

THE GRIND

October / November 2022

YOUR CITY, YOUR PAPER

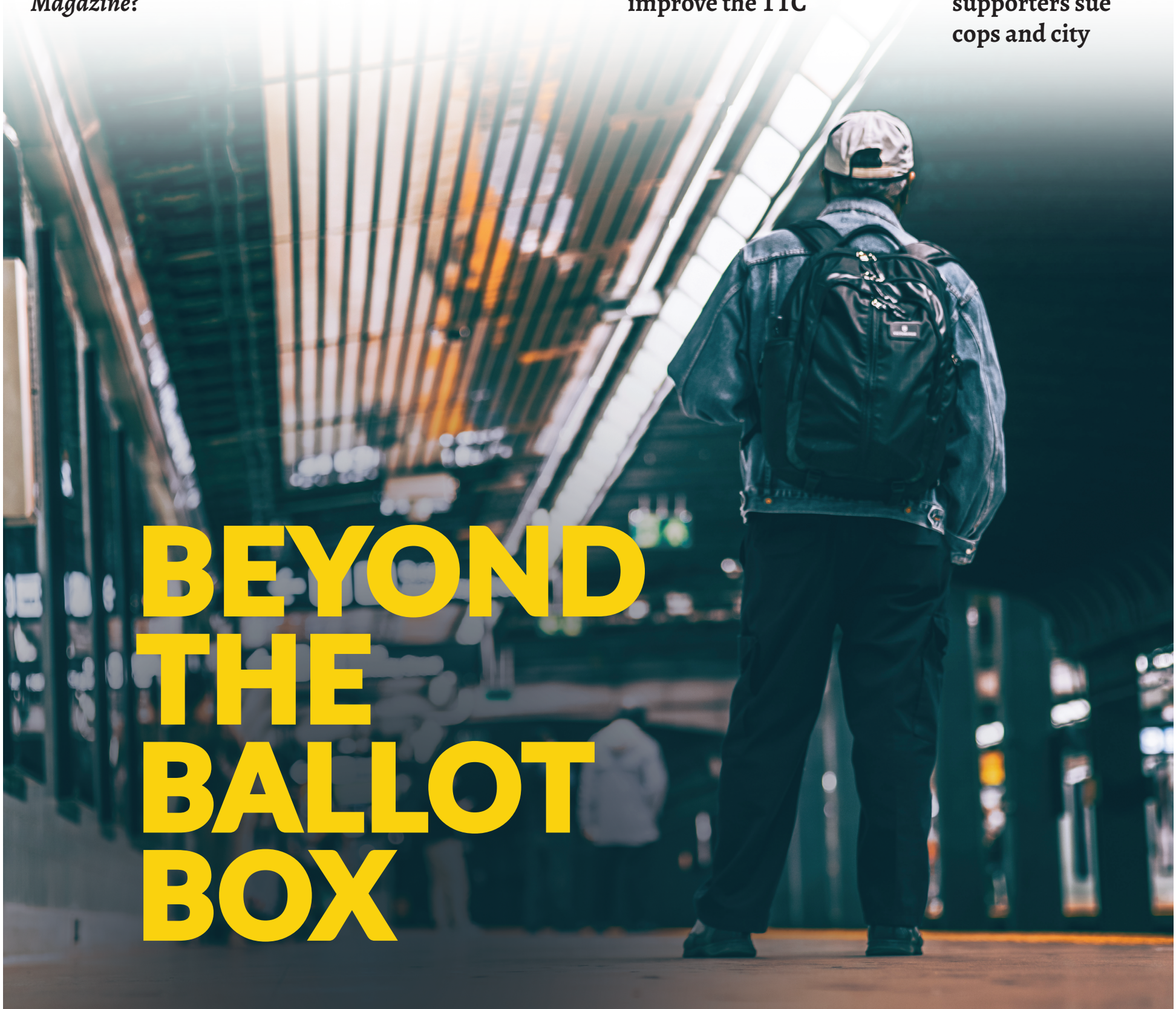
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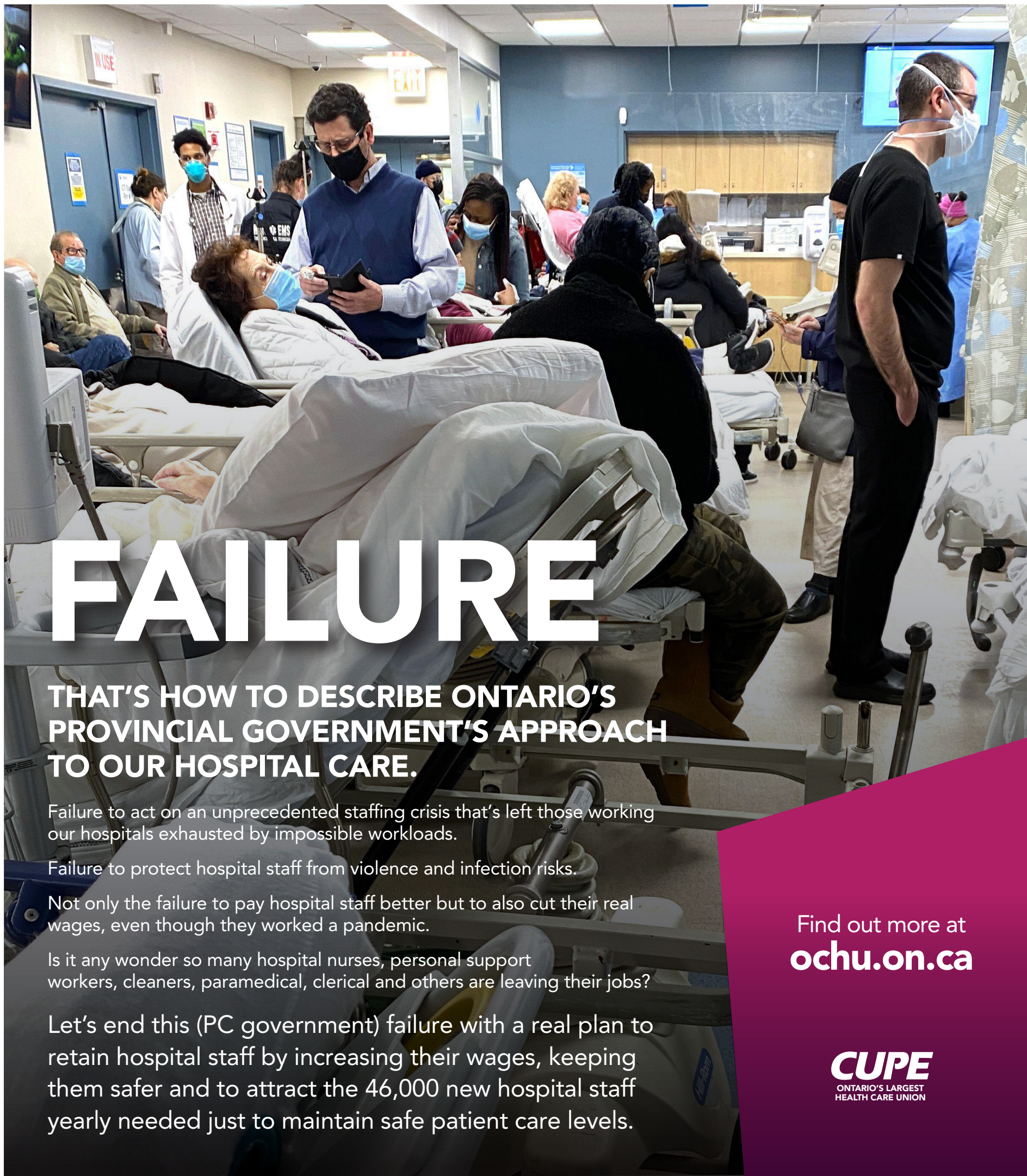
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ISSUE 1 VOL 1



BEYOND THE BALLOT BOX



FAILURE

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Failure to act on an unprecedented staffing crisis that's left those working our hospitals exhausted by impossible workloads.

Failure to protect hospital staff from violence and infection risks.

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OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2022

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The Grind Magazine Toronto

Acting Publisher

David Gray-Donald

Editors

Fernando Arce

Shannon Carranco

David Gray-Donald

Phillip Dwight Morgan

Kevin Taghabon

Copy Editing/Proofreading

Leah Borts-Kuperman, Amy Cunningham, Maria Sarrouh

Cover Design

The Public

Cover Photo

Ayman Joomratee

Interior Layout Design

Ricardo Quiza Suárez

A huge thank you to:

Leah Borts-Kuperman, Jonathan Brown-Gilbert, Adam Chen, Amy Cunningham, Matthew Dimera, Megan DeLaire, Saima Desai, Thomas Goessaert, Jen Hassum, Nick Lachance, Zaid Noorumar, Aliya Pabani, Laura Proctor, Matt Raoufi, LJ Robinson, Leah Rowlinson, Sheila Sampath, Maria Sarrouh, Michael Simpson, Ian Willms, Alicja Wolanski, Jeremy, Katie, Mary, and Shannen

Arts and Labour Media

720 Bathurst St

Toronto, ON

M5S 2R4

info@thegrindmag.ca

thegrindmca.ca

Welcome to *THE GRIND*



The Grind's editors. From left to right: Kevin Taghabon, Phillip Dwight Morgan, Shannon Carranco, Fernando Arce, David Gray-Donald. Photo by Maria Sarrouh

TORONTO is an incredibly vibrant place made vibrant by everyday people. It's a unique corner of the world, located on the shores of Niigaani-gichigami, Lake Ontario, our source of water.

Honestly, we love it. There's so much going on, any hour of the day. The creative spirit of the people of this city is incomparable.

But for all that's good about Toronto, life here is often bleak. So many of us are working hard — soul-crushingly hard — just to get by. A small portion of the city has a lot of money and lives in decadence. But most people don't. We see you. We are you.

We're with you, taking the TTC, dealing with delays, with subway lines shutting down, with packed shuttle buses. Dealing with bad bosses and demanding customers. Praying neglectful landlords won't raise the rent too much, and that schools will be funded well enough to give kids the attention and care they deserve.

By nearly all measures of affordability, Toronto is the most expensive city in Canada and life here is often a grind. COVID continues to impact our friends, families, and communities and workplaces, but governments and most businesses keep pretending it's in the past. The healthcare system keeps hobbling along, dragged down by deliberate underfunding by successive governments, with emergency rooms bursting at the seams and even shutting down.

And then there's this municipal election, which hasn't gotten much attention. Why? Well, the incumbent mayor, John Tory, has been following Doug Ford's playbook of staying out of the media and avoiding debates.

Under Tory, the City spent almost \$2 million dollars clearing homeless encampments from three parks last year after shelters across the city had to reduce their capacity by more than 50 per cent because of the pandemic. They sent in private security and cops to clear the encampments, and beat the crap out of people, leaving unhoused people with nowhere to go. A few months later, Tory was chairing a meeting for the feuding billionaire Rogers family, a role which pays him generously.

See the article **Doug Ford's 'strong mayor' system and the right's drive to control council** for more on these new powers, **page 6.**

In Toronto, independent media have a critical role to play holding elected officials accountable, telling stories of resistance and challenging authority. While mainstream media outlets too often uncritically repeat police talking points and create scares around things like "quiet quitting," a number of independent media worked to shine a light on evictions, exploitation in the workplace, and countless other stories of working class people.

HERE AND NOW

There's a void in this city, especially with NOW Magazine seemingly out of print. An important, no-bullshit voice has pretty much gone silent. But Toronto needs a gritty free magazine now as much as ever. We've watched with deep sadness as NOW's staff have reportedly gone unpaid for months, still putting their souls into it.

Read what former NOW staff have to say about the magazine

But the decline of NOW, founded in 1981 by leftists and artists in Toronto, has lit a fire in us. We couldn't just sit idly by. So we, as a small group each involved in independent online publications, including *The Hoser*, *Media Co-op*, *Briarpatch*, *PressProgress* and others, dreamed up a new publication. A smaller group of media workers came together to solidify and publish *The Grind*. This issue is a mix of excellent journalism from progressive publications across Canada republished in print, plus brand-new writing and art.

To get this first issue together we worked as a volunteer team, making time in between our jobs. There's no big investor behind *The Grind* — no tech bros, no hedge funds — and we're incorporated as a non-profit with a mandate to put all the money we raise into the publication itself.

We managed to scrape some money together, including money we donated ourselves and loans we gave the magazine, and it has been just enough to pay writers, photographers, designers, and the printer.

To make this publication viable long-term — which means hiring paid staff — we're going to need your help. Part of the reason NOW didn't work out in print is it didn't really ask readers to support it financially, instead relying almost 100 per cent on advertisers for revenue. We have some ads in this issue and we'll gladly run more. But we know that to really be an independent magazine telling important stories, calling out injustice, and being a voice for workers, we need help from readers like you.

If you read this issue and like what you see, please consider making a donation by sending an e-transfer to info@thegrindmag.ca.

We're excited to share this first issue with you, and we're already cooking up the next one. We want to expand to include more arts and culture coverage, an events section, and more news and analysis like you'll find in this issue.

Got a story idea or an event to promote? Or just want to rant? Send us what you've got to info@thegrindmag.ca.

Your support and input is what will allow us to keep publishing *The Grind*, telling stories about your Toronto.



Cover of the first issue of NOW

THEN, AND NOW

PHOTOJOURNALIST **NICK LACHANCE** JOINED THE STAFF AT TORONTO'S ICONIC **NOW** MAGAZINE IN 2021. HE REFLECTS ON ITS DECADES-LONG HISTORY IN THE CITY, ITS RECENT FINANCIAL TROUBLES, AND THE STAFF EXODUS

Nick Lachance on assignment for NOW. Photo by Simon Son



NOW Magazine's first issue began with a promise to its readers. The five-person editorial team wanted to be the voice for news and entertainment directed at Toronto's young adults, who in 1981 were the tail end of the baby boomers. (Truly everything was made for them...).

From the beginning, **NOW** blazed its own path, becoming the place where generations of young people came to learn about the hottest new Toronto talent, coolest dive bars, what was on at the Fringe festival, TIFF, everything about Carnival, and Pride – whatever made Toronto, Toronto.

As it grew, the magazine expanded its focus beyond arts and entertainment, and it became a place where diverse people and stories could be found at a time when that was still a rarity in almost every newsroom.

