Advocate for increased funding for sufficient, affordable, publicly provided child care spaces.