



# **GREATER TORONTO WORKERS' ASSEMBLY**

## **Discussion Bulletin**

### **OCTOBER 2011**

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# Platform Problems

## By Caitlin Hewitt-White

I would like to address some structural problems in the Solidarity Platform which make it unready for public use. First let me explain why I am presenting my ideas here when ideally I should have presented these at the last assembly. At September's assembly, we discussed the Platform, made amendments to specific demands, and voted on amendments that were not initially in keeping with the spirit of the original demands. Then – without specific discussion about Platform as a whole – we voted on the entire Platform. We strayed from process when we didn't ask for speakers for or against the motion to approve the entire Platform. Perhaps like others, I had been saving my comments about the Platform as a whole for this point in the process, because it could not be fragmented into amendments to individual demands. So, what follows is what I wanted to state if the chair had called for speakers against the motion to pass the Platform as amended. I have elaborated a bit here given that writing for the IDB allows for this, more so than would a minute or so in the course of speaking against a motion.

### Transitional demands... then what?

The solidarity Platform is internally inconsistent in how it envisions the state and our relationship to it. On the one hand, some demands – like public ownership of banks - presume an extensive state that would truly act in the interest of the working class (yet with capitalism intact). On the other hand, some demands presume a weak state that shies away from aggressive solutions like nationalization. An example of this is the demand for an empty homes tax, which is a possible tax policy that is not unthinkable in a neoliberal capitalist democracy like Canada. British Liberal Democrats proposed this very policy in September. If we wanted to deal with unused property and had a state strong enough to enact the previous demand of bringing banks under public ownership, then we could just confiscate empty homes and collectivize (or “nationalise”) them for the purposes of social housing, instead of merely taxing their owners. Likewise, if we were to calibrate the demand about banks to suit the state presumed by the demand for an empty homes tax, it would become a demand to merely increase state regulation of banks and financial services, or to place a Buffet tax on the rich. These two examples point to an overall inconsistency in the Platform. The document is politically indecisive and imprecise about the type of economy we want, and about the strength of a central governing body like the state at different stages of the struggle for socialism.

This brings me to another way to characterize the inconsistency across the demands. Some demands are transitional demands that presume the state and capitalism (e.g. “increase the minimum wage”; introduce mechanisms to increase unionization levels) while a small number of others are aggressively pie in the sky (e.g. “end imperialist military interventions” - how is this going to happen without an end to capitalism and the oil economy first?). And yet, all the demands are listed under “Transitional Demands”. This is not as big a problem as is the lack of a structured sense of time. The document needs some continuity from the more transitional demands that are possible within our current economic and political system, to the more idealistic demands that would be possible at a moment closer to the end of capitalism.

The introduction to the Platform needs more description of the phases of struggle. During the discussion at the last assembly, the crafters of the document repeatedly stated that the Platform is designed to strengthen the working class. This implies a trajectory that would go roughly like this: we win gains in worker's control of capital and political processes and institutions so that workers' primary needs can be met more effectively, and then we can build our capacities and strengths to self-organize into real threat to the state and capitalism, and then we may be ready for revolution.

A trajectory like this, or of any kind, is not made explicit in the preamble. The preamble states that we are proposing transitional measures without stating what we want to transition *to*. In fact, the preamble does not even utter the word *revolution!* I say all this recognizing that steps towards transformation will never be discrete and won't march a straight line directly to socialism. For instance, in winning gains that help the working class survive, we are simultaneously building our capacity; in expecting the state to fulfill our wishes we may be bought off, co-opted, and set back. I also recognize that we probably would not all agree on which steps to take on the path to socialism. However, the purpose of breaking the rough trajectory of struggle into less rough steps is to identify the main goal for each stage (e.g. transitional demands can increase working class power; then more advanced changes to the legal paradigm of private property can erode the entire class structure), to identify how we primarily interact with the state at each stage (e.g. first wrestle concessions from it; then expose its weaknesses; then actively disable it), and to show that there is a greater end in mind – total transformation. Surely, we

won't stop with increased welfare rates and tax reform, but the Platform implies that we just might.

Moreover, readers need a sense of what exactly we should do in order to demand things, and in addition to demanding things. Tucked away under the Platform section called "Governance" may lie the answer: "democratic transformation of all governing bodies and institutions including the development and implementation of constituent assemblies made up of neighbourhood, workplace and campus assemblies with decision-making powers."

Assemblies would be vital to achieving the transitional demands, as well as to any revolutionary activity that could lead to a new balance of forces within which capitalism and imperialism could cease. Because we are presuming that assemblies are better than what currently exists – a deep separation between social movements on the one hand, and unions and electoral parties on the other – and that they have the potential to bring about what we want, the ninth demand (quoted above) under "Governance" should be renamed "Our Priority" and placed at the very beginning of the document. And when we need to decide where to invest our time and energy as the GTWA, the formation of these democratic bodies should be our priority, as these are the bodies that can agitate for the rest of our demands, whether or not they are expressed in a document like the Platform. Practically speaking, this means that we should prioritize drawing people and struggles to the GTWA, as well as help nurture the development of like-minded assemblies in other spaces. The formation of assemblies is not a demand, but a priority – and might actually be a precondition to being able to demand anything else. Political bodies craft, refine, and mount demands of the state and capital; it is backwards to demand of *ourselves* that we form constituent assemblies – especially when we are already doing it! We should help people understand that no matter what they demand of political parties and the state, democratic yet structured assemblies maximize working class power, and we have to build them now.