I shot my first assignment for **NOW** on a frigid February morning in 2020, and though

I struggled to make my numb fingers work, I couldn't stop thinking about how excited I was. By the time I moved to Toronto a decade ago, *NOW Magazine* was 30 years old and in every bar, coffee shop and TTC station I went to – literally everywhere. As soon as I picked up a copy, I wanted to shoot for them.

What drew me to **NOW** was the freedom I saw in its pages, the ability to tell stories and make images that I wasn't seeing in traditional media. In **NOW**'s pages I saw a dedication to the diversity of Toronto, and it was something I wanted to be a part of. It's one of the things that drew writers, photographers and designers to the publication, and it also kept them there, possibly long after they should have moved on.

"Think of the voices that came through this publication," **NOW**'s former editor-in-chief Rad Simonpillai says. "Go through our archives, you'll find Matt Galloway interviewing Questlove or reviewing Jay-Z albums. You'll find a cover story on *Paris Is Burning* written by my predecessor Cameron Bailey. You'll also find that for decades, while Canadian media stayed white as hell, **NOW** was pretty much the only Canadian outlet that could imagine movie or music writers of colour. That's how I ended up writing in these pages."

Without really planning it, **NOW** had created its own talent pipeline as the same young Torontonians the publication was designed for grew up being inspired to write for it.

Richard Trapunski, who would go on to become **NOW**'s music editor, wrote his first review in 2010. "It was almost hard to believe. I had been opening that same magazine to that same section every week for years. In high school, I would pore over its band interviews and record reviews and listings, imagining shows I might go to if they weren't all 19+." Then later, in university, I used them to plan my nights. It was indispensable."

Throughout its life, **NOW** was also a place for creativity and collaboration to flourish. "Coming from a career in dailies – I started at the *Toronto Star* – working for **NOW** was a goddamn joy," says **NOW**'s former film writer Norm Wilner. "The structure of an arts weekly gave us the time to think about what we were writing, and if I wanted to devote 800 to 1200 words to a Cinematheque retrospective on the late Taiwanese director Edward Yang, it wasn't even an argument! **NOW** was genuinely collaborative from the jump, all of us striving to make the best newspaper we could."

NOW was also an active voice in Toronto's political scene, never shying away from highlighting under-reported issues like Indigenous resistance, the city's horrific shelter system, and cycling deaths that the city would rather sweep under the carpet.

As **NOW** moved through its third decade, the publication faced growing financial struggles. Like other print publications the reasons

were multifactorial – but in 2014 a shift in digital strategies to address these problems began to change the quality of the publication. "The moment you start chasing SEO [search engine optimization], you stop serving the readership," Wilner said. "It was a lesson not all of us learned, unfortunately."

In 2019, one of **NOW**'s founders, Alice Klein, sold the publication. But the new ownership and COVID-19 pandemic didn't help **NOW**'s existing financial problems.

The publication's slow decline accelerated in February 2022, when **NOW** stopped paying its staff with any regularity. Despite this, many continued to work with the hope the publication could be sold and saved.

But hope can only bring you so far, and as the months dragged on more and more staff, understandably, chose to leave.

"My time at **NOW** was cut way too short. I can't help but look at my time with bitterness," says former food writer Ramona Leitao. "The work I did and the editorial team are the only reasons why I can look at my experience at **NOW** somewhat fondly. They let me document almost anything I wanted to and encouraged my ideas from day one. One of my biggest highlights was the way they supported me in writing my first cover story (!) on West African eats in the city."

Where *NOW Magazine* goes from here is currently unclear, but the potential end of the publication would leave a huge hole in Toronto's media landscape. *The Grind* seems poised to fill some of that void, but it's still too soon to say. Meanwhile, a print issue of **NOW** hasn't come out since August, and Simonpillai announced he was leaving the publication in September.

"There was, and is, no other local outlet that cares about local art scenes like **NOW** did. Musicians and promoters and venues and the weirdos writing about it – we were all part of the same ecosystem," Trapunski says. "When Drake plays OVO Fest, you need [someone] there to cover it, but what about the smaller artists on the way up? Who will cover the up-and-coming musician playing for 100 people at the Silver Dollar, or whatever the equivalent is now? For years, I saw firsthand how much young local artists cherished being in the pages of *NOW Magazine* – even just a few words."

What speaks volumes to how important **NOW** and its legacy are to Toronto is how dedicated its staff has always been and how hard they have fought to keep that promise from 1981 alive. Regardless of what happens next for **NOW**, I'll always be proud that for a short time I got to be a part of that 41-year-long journey. Most of all though, I'll always be thankful for the talented, dedicated, inspiring colleagues with whom I have shared a masthead. My only regret would be that it wasn't for longer. You know, unless Drake buys it, like, right **NOW**.



From left to right, the four mayors of Toronto since the 1998 “megacity” amalgamation, Mel Lastman, David Miller, Rob Ford, John Tory, and current Ontario Premier Doug Ford. Miller by Thomas Purves. Rob Ford by hyfen. John Tory and Doug Ford by Bruce Reeve

DOUG FORD’S ‘STRONG MAYOR’ SYSTEM AND THE RIGHT’S DRIVE TO CONTROL COUNCIL

Canadian DIMENSION

NEW VETO POWERS STRENGTHEN EXECUTIVE POWER AND CURB DEMOCRATIC DELIBERATION
- Ryan Kelpin

“IF I ever get to the provincial level of politics, municipal affairs is the first thing I would want to change. I think mayors across the province deserve stronger powers. One person in charge, with veto power.”

This line appears in *Ford Nation*, a 2016 biography by Doug Ford and his late brother and former Toronto mayor, Rob Ford.

In August 2022, Ford introduced the “Strong Mayors, Building Homes Act,” which grants Toronto’s mayor veto power over council in matters such as setting the city’s budget and enacting bylaws. The Act became law in September. To overpower a mayoral veto, council has to vote two-thirds against it. The Act also increases the mayor’s appointment powers over crucial city staff positions.

These moves further bolster the power of mayors who already enjoy a great deal of control over their municipal budgets as well as the informal cabinet structures of their respective executive committees. The goals of this restructuring are obvious: the further centralization of power in the mayor’s office, the sidelining of deliberation by councillors, and the general undercutting of basic democratic and participative principles in municipal government.

A QUARTER-CENTURY OF RESTRUCTURING TORONTO’S LOCAL DEMOCRACY

Ford’s interference in democratic decision-making processes at the municipal level harkens back to former Premier Mike Harris’ “Common Sense” Revolution, which instituted deeply unpopular austerity policies. Harris infamously amalgamated the municipalities of Etobicoke, North York, East York, York, Scarborough and Toronto into the new City of Toronto in 1997, an act that drew staunch criticism and an informal referendum where 76 per cent of the six boroughs voted against amalgamation. Harris would go on to cut the total number of councillors from 114

down to 58 (and then to 47 a few years later) with the “Fewer Municipal Politicians Act”.

In 2018, with the conservatives back in power, Premier Doug Ford introduced the “Better Local Government Act”, reducing the number of city councillors in Toronto from 47 to 25 at the onset of that year’s municipal election.

In his aforementioned book, Ford attacked the council system in Toronto, arguing that veto and discretionary power for the mayor was necessary to cut through “dysfunction.” His government later claimed this would create a streamlined council that would better serve the interests of the people.

It was evident that Ford was settling old scores on behalf of himself and his late brother, as well as pursuing Harris’ unfinished plan to remove as many positions from council as possible to strengthen executive power.

The move was so undemocratic that Mayor Tory and council announced they would challenge its constitutionality in court. This resulted in a stunning threat by Ford to invoke the notwithstanding clause to overrule the courts. As York University political economist Greg Albo argues, Ford was so keen to prevent the election of “lefties” that he was willing to use constitutional power to limit democratic and judicial oversight.

WHY VETO POWER?

Ford’s plan also mimics the centralization of power in the executive, a phenomenon we have witnessed across western nations over the last few decades.

But why Toronto? The answer is complex but can be understood through the post-amalgamation efforts of a right-leaning, pan-suburban coalition to extend its influence over the governance of Canada’s largest city. Downtown, while not a leftist paradise by any means, has a long track record of supporting higher levels of spending, more progressive social-provisioning policies, and an

electoral relationship with NDP-aligned and other “left” candidates across all levels of government.

One of the unstated goals of amalgamation was to weaken the influence of these political forces. Indeed, with the rise of suburban home ownership and a near-codified convention around not raising property taxes, the old downtown-centric model would be unfeasible in the post-amalgamation period.

In the words of Conservative MPP Aris Babikian, an outspoken proponent of the Better Local Government Act:

“Where is the equal representation for Torontonians? Where is the equal representation for those who call our city suburbs home? This ineffective model has left our city fractured along urban and suburban lines... For far too long, city council has been held hostage to the special interest groups and downtown councillors. In fact, the vast majority of Scarborough councillors support this bill.”

Ford’s geographically-oriented right populism pits his largely suburban and rural base against so-called “downtown elites.” In 2018, Ford applauded the 12 “fiscally conservative councillors” representing close to two million people in Toronto’s suburbs who “know what their constituents want, they want smaller government.” In another line from his book, Ford echoes this sentiment: “Rob used to say that if everyone in Etobicoke, Scarborough, and North York would come together and vote as a block, they wouldn’t be ignored by the downtown elites.”

John Tory, for his part, has stated that ‘strong mayor’ powers are necessary “to get more homes built as quickly as possible.” In an interview with the *Toronto Star*, Tory continued:

“There is definitely a need — and I’ve identified this even in talks long before this story came out — we’ve got to speed up the way we get things done at City Hall... The bottom line is we have to get things done, more of them and faster, and that includes getting more

affordable housing built. Right now, that process is taking too long and that is leaving people without a place to live or without the ability to live in the city because of the cost.”

However, the new Act does not mention housing or homes once, outside of the name itself, and completely ignores the larger structural and economic causes of housing unaffordability. It provides no real solutions outside of municipal expediency, and fails to qualify what kinds of housing should be prioritized in future development plans. Ultimately, by handing expanded powers to Tory and the mayor of Ottawa, Ford is working to privilege the pan-suburban coalition and the conservative, car-based politics his base subscribes to. This is both a means and an end to achieving smaller government, normalizing the language of efficiency, and centralizing decision-making.

With 18 of Toronto’s 25 council seats belonging to what could be regarded as suburban ridings, and a mayoral seat that has been in right-wing hands for 17 of the 24 years since amalgamation, free market-focused policy-making can be secured through the executive veto power of the mayor or the ability of the more “fiscally conservative” suburban councillors to overrule the veto of a potentially progressive mayor. It is just the next step in a quarter-century Conservative plan to radically reshape Toronto and its political structure.

Much of how this power is used depends on both the temperament and political alignments of any future mayor. But could you imagine the late Rob Ford with this kind of power in his back pocket when he was mayor? In the wrong hands, the mayor would not just have a great deal more power, but ultimately could become a servant to the even more powerful wishes of the Premier. Our local democracy cannot sustain this kind of attack from above. We need to put pressure on the mayor to not utilize these powers, and assist councillors in their fight to ensure there is actual debate and consultation at city hall.

THE MAYORAL RACE

Fernando Arce



Toronto City Hall. Photo by David Gray-Donald

THE TORONTO election is on October 24th. City councillors, school board trustees, and the mayor will be voted in.

The mayor of Toronto already holds a lot of power, and now has even more due to Doug Ford's new 'Strong Mayors' legislation (see previous page).

While there are several local debates being held among city councillor candidates, there are very few being held among mayoral candidates.

John Tory has been mayor for eight years, and is running again. Earlier in his political career, he was leader of the Ontario Progressive Conservatives, the party now led by Doug Ford.

The only challenger posing a substantial threat to Tory is Gil Peñalosa. Peñalosa founded and ran an organization called 8 80 Cities, which has a "goal of promoting walking, bicycling, parks, and public spaces as a means to building healthier, happier, and more equitable communities," according to its website.

In addition to Tory and Peñalosa, other candidates participating in the only remaining debate before the election are Chloe Brown, Sarah Climenhaga, and Stephen Punwasi.

The debate is happening in-person on Monday, October 17th, hosted by the Toronto Chamber of Commerce.

Here are some highlights of how the platforms and records of Tory and Peñalosa compare

| | John Tory | Gil Peñalosa |
|--|---|--|
| Housing | Promises to increase housing supply Voted against measures to increase residency in low-density neighbourhoods, now promises to densify them | Proposes to convert city-owned lands into solely affordable housing units Supports legalizing rooming houses to create more rental units and to densify neighbourhoods Would incentivize homeowners to subdivide properties into up to six rental units |
| Transit | Scored 2/28 on TTC Riders scorecard for not answering, scoring two points for items in his platform Mainly committed to what is already planned | Scored 28/28 on TTC Riders scorecard Would add additional dedicated bus lanes on busy routes |
| Streets | Promises to work on Vision Zero to reduce fatalities of motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists Numerous roads have had speed limit reductions, new bike lanes have been added during Tory's time in office Many cyclists denounce the implementation of Vision Zero as a failure | Safe streets plan would lower speed limits for suburban streets, would add more sidewalks Would ban right turns on red lights for motor vehicles Promises to redesign 100 most dangerous intersections in four years |
| Supports Strong Mayors Law? | Yes | Flip-flopped. Now says no |
| In favour of using police to clear encampments from city parks? | Yes | No |
| In favour of increasing the police budget? | Supported police budget increases | Unclear. Says he would cut some police funding, like for police horses, and reallocate that money to social services |

HOW TO VOTE

When to vote

Election day is Monday, October 24 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Where to vote

You'll need to find a polling station in your ward. Either search "toronto polling stations" and go to the toronto.ca site, or use Toronto's MyVote app to find your nearest polling station.

Who can vote

To vote in Toronto's municipal election, you must be:

a Canadian citizen; and

at least 18 years old; and

a resident in the city of Toronto; or

a non-resident of Toronto, but you or your spouse own or rent property in the city; and not prohibited from voting under any law.

What to bring

Voter Information Card (VIC): If you are on the voters' list you should have received your VIC in the mail before advance voting days. Although the VIC is not mandatory to vote, it confirms with

election officials that you are on the voters' list and speeds up your time in the voting place.

Identification with Your Name and Toronto Address:

You are required to show the election official acceptable identification to receive your ballot. You do not need photo ID, just one piece of ID showing your name and address within the City of Toronto. The most common forms of acceptable ID are:

- Government issued ID, such as drivers license, photo ID card, tax documents, hospital card


- Bank Issued, such as credit card statement, bank account statement, cancelled personalized cheque, loan agreement

- Utility Bill, such as Hydro, telephone or cable TV, water, gas or a bill from a public utilities commission

- Employment Issued, such as a cheque stub, T4 statement or pay receipt issued by an employer, statement of direct deposit from Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program

For more information, visit toronto.ca/city-government/elections/


Adapted from the City of Toronto website.



Toronto Elections
100 Queen Street West
1st Floor, West
Toronto, ON
M5H 2N2

2022 Toronto Municipal Election

Ward Number: Subdivision:



VOTE
October 24
toronto.ca/elections

Advance Voting Days
October 7 to October 14, 2022 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Vote at one location only:

Election Day
Monday, October 24, 2022 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Vote at:

Your school support is listed as:

Image of Voter Information Card (VIC). Image courtesy City of Toronto



TORONTO TRANSIT FALLING BEHIND

PUBLIC TRANSIT, NOT PRIVATE AUTOS, IS THE GREENER SOLUTION, SAY EXPERTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

by **The Hoser** - Kiernan Green

BONNIE HU'S lived in Etobicoke for three years. Her intersection, Islington Ave. and The Queensway, is situated in a middle-class neighbourhood adjacent to the Gardiner Expressway's escape from downtown, which has supported the growth of Toronto's new families and immigrants.

"I am a renter, and it is important to me to live close to where I work or go to school," Hu said over email. She's proudly car-less, relying on Toronto transit to get around. The same is true for her mother, who earned her licence years after arriving in Coquitlam, B.C. from China. Without it, Hu's mother could only work at a convenience store a kilometre's walk from their home. Hu walked three kilometres to school.

Without adequate transit options, Hu's mother was isolated. She said she found it difficult to contribute to her family. Transit was thus a necessity for Hu when she moved to Toronto. The same is true for many recent immigrants in Etobicoke, who comprise 38 per cent of the community.

Over half of Etobicoke's immigrants have settled in the area in the last 30 years. Before then the area was known as the hotel strip, said Mike Olivier, a founder of the South Etobicoke Transit Action Committee who moved to the area in 1994. "Nobody was walking along the lake unless you were staying at a motel. It kind of had this sleazy reputation," he said. Mr. Christie's landmark bakery wafted the smell of cookies over the lake breeze until it was shuttered in 2013.

In its place, a complex of 15 condo towers is planned to support the swell of new arrivals to the neighbourhood. The Etobicoke-Lakeshore district grew by 20.4 per cent between 2006 and 2016, compared to Toronto's growth of 9.1 per cent. Toronto is expected to grow by another one million people in the next ten years. "The area's completely changed," said Olivier.

However, neither he nor Hu believe the TTC meets the mobility needs of new residents. "Other areas are getting a lot more attention for potential (TTC) expansion," Olivier said. Meanwhile, Etobicoke sees daily bottlenecks on Lake Shore Blvd. and Park Lawn Rd.

As 164 candidates face election for 25 council seats across Toronto on October 24 (seven of which are without an incumbent), transit will be a top concern for many voters. It compelled Hu to put her name on the ballot as one of the youngest city council candidates.

The opportunity to support new immigrants with improved transit will also help advance Toronto's TransformTO climate strategy. Its defining target — net zero greenhouse gas emissions under 1990 levels by 2040 — ranks it among the most ambitious city emission goals in North America. It aims for 30 per cent of registered vehicles to be electric (332,000 vehicles) and that three in four trips under five kilometres be taken by foot or transit by 2030.

The desired effect is cleaving a chunk from the 4.5 metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent produced by gas vehicles annually as of 2019; the largest source of emissions in Toronto's transportation sector, itself a third (36 per cent) of Toronto's emissions.

Great expense for improving transit will be paid in playing catch up, said Eric Miller, the

director of the University of Toronto Transportation Research Institute. Toronto's transit systems have fallen well behind the standards of similarly sized cities, Miller said. Munich, the capital of Bavaria, Germany, for example, operates 24 hours a day and provides access to virtually the entire city via a system of underground and suburban trains, street trams and buses.

To come close to parity with other world-class transit networks, the TTC requires greater density and hierarchy. "You need the local bus that can pick you up at your street corner and take you to the street car, (light-rail transit) or (bus rapid transit), which takes you to regional rail," said Miller. Unlike peer cities in Asia like Seoul, Tokyo or Singapore, Toronto doesn't have the "integrated, hierarchical, high quality (transit) systems that you need to be competitive."

Olivier said a few solutions include full TTC and GoTrain fare integration and increasing the frequency and capacity of street transit (busses and street cars). At City Hall, transit advocacy group TTC Riders said that council must support their push against TTC service cuts, regardless of post-pandemic ridership numbers.

However, the new faces at City Hall will join a council recently recuperated from an era of squeamishness around climate. Former mayor Rob Ford, who surprised many with his success among urban and suburban voters and considered environmental groups "special interest," turned several moderate councillors away from supporting new climate change mitigation policies between 2010 and 2014. (TransformTO was a product of John Tory's subsequent city council, which found Toronto devoid of a carbon emissions strategy.)

"City Hall's agenda hasn't advanced much in the years since," said Miller. "For almost everything we do (in Toronto), the investments are made based on political considerations. Will it

buy me votes in Scarborough, or Markham or Mississauga?" Rather than the question of "is this where we need to be spending money most effectively to build a transit network?"

Olivier added that the City's \$1 billion allocation to rebuild the Gardiner Expressway East runs against the city's emissions reduction commitment. "It's a white elephant. We're just throwing money at a 1950's solution (to mobility)," he said.

On top of running at odds with supporting residents without cars and the city's emissions targets, road investments perpetuate the city's worsening air quality record, said Marianne Hatzopoulou, Canada Research Chair in Transportation and Air Quality at the University of Toronto. According to Hatzopoulou, diesel truck emissions have risen above pre-pandemic levels thanks to the e-commerce boom. This has diminished Toronto's standing on the recently improved air quality standards of the World Health Organization. Any investment which promotes diesel emissions puts Toronto residents at genuine risk for respiratory disease and cancer, Hatzopoulou said.

With regards to TransformTO's emissions target, Hatzopoulou said attention should turn away from personal electrification by buying electric cars, and instead toward building a better transit system. "We always think decarbonization is all about electrification. It's not. Millions of electric vehicles on our highway system is not something we want to achieve." Given the number of commuters it carries, a diesel bus produces the same carbon intensity as each of its riders driving an electric vehicle, she said.

As the new council gets to work, Torontonians will see whether their officials pursue strategies for dense, sustainable and supportive transit, or continue down the slow North American city slide of cuts and austerity.



TTC Riders in Scarborough. Photo by Shelagh Pizey-Allen

10 IDEAS FOR THE NEW CITY COUNCIL ON HOW TO IMPROVE TRANSIT

THE NEWLY ELECTED CITY COUNCIL WILL HAVE CONSIDERABLE POWER OVER THE TTC. **SHELAGH PIZEY-ALLEN**, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE GROUP TTC RIDERS, SHARES 10 WAYS THE NEW COUNCIL COULD IMMEDIATELY IMPROVE OUR PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM.

1 ROLL OUT THE RED CARPET: DEDICATED BUS AND STREETCAR LANES

Buses and streetcars moving thousands of people shouldn't get stuck behind a few car drivers in the turning lane. Giving streetcars priority on King Street was an overnight success, making trips faster and more reliable. A solid red bus lane along Eglinton East, Kingston and Morningside has made Scarborough bus trips more reliable too. An immediate improvement council could make would be to add more red lanes, for TTC vehicles and bikes only, to routes across the city. And bus lanes shouldn't be used as an excuse to reduce service levels or remove local stops, though.

EGLINTON LRT'S LEFT-TURN HEADACHE

The already delayed, \$5.5 billion Eglinton Crosstown LRT (light rail line) could get stuck at traffic lights and behind left-turning cars. Better signal priority is the answer. Existing streetcar ways, like Spadina and St. Clair, need it too.

2 TREAT BETTER TRANSIT LIKE AN EMERGENCY

Public transit use in cities needs to double by 2030 in order to reduce emissions and have a shot at stopping catastrophic climate change. But TTC ridership is now just 70 per cent of pre-pandemic levels. Millions of public transit trips have shifted to Uber and Lyft. The answer? See point number three.

3 INVEST IN MORE AND BETTER TTC SERVICE

Adding service is the best way to increase ridership, and the next best way is to lower fares, studies show. Today, most TTC users are women, shift workers, low-income earners and are racialized. These riders take long trips by bus outside of the typical rush hour. It's time to boost service at night time and during the day, instead of designing the system only for white-collar office workers commuting to downtown. But because the TTC depends on fares for most of its operating budget and fewer people are riding right now, there is a budget shortfall around the corner. That could mean even worse service. The new city council should increase TTC funding to improve service, not make riders pay the price with fare increases and more service cuts.

4 SHOW RIDERS SOME RESPECT

Taking the TTC should be an easy and dignified experience. But it often feels like riders are an afterthought: long gaps between buses, only to have three show up at once; climbing over snow banks to get on board; confusing signs that are only in English; and poor communication during emergencies. Even though the system is wired for it, we can't use our cellphones on the subway. To get riders back, the TTC needs to get these basics right.



Scarborough Line 3 LRT. Photo by Miguel Advincula



Scarborough Line 3 LRT. Photo by Miguel Advincula

5 PROTECT DOOR-TO-DOOR SERVICE FOR WHEEL-TRANS USERS

More people will become eligible for Wheel-Trans in 2025. That's a good thing. But instead of increasing funding to expand service, the TTC plans to cut costs by "diverting" up to 50 per cent of Wheel-Trans users onto the conventional TTC — in other words, kicking people off of "door-to-door" trips. Riders with disabilities say it's an unacceptable and cruel plan.

6 FIX THE SCARBOROUGH RT SHUTTLE BUS DISASTER

The Scarborough RT (Rapid Transit system), also known as Line 3, will close in late 2023. But the 3-stop subway extension replacement won't open until 2030 at the earliest. Riders convinced the TTC to turn the RT rail corridor into a dedicated, off-street busway after it gets decommissioned in 2023. But that interim step will still take years to build. In the meantime, there will be shuttle buses on city streets. At a bare minimum, we need on-street bus lanes for those shuttle buses, and free transfers to the GO network.

7 EXPAND FREE TRANSIT

Toronto's discount for low-income riders is failing on three fronts: it's not truly affordable, it's failing to reach all the people who are eligible and its expansion to low-wage workers hasn't been funded. One first step the city could take is to send a free TTC card to every person receiving the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) or Ontario Works (OW), because the city already administers these programs. To ensure access to education, free transit should be expanded right away to high school students too, who get policed on their way to school, especially BIPOC students.



Photo by Nithursan Elamuhilan

8 STAND UP FOR TORONTO TAKE ON METROLINX

There are two transit agencies in town: elected city councillors sit on the TTC board. At Metrolinx, the provincial transit agency that answers to Premier Doug Ford, there is no local elected representation and private consultants play a big role. Metrolinx runs the PRESTO system and signed an exclusive distribution agreement with Shoppers Drug Mart (owned by Loblaw's Companies), which is why you can't get TTC tokens or passes at your corner store any more. TTC staff can't fix PRESTO machines or gates either. The new city council will need to be a strong voice as it negotiates around PRESTO and other issues like funding for service levels on provincial rapid transit projects.

9 KEEP TRANSIT HUMAN

From phasing out booth collectors in favour of PRESTO machines, to removing a second staff position on the subway known as the "door guard," TTC stations are getting emptier. But most riders want to see more supportive staff, not less. More staff on platforms would make the system more accessible too. Like many other women and LGBTQIA+ people, I've experienced my share of harassment on the TTC. More staff is only one element of ending gender-based violence and harassment on transit, but it's an important one.

10 TRY TAKING THE TTC FOR ONCE

Many elected officials don't understand or care about what's happening on the TTC because they don't use it. They should ride the rocket regularly.

TTC riders asked all mayoral and council candidates about their commitments to these ideas, and others. To track how they deliver on their promises, follow us at TTCriders.ca and [@TTCriders](https://TTCriders)



Photo by Laura Proctor

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Pierre Poilievre has Spent Years Attacking Canadian Workers



Photo by Chris Brown

POILIEVRE HAS PUSHED HARD FOR US-STYLE 'RIGHT-TO-WORK' LAWS AND DEFENDED THE TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM AS STEPHEN HARPER'S JOBS MINISTER

PressProgress — Emily Leedham

NEW Conservative leader Pierre Poilievre's recent rhetoric pandering to workers contradicts his long track record of attacking unions and dividing workers, experts say.

Poilievre spent much of his leadership campaign earlier this year paying lip service to Canadian workers and claiming, without evidence, that workers support him.

"The working class people are enthusiastic about my campaign," Poilievre tweeted in May.

Poilievre, a career politician, has also responded to criticism that his campaign is promoting conspiracy theories by claiming he is defending the "working class" against "elites," like "politicians and bankers."

"Workers have every right to demand raises for soaring food, homes & fuel prices," Poilievre tweeted on Labour Day. "Let's be a country that gives its workers back control of their lives."

In Canada, workers in unionized workplaces earn more than non-unionized work-

ers on average thanks to collective agreements that force employers to negotiate with workers for wage and benefits.

Unionized workers are also at the forefront of securing significant wage hikes amid soaring inflation. And more young Canadian workers are showing interest in the labour movement, kickstarting union drives at places like Starbucks, Indigo and Sephora.

However, Poilievre aggressively fought card-check legislation that would make it easier for workers to unionize in favour of a two-step process that gives employers more time to interfere in the union drive.

Employers across Canada spend millions on union-busting lawyers, consultants and security firms to ensure union drives are unsuccessful.

Under Stephen Harper's Conservative government, Poilievre was one of the loudest supporters of the anti-union Bill C-377, a likely unconstitutional piece of legislation that tried to force Canadian labour unions to disclose all of their internal finances while big corpo-

rations would not have been subjected to the same rules.

Poilievre is also a major proponent of bringing US Right-to-Work laws to Canada. Right-to-Work laws weaken the labour movement by making it more difficult for unions to collect membership dues which pay for the collective bargaining process. Wages and benefits are lower on average in states with Right-to-Work laws.

"I am the first federal politician to make a dedicated push toward this goal," Poilievre stated in 2013 about bringing Right-to-Work laws to Canada.

"I am going to do my part to see that happens at the federal level and I would encourage provincial governments to do likewise."

In 2012, Poilievre mounted a campaign to allow public sector workers to opt out of paying union dues, a proposal that took aim at the Rand Formula — a rule stemming from a Supreme Court decision that allows unions to collect dues.

"Poilievre represents a blend of right-wing populism, economic nationalism, and libertarianism, and his labour legacy and policies reflect this," says Brock University labour studies professor Simon Black.

"This is how he can say 'recognize and reward hard work by making it pay,' but not mention the primary vehicle by which workers have improved the terms and conditions of work, that is labour unions."

"Of course he has a history of supporting anti-union, 'Right-to-Work' policy, which has racist roots in the Jim Crow South," Black added.

Right-to-Work laws were first championed in the US by a 1930s Texas businessman and white supremacist Vance Muse. Vance argued that Right-to-Work laws provide white workers with a means to "opt out" of union membership — and associating with Black workers.

Martin Luther King Jr. thus recognized Right-to-Work laws as a threat to the civil rights movement and good jobs in 1964.

"In our glorious fight for civil rights, we must guard against being fooled by false slogans such as 'right to work,'" Martin Luther King, Jr. said. "It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and job rights."

Poilievre also used xenophobic rhetoric arguing that "foreign" migrant workers were taking Canadian workers' jobs and driving down wages.

Poilievre was Stephen Harper's Employment Minister while thousands of migrant workers had their work permits expire in 2015 which forced them to leave the country or remain as undocumented workers.

"That's why they're called temporary foreign workers," Poilievre said about the looming deportations in 2015.

Migrant rights advocates condemned xenophobic rhetoric which pitted Canadians against migrant workers.

"While in the past racist headlines read 'Immigrants are taking Canadian jobs,' now they insist 'Foreign workers are taking Canadian jobs.' What's the difference?" wrote Migrant Workers Alliance for Change organizer Syed Hussan in 2014.

"Full immigration status for all, full rights for all workers is the only way forward. Resist attempts to divide unemployed, migrant and poor people."

With limited pathways to permanent residency and work permits tied to employers, migrant workers recently compared the temporary foreign worker program to 'systemic slavery.'

Massive campaigns from migrant rights organizers pressured the current Liberal government to develop a regularization program that could see over half a million migrant and undocumented workers granted permanent residency.

Poilievre defended his management of the temporary foreign worker program and the deportations: "Broadly speaking, we made the right decision with the program, and we're going to continue."

Long COVID and Disability Justice

briarpatch - Yasmine Simone Gray

BEFORE the pandemic, Tracey Thompson was a chef in Toronto. But for over two years now, she has suffered from long COVID, the often-debilitating condition that can cause severe damage to the heart, kidneys, skin, and brain.

Symptoms of long COVID can include respiratory problems such as difficulty breathing and heart palpitations. Neurological symptoms such as brain fog, difficulty speaking, and changes in sleep, smell, or taste are also common. A person's risk of severe, long-term health impacts from COVID-19 increases with each infection.

Around 10 to 20 per cent of people infected with COVID-19 develop long COVID, meaning there are likely upwards of 400,000 people in Canada who had or have the post-viral condition. A disproportionate number of them are racialized, including Tracey, a Black woman who is now unemployed due to disability.

By lifting all COVID-19 restrictions and public health measures, the federal and provincial governments have declared the pandemic over, allowing the virus to mutate and placing more and more people at risk of infection, reinfection, and long COVID.

To better understand long COVID, the supports available, and the supports we need, I spoke to Tracey about living with long COVID and the need for disability justice.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE AS A PERSON LIVING WITH LONG COVID?

Tracey: I'm primarily bedbound. I can't really read anymore. I can read in short spurts, but I can't read a novel because I can't remember things from one page to the next. I have limited energy — that's probably the biggest challenge for me. I haven't been able to work for over two years and I have to carefully dole out what energy I'm going to use and for what purpose. Obviously, eating is number one, that comes before anything else, and I take it from there. I'd like to be able to entertain myself, but I can't now because I have screen sensitivity — so no TV, no computer games, no reading, and no creative things because I don't have the energy for them anymore.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR PROVINCE'S RESPONSE TO COVID?

Tracey: The Ontario government's response has been appalling. I don't think that that's specific to Ontario, but I feel like the risks of this illness have been underplayed. I think it's part of a long-standing problem of discrim-

ination against disabled people. Disabled people who can't work are subjected to real disdain. If you're part of the working class, you're expected to produce profit for other people. When it turns out you can't, then you're garbage. You're seen as less of a person. There's this relatively large cohort of people that are becoming disabled all at once because the Ontario government is denying testing, creating hoops that people have to jump through to access care, and failing to take long COVID seriously. There's no pressure on people who aren't ill to help people who have long COVID, and without pressure the government doesn't feel a need to provide support. There's a fear of accepting the reality that COVID is a mass disabling event. It's much easier to pretend that this is not a real problem.

WHAT GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS HAVE BEEN AVAILABLE TO YOU SINCE YOU DEVELOPED LONG COVID?

Tracey: There are no real, meaningful, ongoing supports for people with long COVID in Ontario — financial, health care-wise, or anything else. I don't think it was up until the summer of last year that the federal government even recognized long COVID as a health condition. It took over a year and a half for it to be recognized, even though people had been talking about having long COVID as early as spring 2020.

There's been talk among community activists about providing supports, but no supports have materialized for people who have been affected with long COVID struggling to get through their day-to-day. For people who are unable to work, they may be able to access long-term disability, depending on the kind of job they had before and whether they have a pre-existing illness, but you can't live on that. If you're an Ontario resident, the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) is \$1,169 per month and you have to pay for rent and phone and food and medications with that. The restaurant industry doesn't have very strong supports for its staff and long COVID isn't recognized as a disability by the federal or Ontario government, so I don't qualify for ODSP.

OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS, WHAT ELSE HAS BEEN AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR LONG COVID?

Tracey: I learned a lot from different online communities. There are a couple of Canadian Facebook groups and also Body Politic, a

primarily American group. Online communities have been important for coming up with ideas on how to lessen symptoms, to find out about treatments and trials, and for people to talk to. I'm single and I live alone. I've been alone for over 900 days — it's not healthy. I've got some community around me, but people are getting on with their lives after two years of the pandemic and people expect you to get better or to adjust in some way. When you don't, some people eventually fall away and it's pretty isolating to be left behind.

WHAT GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE IMPLEMENTED FOR LONG HAULERS?

Tracey: If there was clear messaging around what long COVID is and what it looks like, people would have a better understanding of what's happening to them. My fantasy is that there's a big campaign and it says, "These are things we're looking out for. If you have these symptoms, please go and see your doctor." And experts have told your doctors about long COVID and your doctors believe you when you talk about your symptoms.



Illustration of Tracey Thompson, by Elsbeth Dodman

HOW CAN OTHER PEOPLE SUPPORT LONG HAULERS?

Tracey: In order to support long haulers you have to support disability justice in general. Start by believing people. Long COVID is a dynamic illness, so function will fluctuate. I would like the average person to just believe the people in their lives who are struggling with COVID or long COVID. People should also keep wearing masks and keep taking COVID precautions because people are still at risk of getting infected.

In July, Tracey applied for medical assistance in dying (MAiD) because she, like many other poor disabled people, is unable to afford housing, food, and other living expenses. You can support her fundraiser for housing and medical costs at:

WWW.BIT.LY/TRACEY-THOMPSON-LEFT-TURN-HEADACHE

Yasmine Simone Gray is a disabled writer, artist, and educator based in Toronto, Ontario. Find her on Twitter at @yasmimesimone.

Toronto Police Officers barricaded 14 Divison on Dovercourt Rd. on July 21, 2021, after the Lamport Stadium encampment clearing. Photo by Kevin Taghabon

Encampment Defenders Sue Cops and City over Violent Clearing



THIS PIECE INCLUDES DESCRIPTIONS OF ARMED TORONTO POLICE OFFICERS TARGETING, ATTACKING AND MAIMING PEOPLE IN PUBLIC

The Hoser - Kevin Taghabon

A GROUP of people who defended the encampment in the park beside Lamport Stadium, located on King Street West in Liberty Village, are suing the Toronto Police Service and the City of Toronto for the violence inflicted on them on July 21, 2021, when the encampment was cleared.

Lamport was one of the last encampments remaining, a place for people who couldn't afford rent and wanted to avoid the city's overcrowded, often dangerous shelter system during the pandemic.

Mayor John Tory said after the clearing that the actions of the police that day were "firm but reasonable."

Dave Shellnutt, known as The Biking Lawyer, who is representing the plaintiffs, points to photo and video evidence.

"Compassionate and firm is not smashing people with batons," he says. "It's not holding them facedown on crates and smashing their wrists with batons. It's not indiscriminately pepper spraying young people. John Tory is lying at worst, and at best, he's just wilfully blind to what he unleashed upon the citizens

of Toronto. They've said they're not in control of the police, but in their press releases it's quite clear that the city asked the Toronto Police to be down there. And so that's why we've advanced a claim against the City, because they're responsible for the attack."

We spoke with Calla Moya, one of the plaintiffs in the case. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GET INVOLVED WITH ENCAMPMENT SUPPORT?

Calla: I was doing outreach work through [the Encampment Support Network], specifically in Moss Park in the downtown east area... I feel particularly attached to this area, its history, my neighbours, because we all share this lived experience of being racialized, disabled and specifically poor.

I was doing outreach at Moss Park since November [2020]. I just got involved through internal organizing. I see a definite problem with this city. And being on the ground and seeing it with my own eyes: watching people I made relationships with die, deaths of hard-

ship, opioid overdoses, or just tragedies and being poor. That's what motivated me because I just have this experience of growing up poor and being houseless as an adult later.

I grew up with a single mom on ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program) and it was very tough, both in community housing and other low rent areas. I grew up in Hamilton and also in Brantford, kind of in between. Core areas that are slowly becoming gentrified.

CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU ON JULY 21, 2021?

Calla: Absolutely. I got the call because I was part of the organizing team preparing for the [encampment] eviction, because we knew it was going to happen. We have specific contacts who have intel into internal city workings. We knew it was pending because... pretty much all the [city] councillors agreed that there is a "no encampments" policy. They instilled that at the beginning of the summer.

So I was scheduled to be there really early before the fencing went up at Lamport, and I got there at 5 a.m. with an Uber because I live

in the east end. It would take forever if I didn't have a ride. I just pull up, the fencings already going up. So much security.

[The city] got private [security] contracts, millions of dollars just to hire these workers who didn't get the memo that they don't have this experience. Most of them are living on precarious visas and most of them are racialized. They're up pulling out the fences, and police start hanging around.

As supporters were coming in I made sure people had the number for the jail hotline written on their arm wherever they can access it easily. I had a sharpie and I was going around. I'm like, "You know your rights, just a disclaimer there might be some really fucked up shit happening today because it's increasingly getting worse."

I was also in charge of transporting things through the fence because police and security weren't letting us. People on the outside of the fence were trying to get supplies to us and the police were not letting them.

And then it became early afternoon. I forget his name, but he is one of the main guys in charge of [the City of Toronto program] Streets

to Homes. He started going around with police, going up to tents and encampment residents, asking them one last time, “Do you want to go into the respite? Do you want to go to a shelter hotel?” Giving the shitty offers that no one wants. And obviously residents are like “no, no.” Some of them went, but the whole point is that we just want permanent housing for people.

Then we saw a group of police start going up to the protesters and telling them that they’re trespassing, anything could happen and that they can get arrested if they don’t leave now. That happened like once or twice and then suddenly the police just start fucking moving very, very, very strongly.

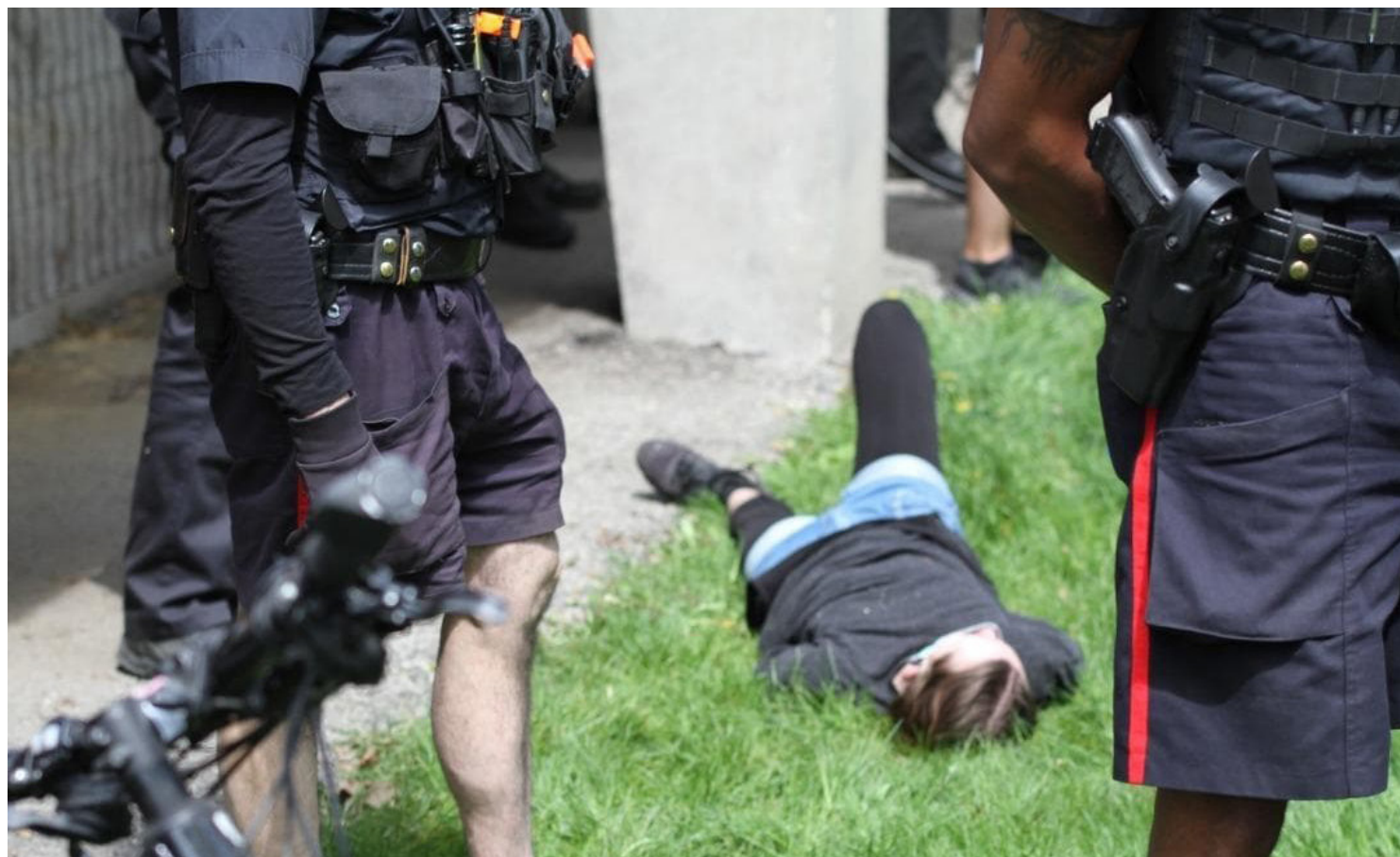
We took our positions. You’re trying to lock arms so that police can’t come into the actual encampment. But of course the police started pushing people down and like [body] checking, making people go out to the other side of the fence where the exit was and just slowly pushing us away.

Then we got [wood] pallets dividing the middle of the area to get the police to stay away. And that was unsuccessful because the police just started indiscriminately pepper spraying us and I got pepper sprayed while holding a pallet. That hurt. I ran like hell and a medic washed out my eyes with a bottle of water. I’m just like: “Wow, this is mania because there’s like so much going on. I’m overwhelmed.”

I ran to my comrade who was linking arms around the tent with some other comrades, so I joined, and that was near the top of the encampment. They were actually pushing people to the left, so I was kind of one of the last people hanging around. I was linking arms with my buddy and the police started shoving everyone down to try to break the arm circle. Then they pepper sprayed us.

I got pepper sprayed twice. Basically people started moving towards the exit of the fence, because there was no other choice. Police have their batons out and are whipping people. They’re taking people and tearing individuals away from the group to go arrest them. They’re just picking people out to mitigate the critical mass, and it was really scary. Most people just started running. People couldn’t handle seeing this kind of unfathomable fucking violence and chaos from the state. It was just too much.

Anyway me and my comrades are running towards the fence. It’s like, we’re pepper sprayed again, we’re flailing. I was so close to the fence and I was holding up my friend who got pushed down. I picked her back up. We’re being pushed and pushed. The police are facing us. We’re face-to-face with the police. They’re just plain pushing the entire crowd. I think people at the same time [were hearing] just yelling, “You’re assaulting an officer, you’re going to be charged,” [with police] dragging people before the crowd has a chance to grab them back.



Toronto Police surround an encampment defender at Lamport Stadium on May 19, 2021. Photo by Shannon Carranco

I turned around as I’m picking up my friend and I saw a cop pulling out the baton. Right there in my face. And I do this [gesture] so they know my head is about to be beat in because it’s right in my face. They claimed I was assaulting an officer by doing this. And like five big boy cops kick me out of the crowd. My friends are trying to grab me back. The police were too quick and too strong and pulled me out and lifted my entire body right off the ground. I was levitating, and they threw me really hard and really fast onto the concrete.

The back of my skull hit the side of a curb, just completely slammed. I was incapacitated. I lost consciousness for a bit. I wake up, and two cops, including the one who had the batone, are on either side of me holding my elbows in, dragging me across the pavement to the paddy wagon.

That one cop who had the baton out, it seemed like she was new to the job, because the other one was like, “Okay, so what you’re going to do is this, and this.” Because she didn’t know. “We’re gonna charge her with this, that and this. We can write down what numbers they are and you can get her to sign the papers, read her her rights, and then put her in the paddy wagon.”

She takes me to the paddy wagon and she’s like, “Okay, I’ve got to fill out these forms.” I’m handcuffed just standing there. She’s just completely fumbling with the forms, and doesn’t know what she’s doing. Standing there, I’m really lightheaded, I’m seeing stars and I’m really thirsty.

Another cop was holding me, holding my

arm so I wouldn’t run away. I’m begging these cops to let me sit down and give me a drink of water. The cop is like, “We’ll do that, once we fill out these forms.” And I’m like, “No, I need to see a paramedic. My head really hurts.” And she’s like, “We’ll get you to a medic once you fill out these forms and we officially charge you.” And I’m like “No, right now, please. I’m not letting you get away with this.”

She’s like, “fine, fine.” I see a medic and they’re like, “kay, we’ve got to put her into the ambulance that’s like not in the fence, outside the fence on the side.” So they want to take me to the hospital, and this lady [officer] is like, “Do you want to go to a hospital? You can go to the hospital. After we’re done processing you, and after you get out of jail.” I’m like “No, I’d like to go now.” She said, “If you go now, that means that officer has to be present. And, you don’t know how long of a wait in the ER it could be. It could be like over three hours and we’re just sitting there. You could just go after you’re done being incarcerated.”

I know exactly what they’re doing. I know I need medical attention. I know I need this to be documented. And so then the paramedics checked me out. I said, “My head really hurts. I need to see an ER doctor immediately.” Then the cop supervisor comes in and talks to her outside. She comes back and she’s like, “Okay, we’re gonna let you go. You’re not being charged. We’re just gonna let you off with a ticket.” Okay. See ya.

I was taken to the hospital and another person who was a supporter at Lamport was in the ER of Toronto Western [Hospital]. He

was there because he got whipped on his shin with a steel baton. It was nasty. Later on, he told me I was really not myself. We had never met before. But we started being buddies after that. He’s like, “You’re way different than when I first met you. You’re back to reality. But in that emergency room, you were a completely different person, and you had no idea what was going on or where you were.” I was just sitting in that room and hanging out not even knowing what’s going on.

I guess I was sitting there for hours without [being triaged] and had no idea what’s going on. This was considered a huge emergency. I could have had a brain bleed. So I saw a doctor and then I was enrolled in the concussion clinic and a friend picked me up at the hospital and took me home and took care of me. That was my day.

I’m committed to the project. I want to get their asses. They can’t get away with this. There’s no way. Because [the City and TPS] have taken so long to even respond, I’m gonna guess like two years [for the lawsuit to finish in court].

The Encampment Solidarity Network (ESN) announced it was dissolving in December 2021. ESN Parkdale is one of the only remaining parts of the former network continuing to organize unhoused peoples in Toronto, whether in encampments or in the shelter system, resisting the city’s targeting of unhoused peoples.

Inside the Bond Place Shelter-Hotel

CONTENT WARNING: THIS ARTICLE CONTAINS INFORMATION THAT MAY BE PAINFUL FOR SOME READERS. THE TRCC OFFERS A 24/7 CRISIS LINE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED SEXUAL ASSAULT WITH PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL CRISIS INTERVENTION, AT 416-597-8808.



The Bond Place Hotel sits at the corner of Bond St. and Dundas St. East. Photo by Shannon Carranco

The Hoser Rhea Singh

SITUATED between Church and Yonge, the Bond Place Hotel has been a temporary shelter since April 2020. As of October, the city says it plans to convert the rooms into rental units. But the problems at the Bond can be found in many of the city-run shelters.

What initially started as a hotel-shelter lease obtained by the City of Toronto with the purpose of housing up to 250 unhoused people, turned quickly into a hostile and unsafe environment, according to residents who live there.

This spring, a Twitter account called 'Voices from The Bond' was created by Bond residents with the assistance of ESN Parkdale, an offshoot of the Encampment Support Network, volunteers who give support to encampment and shelter-hotel residents. Since its creation, Voices from The Bond has documented and shared residents' experiences within the shelter hotel.

The information is compiled through resident-created questionnaires that cover "service restrictions, food quality, accessibility and more." All responses are posted with the consent of the residents.

"I don't think mainstream people know how bad living conditions are there. It's as though we don't have human rights," says Bond resident Jenifer Jewell.

Jewell has resided at the hotel since 2020. She says the issues are derived from a lack of attention to residents' needs and the staff's volatile treatment of some residents which goes against Toronto Shelter Standards. The TSS sets a guideline for procedures and rules for city-run shelters to abide by.

Both Jewell and the Voices from The Bond Twitter account mention incidents where elevators were inaccessible and staff didn't serve dinner to residents with disabilities. Residents claim they've been served rotten food and undercooked chicken. They've also experienced a lack of access to phone services to contact doctors or caseworkers, a lack of heating, and unwanted wellness checks, where Bond security staff has entered residents' rooms without permission.

Favouritism and judgment from staff is another major issue at the hotel, according to residents.

"There have been situations where staff members have begun laughing at someone in crisis," says Jewell. "The training is inadequate... it happens rarely, but I've been told by staff to use the stairs while I'm in my [wheelchair.]" In another instance, a resident requested non-male staff for their bed checks and was denied.

"It feels haunted here a lot of the time," Graeme Dring told us. "Staff come in and do these checks, they knock and just start walking

in while you're getting out of bed, it feels a bit premeditated... like they're peeping in on you."

Sadly, Dring passed away this spring.

Dixon Hall, the housing services organization that runs the shelter program at the Bond Place Hotel, did not respond to our request for comment and the structure of their de-escalation training remains unclear.

However, the issues go far beyond favouritism and de-escalation. From sexual assault to a lack of communication when other residents die, residents view the shelter as a hellscape to live in.

ASSAULT AT THE BOND

Physical safety has been a concern for residents, specifically in regards to sexual assault. According to Jewell, staff were allegedly informed of a resident who had sexually assaulted multiple women in the shelter and the shelter administration did not take immediate action.

"I've had so many women in my room crying and curled up on the floor," says Jewell. According to Jewell, while the perpetrator was arrested, a number of sexual predators remain in the building.

Marianna Reis, a member of ESN Parkdale, says that prior to the collective's involvement with Bond residents, there had been an initiative by residents to push for women and gender-oppressed-only floors. According to Jewell, residents are slowly being moved up to the two dedicated floors which was a result of the attention received from the Twitter account.

"[What] I hear most often about the Bond is that there's a lot of violence against women and gender-oppressed people," says Reis. "That's something we see across the shelter system — that they're disproportionately dealing with abuse."

With all the issues at hand, filing a complaint or even speaking up is an incredibly difficult and straining process.

Under both the Toronto Shelter Standard (TSS) and Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) the Bond has failed to provide adequate and ethical living conditions, according to allegations made by residents.

Through these allegations, Bond staff and shelter operators, Dixon Hall haven't respected section six of TSS in regards to clients' rights and responsibilities. This also includes the "Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act" and "Residential Tenancy Act" not being implemented correctly.

In one instance, shelter staff told a resident to buy their own hygiene products using their Ontario Works and/or Ontario Disability Support Payment. According to section nine, subsection 1.2 of the TSS, "shelter providers will assist residents in accessing hygiene products, at a minimum providing them with basic hygiene necessities per admission."



11 DEMANDS OF BOND PLACE HOTEL RESIDENTS

1. That anyone currently living at the Bond (or was living here when the renovation was announced) be given the right of first refusal for any housing units made available here after the renovation.
2. That every Bond resident is provided with a housing worker and a housing plan. There is a mandate that every Bond resident be assigned a housing worker within 24 hours of intake, but many have lived there over a year and have still not met with one.
3. That Dixon Hall be proactive about tracking which residents have and have not met with a housing worker, and what their location-specific needs are.
4. That all units be deeply affordable after renovations, not just a subsection of them.
5. That at least 30% of the renovated units be accessible. The City is currently proposing that only a meagre 15% of the units be accessible.
6. That the Bond be accessible during renovations. This includes keeping the elevators running while work is being done in the lobby.
7. That Bond residents be given at least 1 month's notice if their living situation is going to change. We deserve the same basic rights and protections that tenants are entitled to.
8. That all residents displaced (temporarily or permanently) during renovations be provided accommodations that are comparable to their current living arrangement at the Bond, or an upgrade. This includes, but is not limited to, private rooms with single/couples occupancy.
9. That Dixon Hall ceases its tactic of turning service restrictions into de facto permanent bans. Many restricted from the Bond ultimately end up permanently discharged, effectively clearing out residents ahead of renovations without providing them a housing plan.
10. That the criteria around eligibility for rent subsidies be loosened.
11. That these basic rights be recognized by other shelter hotels and providers across the City.

From Voices from The Bond on Twitter, @BondResidentsTO, posted September 2022.

The city's Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) stated by email that shelter staff have many years of experience working with those unhoused in the city. In regards to sexual assault, the city stated "any harassing or violent behaviour is not tolerated in any of the City's shelter sites."

"If anyone feels like they are in an unsafe situation, or has been assaulted, we strongly encourage them to speak to any of the onsite shelter staff or support service providers."

Alongside Jewell, resident Jason Richie was trapped in the building in February 2021 when a fire broke out on the fifth floor. Both residents mentioned how emergency exits were locked and residents were unable to leave.

Richie, who was on the floor where the fire broke out, had to manually push the door open with another resident to escape. This goes against Ontario's Fire Protection and Prevention Act as emergency exits were inaccessible.

"My room was full of smoke, I was coughing up black stuff... they never replaced my stuff and they didn't reimburse me either," says Richie. "Nothing — they didn't even say sorry."

The lack of communication from staff has been constant at the Bond, according to residents. In regards to the deaths of Bond residents, both Jewell and Richie said staff don't let them know if their friends have died.

"If I have a friend in there and they die in my arms, there's nothing, and then four days later someone else is in the room and all [my friends] stuff is in the trash," says Jewell. The only other way residents are aware of deaths in the building is when people are taken out in body bags. According to Jewell, it used to be once a week.

PRESSURE

Jewell stated that she began to see small changes once the Twitter account had been made, but the pressing issues weren't being acknowledged. Reis says that ESN Parkdale had not been contacted by Dixon Hall in regards to the internal issues being publicized online.

But, according to residents, the shelter announced a general meeting for residents to express their complaints and began to put up flyers for mental health resources.

"Our Twitter account prompted the first resident meeting that Dixon Hall organized," says Reis. However, "many of the residents weren't aware of this meeting because of how poorly advertised it was."

Since its introduction as a shelter hotel, some residents have taken the responsibility of advocating for safety within the Bond. Currently, groups of residents and members of ESN Parkdale have begun tabling initiatives adjacent to the shelter to provide residents with coffee, food and support weekly.

"Having a one-day thing a week has helped me to get more stabilized," Dring told us. "Now I've gotten back on track, and mixing with different people that are outside, not just stuck in this mess."

This article is dedicated to Graeme Dring. The following is a short note by his friend, Jennifer Jewell:

Graeme was a really kind person and I trusted him, which is rare in this sort of environment. I miss him. Every time someone knocks on my door I think it's him. I didn't answer my door for a couple of days, I just couldn't, and even now I keep thinking it's him. Knowing he's gone still doesn't feel like he's gone. Graeme was an important part of my life and I'm tired of all the death here, I'm tired of losing my friends. There are friends that I've lost and I can't even confirm if they're gone or not because they're just not here anymore. They put someone in Graeme's room the same night they took him off life support. All of his stuff is gone.



Bond Shelter resident Jennifer Jewell holds flyers about shelter standards in Toronto. Photo by Shannon Carranco

POLICING THE NEOLIBERAL CITY

The Hoser - John Clarke

IT has been reported that "In Toronto, 10 per cent of all police contacts, some 360,000 interactions, are with people experiencing homelessness." It is also estimated that, "On any given day over 8,500 people in Toronto" are without housing. This means that, in a city with almost 3 million residents, a very major portion of an enormous budget for 'police services,' now well beyond \$1 billion a year, is being devoted to an effective crackdown on a few thousand visibly destitute people, concentrated in the central urban area.

The dominant political agenda in Canada over the last several decades has produced social cutbacks, a growth of low wage precarious work and a relentless pursuit of upscale redevelopment. The 'neoliberal city' that has resulted is a place where some enjoy luxury housing, while others struggle to put food on the table and re-

main housed. Such a city generates enormous social tensions and a brand of police activity that is intended to keep the lid on them.

For 28 years, I was an organizer with the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP). In that capacity, I had a very ample opportunity to see the 'law enforcement' side of the war on the poor in operation. One day, I intervened in a situation where a cop was giving a ticket to a homeless man in a public park. The 'offence' he was accused of was that of camping in a park without a permit. Yet, he had been simply sitting on the grass with a closed bag beside him.

The cop had issued the ticket, he freely acknowledged, because local businesses didn't want homeless people gathering at that location. This is exactly how the 'complaint driven' forms of police activity unfold. Local business and residents' groups communicate their concerns to the police, who then act as armed agents of gentrification. The process is dubious, in terms of any adherence

to law, but the kind of 'order' that is being established and whose interests it serves are very clear to see. The massive police operations to clear out homeless camps that followed the end of the pandemic lockdown period were only a larger scale pursuit of the same objectives.

SOCIAL CONTROL

If we go back to the roots of policing in history, we will readily understand that the repressive activity being unleashed today, in the context of austerity, inequality and an extreme commodification of housing, is really in line with the essential function that the police have always discharged. We may consider the formation of the Metropolitan Police Force in London, England, in 1829, with its mandate to impose order on the impoverished working class communities thrown up by the Industrial Revolution. We can also consider the creation of the forerunner of the RCMP, in 1873, as a para-

The city's Toronto Police Service budget was over \$1 billion in 2022. Photo by Shannon Carranco



military means of clearing Indigenous people from their traditional territories. Policing has always been about imposing social control on potentially restive populations in the interests of those with economic and political power.

Exploitation, economic disadvantage and social abandonment play out in this society along lines that are deeply and fundamentally racist. That police activity in Toronto reflects this harsh reality, and that it is itself notoriously racist, is anything but surprising. As of 2020, Black people made up 8.8 per cent of the city's population but were the object of almost a third of the charges laid by police. It has also been determined, quite appallingly, that "between 2013 and 2017, a Black person in Toronto was 20 times more likely to be shot and killed by police than a white person."

The demand to defund the police, that took on such a pressing nature in the period after the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020, had an impact right here in Toronto. As I write this, a municipal election is underway that sadly has involved very little challenge to the massive and costly deployment of police power in Toronto. The new City Council will operate with that vast institution of enforcement intact and the social and economic injustices it upholds undiminished.

Despite this, far from having lost its significance, the demand to defund the police still points the way forward for communities in these harsh and uncertain times. We face an enormous cost of living crisis, the threat of a major economic downturn and the prospect of further rounds of austerity and social cutbacks. To continue to pour the resources needed to respond to these challenges into buttressing the repressive power of the police is indefensible. The incoming City Council must face relentless community pressure to address this livid question.

The police were not created to keep poor and racialized working class communities safe. When OCAP was involved in a campaign to get a basketball court constructed in a neighbourhood where many Somali people lived, parents told us that they wanted this for their children because, if they had to travel any distance for recreation, they would be at risk from the police. There was no sense among these families of being served or protected by the cops. On the contrary, they saw the police as a threat and a danger and, in this, they were entirely correct.

The huge outlay of resources that goes into the persecution and harassment of poor and racialized communities in this city by the police would, indeed, be put to much better use if it were diverted into services that actually conform to valid and important social needs. Law and order advocates and centrist apologists may be aghast at such a contention but, if we want our communities to be safe, the demand to defund the police makes an enormous amount of sense.

How Scarborough warehouse workers defeated HBC



Workers on strike at the HBC Scarborough warehouse stop a bus of scabs (aka "replacement workers") from entering the workplace to break the strike. Photo courtesy Unifor Local 40



- Rank And File.ca
Alia Karim, Kevin Brice-Lall
and Taylor Welsh

ON JUNE 30, over 330 e-commerce logistics workers in a Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) warehouse in Scarborough, Ontario, won their nine-day strike for wage increases, retroactive pay, and no concessions.

In battles, which they posted about on Twitter, the strikers turned away trucks and scab buses trying to get into the warehouse all under the surveillance of HBC management.

Predominantly from new immigrant communities, the union members of Unifor Local 40 courageously held a picket line 24 hours a day and defeated Canada's oldest corporation.

PANDEMIC WAGE FREEZE

On the picket lines, workers said the key issue was fair pay. Despite working throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, they didn't receive a raise for three years.

"We didn't miss a day," explained one picketer. "And during that time, the only extra money that we got was what the government gave. After that, we didn't get anything else."

Months into the pandemic, HBC temporarily closed stores and laid off 600 of their retail workers in stores, but their online busi-

ness boomed. They forced their warehouse workers to process more online orders without any additional compensation.

Another worker said that they agreed to extend the current contract without a wage increase for one year, but after that "we kept on working with no contract, no raise, no nothing. When talks broke down, we didn't have a choice but to strike."

INFLATION AND HBC EXPANSION

After the worst of the COVID-19 crisis, the inflation rate climbed to a forty year high of 6.9 per cent in Ontario.

"Since the pandemic hit, it's gone from being okay, to paycheck-to-paycheck," one worker explained. "We have people who don't know how to come into work next week if they have to buy gas. We have people going to the food bank to feed their family. It's getting crazy."

With the dramatic increases in fuel, food, housing and utility costs, the strike was necessary to force HBC's hand as the corporation reorganizes to expand its lucrative online shopping.

It's so lucrative, the strikers said HBC conducted renovations in the warehouse to expand warehouse production.

"We're seeing construction going on, we're seeing an additional night shift that's going to make this building open 24/7, and brand new delivery vehicles."

One worker put it bluntly, "Your progress is on my back."

Stopping warehouse production was the best tool to halt the profit-making and force HBC to negotiate a better offer.

HBC'S PANDEMIC SUBSIDIES

HBC was a recipient of the federal government's so-called Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), which covered upwards of 75 per cent of an employee's salary up to a maximum of \$847 per week. The subsidy is not a wage subsidy, but a payroll subsidy.

The program ran from March 15, 2020, and October 23, 2021 and has cost at least \$100 billion in public money. As Rankandfile.ca observed at the outset of CEWS, there were almost no barriers for corporations to CEWS access, including no restrictions on profits, dividends, or executive pay.

We do not know how much HBC collected in CEWS subsidies because the federal government will not disclose these figures. We do know that their e-commerce division generated significant revenue for the corporation throughout the pandemic.

Despite this, HBC postponed bargaining around the May 2021 contract expiry, and only offered pay increases on a "go-forward" basis, and not the period after the contract expiry.

By asking to negotiate a contract with a "go-forward" offer, HBC management tried



to freeze wages for the same period the corporation accepted public money through CEWS. Workers risked COVID-19 to keep operations running, postponed bargaining in good faith, and generated major profits for the corporation while receiving no share of them.

HBC management gambled on workers feeling desperate enough to take any increase — and the public not finding out about it. The workers called HBC's bluff and demonstrated that they can push back collectively on the picket line.

BUILDING SOLIDARITY ACROSS SHIFTS

Workers in the warehouse are predominantly new immigrants, many of whom do not speak English as their first language. This created barriers to building up support for a strike.

Not only did they face linguistic differences, but they had to communicate across different day and night shifts.

"One of the things that we faced before was each shift was sort of against each other — like 'We did more than you!' and all this kind of stuff," explained one worker. Management would try to push one shift to process more than the next shift, and use these new benchmarks to tighten each shift's deadlines.

Talking to everyone in different shifts was difficult, so throughout bargaining workers sent updates through a mobile group.

"When we saw it was leading in the direction of a strike, we started talking about it amongst ourselves. Information was going out telling them what was going on, and what we needed to do. It worked really, really well."

The majority of Unifor Local 40 members were also first-time strikers, so building their confidence was key. With a strike mandate of 98 per cent, they built tremendous unity to stand up against management. During the night shift they retained over 15 people at the line. As one picketer said, "If we let them pass, what's the point?"

Meanwhile, the fear of retaliation by HBC management hung over them.

As one steward recalled, "People were wondering, are they gonna get fired? Or, how am I going to get money to pay my rent or my mortgage?"

Another worker argued, "It being the first time for us on strike, we didn't really know what to expect — how long it's going to last. We're already in a difficult situation. As people come out and do this, it's a tough pill to swallow. But I think everybody's on the same page about why we are doing this, so that's why we have such good support."

HOLDING THE LINE

Only a few days into the strike, workers showed unwavering unity with each other to stop truckloads of products entering and leaving the warehouse. They turned back busloads of scabs from a staff agency who were offered \$1.25 more per hour to keep the warehouse running.

On the first day of the strike, management brought in 33 scabs in one bus and enforced a constant surveillance of security guards and

police. Then they escalated even more pressure on the picket line by trying to send three buses of workers in.

"They showed up with three buses! From one bus to three buses. They thought they would have it. Management stood out there and tried to negotiate with us but we weren't having it!" a steward proudly announced. "Move that bus!" the strikers cheered.

Workers said these moments on the picket line instantly transformed their local. As one striker reflected, "You'll find yourself talking to people that you didn't really talk to. When we go back to work, we'll be closer."

THERE IS POWER IN A UNION

The situation took a dramatic turn only days before the local won a new collective agreement. On Monday, June 27, HBC management successfully obtained a judge's strike-breaking injunction to curb the strikers' activities in a desperate effort to get back to business.

Despite that, the picket line held strong, refusing to let trucks and buses in. Their effort paid off. Within hours of the judge's ruling, HBC management requested a return to bargaining. Only after one more day of negotiations, they reached a new tentative agreement.

According to Unifor, 80 per cent of the union accepted their new agreement with the following highlights:

- * Wage increases for all members
- * \$1,500+ retroactive pay
- * Total pay increase of 13.3 per cent, not including retroactive pay
- * Employee benefit contribution at 2017 rate
- * New language to guarantee right to participate in discussions on new technology

This is a far cry from HBC management's refusal to give a retroactive pay increase. The \$1,500 for 330 members each totals around \$450,000 in compensation. When seen in light of HBC's lavish executive compensation model, it's clear they could always afford it.

Against the bigger picture of high inflation, a tight labour market, and other strikes against inflation, the members of Unifor Local 40 have shown how workers can get organized, strike, and win.



STOPPING THE BIG SPRAWL

briarpatch - Stephanie Leguichard

ONE morning in the middle of a campaign period, a developer handed Jane Fogal, a municipal councillor in Halton, Ontario, an envelope stuffed with cheques.

“There it all was, 10 cheques, each from a different name,” she recalls. Each name was a different member of a family that owned a land development company — the developer’s ploy to technically comply with a law forbidding corporations from donating to municipal politicians, while still trying to purchase Fogal’s political support.

“I thought, ‘Oh my God, you can have that back,’” she says. “But that’s how it goes. I’ve seen the corruption.”

Fogal returned the cheques to the developer, but other politicians are less conscientious, accepting hefty campaign funding from land developers and then doling out favours to them.

One of those politicians is Ontario’s premier, Doug Ford. Between 2018 and 2021, the National Observer reported, Ford’s Progressive Conservative government used ministerial zoning orders — directives that allow the Ontario municipal affairs minister to override existing planning and zoning rules, and which cannot be appealed — to push through development in areas with environmental concerns, directly benefiting developers who had together donated over \$200,000 to Ford’s party and another conservative group.

What those developers want is suburban sprawl.

In 2020, the Ford government proposed revisions to the growth plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe region, which stretches across southern Ontario and encompasses the Greater Toronto Area. The original growth plan, created in 2006, was intended to make municipalities denser and more transit-friendly. Ford’s

changes reverse course. Anti-sprawl advocates like Fogal have called the revised plan “The Big Sprawl.” She describes it as “the biggest land grab that I’ve ever seen. It’s only for the benefit of the land speculators, and we have to stop it.”

The revised plan would destroy hundreds of acres of natural areas and farmland by designating it for suburban development. It would mandate that 81 per cent of the region’s population growth through 2051 be accommodated by building new suburban housing rather than by investing in affordable housing within already developed areas.

THE MOVEMENT TO STOP SPRAWL

Since 2020, activists have built a “Stop Sprawl” coalition across the Greater Golden Horseshoe region, drawing in farmers, environmentalists and Indigenous activists. Fogal, who spearheads the movement in Halton, a regional municipality in the western part of the Golden Horseshoe, says that 90 per cent of

Hamilton residents surveyed are opposed to expanding the urban boundary.

She warns that giving the green light to even more sprawl would be catastrophic for the environment and for local residents. It would make the population even more car-dependent, supplanting parks with parking lots and relegating public transit and walkability to the past. It would create purely commercial landscapes dominated by big box franchises, chain restaurants, gas stations and strip malls.

Thad Williamson, professor and author of *Sprawl, Justice, and Citizenship: The Civic Costs of the American Way of Life*, writes, “Suburban sprawl as currently practiced is fundamentally hostile to the aspiration of achieving a society capable of meeting even modest norms of equal opportunity. Sprawl is also constituent of a way of life that prioritizes privatism and consumerism over engaged political participation and ecological sustainability.”

Sprawl takes money out of public coffers in urban areas — where low-income and racialized people tend to live — and moves it to wealthy, white suburbs. In *The Shape of the Suburbs: Understanding Toronto's Sprawl*, author John Sewell describes how as Toronto's suburbs expanded throughout the latter half of the 20th century, the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) brought public transit service to the suburbs. But low suburban density meant low ridership numbers. It was an expensive pursuit that eventually forced the TTC to raise fares and cut back on urban transit routes.

What politicians call “low-density development” requires enormous amounts of money for new roads, sewers, highways and their subsequent maintenance. While infrastructure spending isn't something to be avoided, sprawl is the least efficient way to manage it. Estimates by the City of Ottawa show that low-density development costs taxpayers approximately \$465 per person, while higher-density development, like apartments, saves about \$606 per person by making use of existing infrastructure.

This isn't anything new — Ford has simply accelerated the trajectory toward sprawl that the governments of Ontario and Toronto started subsidizing after the First World War. In 1927, Sewell writes, the Ontario government subsidized suburban roads, paying 40 per cent of the cost to construct a road and 20 per cent of the cost to maintain it. Later, in 1965, the province announced it would begin charging less than break-even rates for water and sewer services in suburbs and in proposed suburban development sites — making suburban development even more lucrative.

Farmers have joined the fight to protest the 319 acres of agricultural land being lost each day across Ontario. The land covered by Ford's growth plan is home to some of the highest quality farmland in Canada. Over 861,000 jobs are provided by the food and farming sector, accounting for at least \$46 billion of Ontario's economy. Once farmland is paved over, it's unlikely to be converted back to farmland, driving farmers to look for land to farm farther afield.

The coalition against sprawl also includes Indigenous groups who argue that land should be returned to Indigenous nations, and environmental activists who caution that more sprawl would escalate emissions, devastate wildlife and drain wetlands that are essential for clean water and for mitigating flooding when storms hit the area.

IS SPRAWL NECESSARY?

Pro-sprawl politicians argue that sprawl is necessary to accommodate the projected growth in the population, which is expected to reach around 10 million in the Greater Toronto Area by 2046. They insist that sprawl is simply a matter of increasing supply to meet demand.

The truth is that sprawl is absolutely unnecessary.

According to some urban planners and environmental lawyers, even assuming the highest population growth projections, all of Toronto's newcomers in the next 30 years can be accommodated within the existing urban boundary. Ontario Green Party leader Mike Schreiner points to the 88,000 acres of developable land already within southern Ontario's existing urban areas.

“Lots of neighbourhoods in the [Golden Horseshoe], they're just not serving their residents now,” says environmental lawyer Phil Pothen. “It's just not practical to do what you need to do on foot or by [public] transit. And the reason behind that is that they don't have the densities and mixes of uses to support it.”

Ontario's 2017 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe set a density target of 80 residents or jobs per hectare in greenfields — areas where developers tend to build single-family homes. But Ford's 2020 revisions halve that target to 40 people per hectare in the Greater Golden Horseshoe's peripheral municipalities.

Pothen says that increasing the density to 100 residents and jobs per hectare would pass the threshold making public transportation feasible, because it would serve enough people to generate sufficient revenue.

THE MISSING MIDDLE

Pothen argues that in past decades, Toronto's housing development has focused on the polar ends of housing density.

On the low-density side, you find large single-unit detached houses with colossal yards, driveways and two-car garages in suburbia. As Pothen explains, “the mid-2000s home sizes were the extreme, globally and historically,” with the average home size in Canada exploding from 1,050 square feet in 1975 to 1,950 square feet in 2010.

On the high-density side are highrise apartment buildings, eyesores that relegate many residents to shoebox condos thousands of feet above the street.

Developers and politicians have stifled our capacity to even imagine alternatives between these two extremes.

But between them lies what urban planners call the “missing middle.” According to urban planner Paul Shaker, these include low and mid-rise apartment buildings, stacked and side-by-side duplexes, courtyard buildings, townhouses, medium multiplexes, stacked triplexes, live-work housing and secondary dwelling units that are attached or sit on the same land lot as single-family homes.

Missing middle housing often goes hand in hand with mixed-use zoning, which allows residential, commercial and cultural buildings like libraries and museums to be built close together. This is the key to generating walkable, tight-knit communities where arts and culture can flourish.

But current municipal bylaws enforce exclusionary zoning which requires that only single-family houses be built in vast swathes of the region. These houses are usually priced so that only middle- and high-income earners can buy them. In these areas, any other type of housing proposal has to undergo an expensive and arcane bureaucratic process to receive special permission from both the government and the community.

Because of these bylaws, many municipalities are more likely to approve a hideous McMansion than a well-designed apartment building that might house Black and brown low-income families.

As Fogal tells me, “People don't like change and so they come out against everything that's proposed. What they're really worried about is their own property value.”

SPRAWL AND COLONIZATION

Sherry Saevil is the co-founder of an Indigenous organization in the Halton region called Grandmother's Voice. She says the incessant encroachment of developers is part of a long history of governments violating treaties.

“Prior to settlement, the Niagara Escarpment was a trail where Indigenous people would travel on foot to get to Niagara Falls, because that's where a lot of Nations from the United States and Canada would gather to discuss how to make sure our needs and desires are met, knowing that there will be this huge expansion of non-Indigenous people coming to this land,” Saevil explains. “They're starting to develop [quarries] at the foot of the Niagara Escarpment, which is a huge problem.”

The Niagara Escarpment runs through 725 kilometres of the western portion of the Greater Golden Horseshoe region. In addition to its cultural importance for Indigenous Peoples, it's a UNESCO biosphere reserve — the one with the highest level of species diversity in Canada. By allowing development within the biosphere, Doug Ford is flouting the Greenbelt Act of 2005, which was designed specifically to curb sprawl.

He's also transgressing agreements with Indigenous Peoples that cover southern Ontario. One of these treaties is the Haldimand Grant of 1784, in which the Haudenosaunee were promised 10 kilometres on each side of the Grand River — land that's now used by cities like Kitchener and Brantford. While the Crown claims the land was later surrendered, traditional Haudenosaunee chiefs maintain that the land is unceded — and in 2021, chiefs declared a moratorium on development across the entire Haldimand Tract. Haldimand County is one of the greenfield areas where Ford halved the density target from 80 to 40 people or jobs per hectare.

According to Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs, in Ontario there are 111

specific land claims that are in progress or in active litigation. As Saevil explains, “The government has never settled the debt with Indigenous communities... So when we're talking about suburban sprawl, it's nothing new.”

THE SPREAD OF THE STOP SPRAWL COALITION

Since 2021, the burgeoning Stop Sprawl movement has spawned campaigns in many other municipalities in the Golden Horseshoe region, including York, Peel, Halton, Hamilton, Durham, Oxford County and Orillia.

According to Michelle Tom, a Stop Sprawl organizer in both Halton and Hamilton, the movement has used an array of strategies.

“We fundraised and were able to get 1,600 lawn signs out, all over the city. Folks wrote letters to the editor; shared items on social media explaining better solutions to make affordable, walkable neighbourhoods; and our mapping team analyzed the city for empty lots that could accommodate more housing in a variety of forms. People made videos, we had rallies, and a Farmfest concert.”

Nancy Hurst, a co-founder of Stop Sprawl in Hamilton, says that the movement's efforts in Hamilton and Halton have already been successful in both municipalities. Thanks to unanimous and ardent opposition from the community at city council meetings, the municipal government voted against expanding the urban boundary.

In Hamilton, the city council also approved a new official plan that anti-sprawl activists helped create, which, Hurst says, “includes opportunities for inclusionary zoning, a mix of housing types allowed to be built and the preservation of our Hamilton Mountain farmland.” Inclusionary zoning requires developers to create affordable units in new residential developments.

Ford's Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steve Clark, condemned Hamilton's “no urban boundary expansion” proposal as “irresponsible.” In April, Ford passed Bill 109, which Hurst says “now allows Ford to appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal any municipality's official plan,” potentially reversing the plan. Given the Ford government's hostility, Hurst believes it's more crucial than ever to support the fight against sprawl across the Golden Horseshoe.

Ontario's Stop Sprawl movement serves as a reminder that the people — not the market — should have the power to steward the growth of their own communities.



The Rally for Climate, Communities, and Nature in May. Photo by Michelle Tom



The first U of T fossil fuel divestment march, in November 2014. Photo by Milan Ilnyckyi

Activists gather in front of the U of T during the second divestment march in October 2015. Photo by Milan Ilnycky



Illustration courtesy
of The Resolve

The return to toxic office culture

The Resolve - Sophia Murphy

SAFETY PLANS AND OTHER TIPS TO SURVIVE OFFICE MICROAGGRESSIONS

BEING away from the office environment for the last two years gave Sandra* a unique opportunity to reflect on her experience as a Black woman in the workplace and what she saw happen to other racialized employees. Sandra, who has worked in the public-service sector for over 20 years and manages a team of seven people, realized she had been suffering under the toxic culture of her office.

Before the pandemic hit, she was ready to leave her department and the organization. Sandra credits working from home for saving her career; virtual work meant being away from the casual water-cooler conversations, office banter, and the unexpected visitors who had no problem barging into her office to “chat.”

With those social elements eliminated, Sandra found she was no longer privy to, nor the victim of, any of the microaggressions or discrimination she had experienced in person. She felt more relaxed and rested than she had in years.

So when news came that she would have to return to the office, Sandra said she was “panicked at the thought of going back.”

She is one of the many people who have had no choice but to return to the office, after the Ontario government announced that public servants must return to in-person work as of April 4.

The decision signalled to companies across Ontario that businesses could resume their pre-pandemic normal. Easing restrictions and mandates meant it was only a matter of time before other sectors demanded their workers' return.

If you're one of the many people who headed back to the office, you may have mixed feelings. But for some Black employees, their hesitancy doesn't stem primarily from the morning commute, COVID concerns, or the daily grind; it's more a matter of mental health.

Black workers who faced daily microaggressions, discrimination, and racism in their work-

place, pre-COVID, are now coming to terms with returning to the same toxic work environments.

CALL IT WHAT IT IS

Microaggressions have gained a lot of attention in recent years. While often perceived as less overt and damaging than blatant discriminatory acts, those slights and subtle attacks can leave you questioning yourself, your interpretation of a situation, and your capabilities.

But the term “microaggression” does a disservice to Black people and the mental health system at large, says Nicole Franklin, a registered social worker, psychotherapist and the owner of Live Free Counseling Services and the Black Therapist Collective.

“It's so important that the word reflects the impact. And these acts have a macro impact, especially on the mental, physical, and emotional health of Black people,” Franklin says.

She suggests we should call it what it is: “Racism in the workplace.”

“The word ‘microaggression’ is more comfortable for people who are not experiencing it. It's easier for them to address a microaggression than a racist incident,” she says.

‘WE WEREN'T WELCOME’

Sandra remembers when she or other racialized people were excluded from meetings and key decision-making groups, even though the projects were within their scope of expertise. When confronted, the perpetrators offered no valid reason for the exclusion, no apology or acknowledgement that they had left an integral colleague out of the process.

Of those incidents, Sandra says, “It makes you feel like a coddled child who knows nothing. Their actions sent a clear message to us that we weren't welcome at the ‘big people’ table.”

In another incident, two coworkers called Sandra's promotion into question. They made

the comments aloud and with a roomful of people present. It was an eye-opening moment for her and one she won't ever forget.

On many occasions she became aware of derogatory and racist comments made by coworkers about other racialized people, too. None of the offenders faced disciplinary action, she says, even when the remarks were made in front of upper management.

Realizing that senior management was complicit in these acts brought additional pressure and stress. “I just knew I couldn't bring my complaints to anyone,” Sandra says.

WALKING A TIGHTROPE

Richard*, an analyst and one of few Black people in his specialized field, says he often walks a tightrope, watching what he says and how he says it, so he won't be seen as the stereotypical “angry Black man.”

Over the years, he's repeatedly had to prove himself to certain coworkers, and people often over-scrutinize his work. “Some people see a Black person and automatically question what they're doing there and whether they know what they are doing,” he says.

When asked how he deals with these situations, he says, “I think, as Black people, we learn to just carry on. Yes, it might hurt, but what can you do about it? You can't change it. You accept it and internalize it, for better or worse.”

It's that internalization, according to Franklin, that's most damaging.

“You can leave a workplace or walk out of a store that's treating you unfairly. But what you're processing on a deeper level still makes you feel like you're the problem. And that is very hard to overcome,” Franklin says.

She contends that most workplaces don't provide enough safety and security for their workers, or safe processes to report transgressions.

CREATE A SAFETY PLAN

Sandra and Richard share Franklin's sentiments. They say they'd like to see a genuine change from the top down, which includes better policies around harassment, inclusion, and discrimination, and more support from senior management.

Franklin encourages Black people to create change. “I love the fact that people are creating new environments, new spaces, and new businesses that are built from the ground up with different philosophies and practices with the idea of staff wellness in mind.”

Franklin reminds us Black mental health is about community care. Acknowledging your feelings and seeking therapy are all important and necessary steps. But it's also vital to speak up when you can and move towards actionable steps that can benefit us all.

Franklin advises employees returning to toxic settings to develop a “safety plan.” This type of plan outlines actions you can take when different scenarios arise. A plan may include measures such as speaking up, reporting someone, holding people accountable, or documenting transgressions. While you can develop a safety plan on your own, it's best to seek the help of a mental health professional.

“A safety plan may sound intense. But it's what we need to do to protect ourselves. It provides a strategic way to fight back through small everyday acts of resistance that feel manageable,” Franklin says.

When news came that she would have to return, Sandra was quick to reach out to a counselor who helped her develop strategies and coping mechanisms.

Since seeing a therapist, Sandra says, “My whole mentality has changed. I am now fully prepared to call out these acts and the perpetrators. Because I know, now, that the mental strain of not saying anything is worse than any backlash I could receive.”

For those who find they are in a position where they can't say or do anything, Franklin recommends documenting transgressions as they occur. And if possible, seek out others who have had similar experiences. There is power in numbers.

She also urges employees to establish boundaries between themselves and their coworkers early on.

Finally, Franklin wants people to understand that you're not obliged to suffer through. “It's okay to leave. It doesn't make you weak,” she says. Leaving is sometimes the best decision you can make for your mental health.

Perhaps the biggest issue regarding toxic workplaces is that we don't talk enough about the racial transgressions we experience there. But Franklin maintains, “It's not all on us; this is a systemic issue. It's the system's responsibility to acknowledge that this is happening, and protect us. But we also can't wait for those changes.”

*Names have been changed

Kitchen Stereo



André Ethier (left) and Joseph Shabason (right) of Fresh Pepper. Photo by Colin Medley, art by Tom Beedham

FRESH PEPPER BAND MEMBERS JOSEPH SHABASON & ANDRÉ ETHIER COMPARE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY RESUMÉS, AND THE GRIND THAT CONNECTS MUSIC AND SERVICE WORKERS

NEW FEELING - Tom Beedham

RATTLING off a handful of restaurant gigs he worked on College Street and Queen Street West, André Ethier is filling in a personal map of Toronto's downtown when he lands on the time he quit a job to tour with the band the Deadly Snakes and ended up barbacking the original Silver Dollar Room through venue talent booker Dan Burke.

"I was complaining that I didn't have a job, and Dan was like, 'Come down to the Silver Dollar.' That was horrific," Ethier recalls.

Before it was demolished and rebuilt to exact specifications as a sanitized cocktail lounge on the same site, the venue spent the best part of two decades enduring an era of sticky-floored underground guitar music and the occasional onstage brawl — not to mention the notorious after-hours party space downstairs.

"My training shift was like, 'The northwest corner is run by this gang, so don't go in there; don't clear any drinks.' The previous busser had left because he had been given a concussion by some criminals that had picked him up and dropped him on his head on the cement floor," Ethier said.

As Ethier offers his side of the Silver Dollar Room, Joseph Shabason is having trouble holding back his exasperation. Speaking over the phone from Shabason's kitchen after lunch at Ossington falafel joint the Haifa Room, the pair is on the line to chat up Fresh

Pepper, a band they assembled with peers between pandemic restrictions. The core members are rounded out with Kieran Adams on drums, Thom Gill on keys, and Bram Gielen on bass — familiar names for fans of Shabason's solo records and work in DIANA; as well as vocalists Robin Dann and Felicity Williams, two more locally in-demand performers perhaps best recognized at the front of Bernice, which also features Gill.

Like Ethier, Shabason has also put in his time in the service industry, waiting tables and working in kitchens. "I've also worked in so many wedding bands," Shabason says, "[which is also] somewhat service industry — we'd be eating in closets and working with all of the servers."

In fact, Ethier and Shabason report, everyone on Fresh Pepper's debut self-titled album has spent time supplementing their music careers in restaurants and kitchens.

"They're very related," Ethier reiterates. "Two perhaps enjoyed industries in Toronto, but underappreciated for how they grind people down and how difficult it is to grow up [around] and within those industries."

Fresh Pepper's music provides a summit for service and music workers alike, toasting their interdependencies and challenging the conditions they bump against with metaphor-rich vignettes. "Dry your eyes Susie Q / An actor's face at the window when it's raining," Ethier sings over a glassy set of keys before an upward saxophone swirl uproots the action and tosses it into glistening dream-like suspension on opening song "New Ways of Chopping Onions." In the space of two lines, the song calls to mind film, music, and kitchen

traditions and trade secrets; the antipsychotic drug Seroquel; even Rutger Hauer's "tears in rain" monologue from the end of *Blade Runner* — a bouquet of gestures to some untold obstacles and indignities commonly endured in entertaining.

On a similar tip, "Seahorse Tranquilizer" features a guest appearance from Destroyer's Dan Bejar, stepping in to sing about the meticulous, extravagant lengths restaurateurs will go to provide a comfortable dining experience — "We harvest insane roses," Bejar sings, Dann and Williams echoing him before Ethier joins in: "Every table gets a rose / Every table gets a candle." It all gets lost in the busy dining-room chatter that pervades the track, playing off like a floor staff's collective fantasy. That invisibilized verisimilitude is baked into the Fresh Pepper project.

"It does relate to the pandemic," Ethier says, though he and Shabason are reluctant to ascribe too much of the album's influence to its pandemic origins. "Playing live shows and being a band took a hit during the pandemic — [we] more or less couldn't play shows, and restaurants couldn't open."

Writing a record was all they could do to nourish themselves.

"We'd call each other every day and just talk through things in a really nice way, and the rest of the band was very much integral to the record being done, but at the end of the day it was André and I just in the weeds day in and day out — and it felt nice to be there with somebody because it had just been me by myself or with my toddler for so long that to sort of feel like an adult again was doing something meaningful," Shabason reflects. "Not that raising a child isn't meaningful, but

it's also fuckin' monotonous and crazy-making sometimes. And this was just pure joy for me."

"The time flew," Ethier adds.

Time figures prominently across the record: screaming into the foreground at the close of "New Ways of Chopping Onions" as an alarm clock telegraphs the opener was all a dream, some ungodly non-billable overtime; closing in with mounting intensity on the jazz noir Davis nod "Walkin'"; sloshing through a lazy river of woozy guitar bends and hungover flotsam and jetsam on "Waiting On"; swirling down the drain after blasting drum skins and assorted percussion implements like so many dishes with hot, vaporous sax fumes on "Dishpit." On "Prep Cook in the Weeds," the titular narrator watches flies slowly accumulate on the hands of a kitchen clock — time appearing to slow so much the future erases itself, life disappearing under the weight of agents of decay, the kitchen's very biochemistry under threat.

"It's a horrible thing to be at work," Ethier says about his lyrics. "The flies have taken the wheel and they're driving time."

This could be pretty oppressive imagery, but the band diffuses the atmosphere with a sublime lightness, collectively conveying a kind of zen you could only arrive at through repetition, distance, and mutual support.

"For me, this record was the first time since the start of the pandemic where time kind of dissolved," Shabason enthuses. "This was maybe the first time we had been allowed to be in a room together in a full year, so I think everyone was really excited, too. It felt joyful and fun and easy and like this kind of collective exhale of just being like, 'Oh, this is so nice.'"

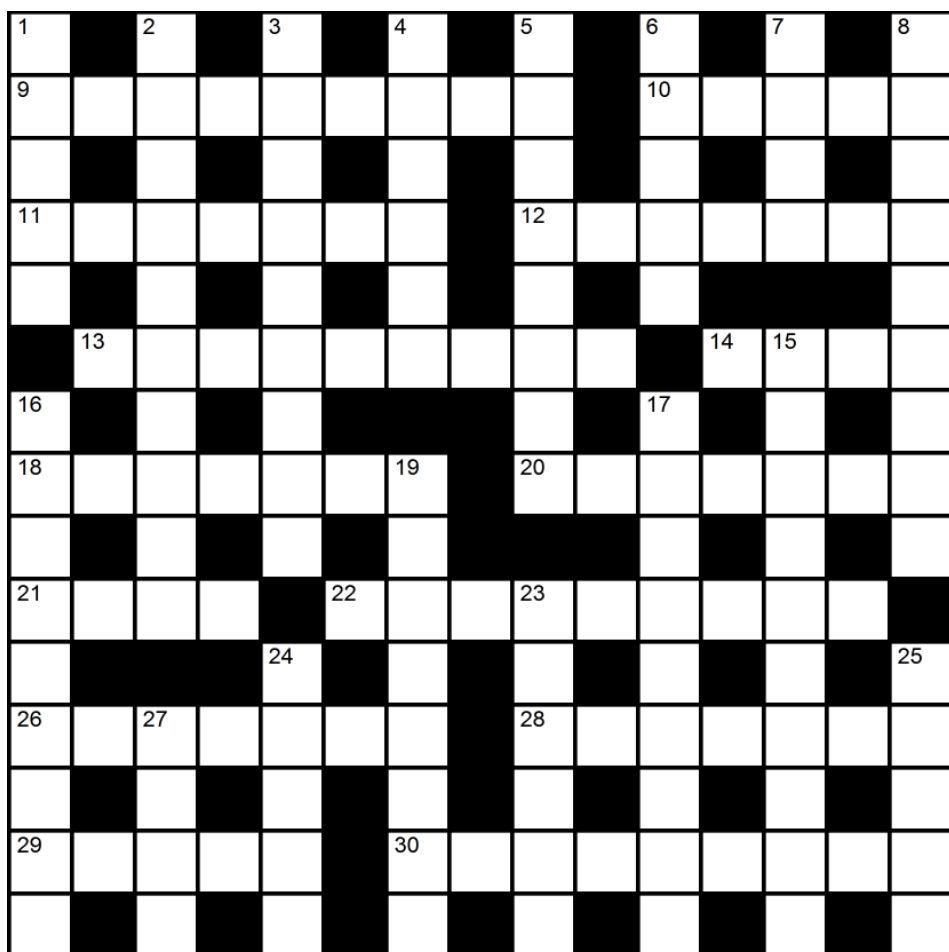
That's felt in everything from the loose physicality to the folk wisdoms they elevate to dreamy guiding light. Shabason's studio consists of one room, so to accommodate Adams' drums, he and Gill recorded scratch parts on an MS-20 synthesizer and an early 2000s Yamaha MOTIF for the beds but ultimately kept them intact; Ethier's guitar parts ring out without needing to be resolved. "Congee Around Me" builds itself up into an atmosphere of collective care and nourishment, its characters finding abundance in the elemental simplicity of pantry staples. It's a dynamic that's central to the song itself, Dann and Williams supporting Ethier's vocals while the rest of the band patiently add their parts in brushes and swells.

"I hear it, and it makes me well up," Shabason says about the song, though he might as well be talking about the album. "It's everyone working in concert to make this thing that feels so emotional."

Fresh Pepper's self-titled debut is out now via Telephone Explosion Records.

Crossword puzzle

Solving the puzzle one word at a time



ACROSS

- 9 Playwright (9)
- 10 Moor (3,2)
- 11 Space surrounding an altar (7)
- 12 Quickly (7)
- 13 Runner (9)
- 14 Cougar (4)
- 18 Distinct sort or kind (7)
- 20 Surgical knife (7)
- 21 A great deal (4)
- 22 Herald (9)
- 26 Hedge (7)
- 28 Books of maps (7)
- 29 Young hooter (5)
- 30 Abbreviated (9)

DOWN

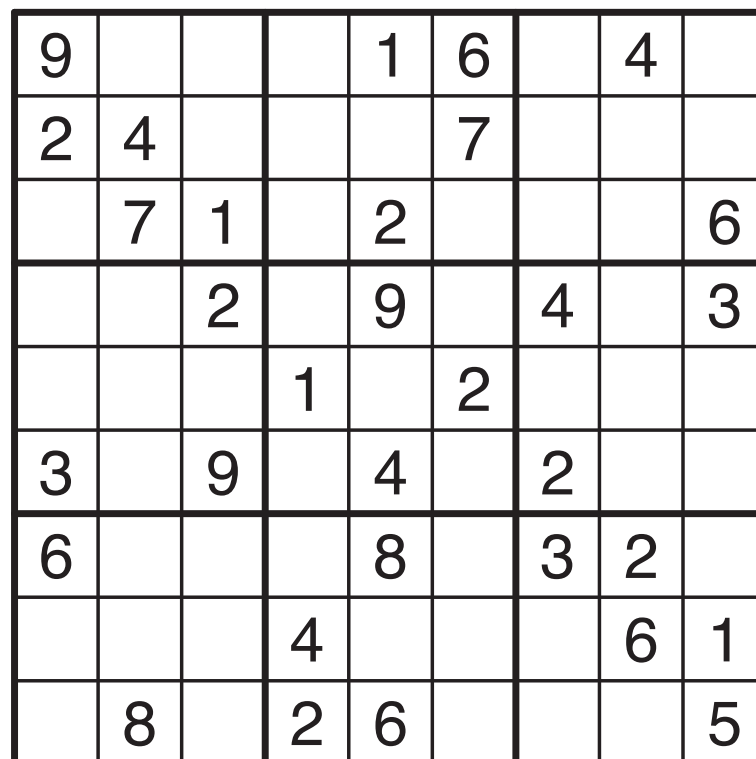
- 1 Decree (5)
- 2 Executives (10)
- 3 Biting (9)
- 4 Fiddle (6)
- 5 Old liners (8)
- 6 The Roman Empire's home country(5)
- 7 Large mass of floating ice (4)
- 8 As thumbs are (9)
- 15 Disagreeable (10)
- 16 Psalter (5,4)
- 17 Moon (9)
- 19 Astonishment (8)
- 23 Lea (6)
- 24 Threescore (5)
- 25 Stage whisper (5)
- 27 Depend (4)

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Crosswordsite

Sudoku

Sudoku is played on a grid of 9 x 9 spaces. Within the rows and columns are 9 "squares" (made up of 3 x 3 spaces). Each row, column and square (9 spaces each) needs to be filled out with the numbers 1-9, without repeating any numbers within the row, column or square.

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Web Sudoku



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Remaking the Port Lands and the mouth of the Don River. Photos by Ian Willms



View from the Port Lands.



THE DON'S NEW LOOK

The Hoser - Megan DeLaire

Since the late 1800s, Toronto's lower Don River and the pace of urban development in the city's east end have interacted like turbulent streams, clashing, spinning off and never quite aligning.

The pressures of urbanization and industrialization eventually squeezed the river into an artificially straight channel and turned its mouth into a choked, concrete-lined waterway.

Not to be contained, the river finds its way out and into the streets and structures of the city's Port Lands and South Riverdale areas, which are plagued by intermittent, low-level floods after storms. If the area were to be hit with a major storm on the scale of the deadly

Hurricane Hazel of 1954, 290 hectares of land east of the city's core would be at risk of severe flooding.

The municipal, provincial, and federal governments are trying to align these currents and correct the damage done. A new river mouth, a river valley, and an island are being made as part of the \$1.25-billion Don Mouth Naturalization and Port Lands Flood Protection Project (DMNP), funded by the three levels of government. Construction is nearing completion, and the plan is for the Don to begin flowing through to the new river mouth in mid-2024.

The new Port Lands will be used to eventually house around 20,000 residents, and will also include a community centre, a school, and retail and mixed-use buildings. This densifies the downtown core, and brings new property tax revenues to the city.

With development once again driving the river's transformation, the question remains: Will hydrologists, ecologists and landscape architects be busy 100 years from now undoing the work done in this decade?

To read more about the DMNP, and what landscape design and conservation experts have to say about it, check out the full story at thehoser.ca