### The use of the Platform

Here is the motion we passed in May:

MOTION: The Assembly develop a collective orientation to the October provincial elections. This would primarily take the form of: Drafting a People's Platform that spells out the main points of an anti-capitalist agenda for the Ontario 2011 elections with a view to making a few key interventions during the

elections. Public meetings/initiatives in the weeks leading up to the October 6 election to articulate perspectives. More frequent internal meetings to plan/assess our work and positions between now and October. **Passed.**

Compare this with the blurb that appears above the Platform as published on the GTWA's website:

"Members and supporters of the GTWA are encouraged to distribute it widely and use the ideas in it as a tool to engage friends, coworkers, neighbours and family in political discussions (especially in light of the upcoming election). The GTWA will use the platform as way to debate, articulate and promote our collective politics"

(source: < <http://www.workersassembly.ca/node/164>>)

We voted on the first motion, but the second does *not* come from a decision made at the assembly.

Although there wasn't enough time to plan to intervene in the last weeks of provincial campaigning in a systematic and thorough way, there were nonetheless two and half weeks to do something with the Platform. And according to the original motion, the Platform had a shelf-life meant to end once elections were over. Since it has not yet been used to intervene in public debate as was intended when the motion passed in May, and since it is the culmination of hard work by the Platform committee and lengthy discussion at the last assembly, it is logical that the people who wrote the Platform will be reluctant to now let it drift into the ether, unused. In addition to the website blurb that encourages us to distribute this document outside of the context of elections, suggestions within the PSCC are afoot that the OccupyTO movement adopt the Platform's economic demands. It's understandable people want to "use" it, but the Platform is controversial, serious, and belongs to the entire Assembly. Its use needs to be directed by the Assembly. So, people should cease "using it" until we can vote on whether or not to use it, now that provincial elections are over.

As it stands, I think the only element of the Platform ready for public adoption – if we were to collectively agree to take it public for new purposes – are the principles. Notwithstanding the enormous labour that went into writing it, the Platform is poorly structured and would make most readers confused about what it is that we are really fighting for – regulated capitalism, or an end to capitalism? A friendlier and more democratic state, or an end to the state? Or, as I have tried to suggest, a trajectory leading from one to

another with many fuzzy but essential steps in between?

Whatever the case, we have to make it clear, especially if we are to bring the platform or any of its elements into non-GTWA spaces like the OccupyTO movement – which should only happen if the majority of members vote to do so at the next assembly.

Lastly, it is incredibly important not only to our unity as an assembly, but to the integrity of democratic process, that we not let the Platform stand in for a “collective politics” when we haven’t even had the chance to formally agree on what our “collective politics” are, beyond our Vision Statement.

## **Lenin Asleep at the Back of the Room: Talking about assemblies with Elise Thorburn** By Caitlin Hewitt-White

Elise Thorburn has been a member of the GTWA for a little over a year. She is currently on the Coordinating Committee and works with the Feminist Action Committee. She has been researching assemblies as new political formations for the last two years, and has recently given talks in Amsterdam and New York on this topic. In November she will speak in London, UK on the experiments in assembly politics and the common. GTWA member Caitlin Hewitt-White interviewed her on October 18, 2011.

**CHW:** What are assemblies?

**ET:** They’ve been different things at different historical moments. They aren’t new; assemblies have been around for a long time, from ancient Greece until now, as modes of democratic engagement. They were also a big part of the council communist movement and were used in Spain in the 1970s. But recently there has been a real resurgence of the assembly within left movements, whether we see it in radical or more liberal spaces.

I think the first time we saw them emerging contemporarily is out of the World Social Forum which was a big project that brought together a lot of people internationally. But there was a sense that the Forum was too large and a bit unwieldy, so there was a lack of real engagement. It wasn’t a space where decisions could be made. So it was at the first US Social Forum where these new, smaller bodies within the Forum were formed around different themes like the environment, or union struggles. They were called People’s Movement Assemblies, and they became embedded within the structure of the WSF itself. Since that time there has been a big resurgence in assemblies as an organizational form whether we’re talking about the Climate Justice

Assemblies in Cochabamba or the assemblies in the plaza occupations in Greece and Spain or, of course, the Greater Toronto Workers’ Assembly.



(Above: an assembly of striking garment workers, Spain, c. 1977)

The difference between the GTWA and other assemblies is that many others have been ephemeral and have served their purpose for a day or a weekend. They have been spaces where decisions are made *for* movement, and they will help shape future directions of the movement, but they haven’t really served as an institutional structure *of* the movement.

Generally, assemblies operate in a directly democratic manner, they involve lots of dialogue and debate, they incorporate very heterogeneous communities and memberships, and lots of them – but not all – use consensus decision-making models.

**CHW:** What makes assemblies different from other bodies?

**ET:** So I think that one reason that they have become the preferred mode of decision-making in the last five to ten years comes out of the failings of the anti-globalization movement, and the fracturing of that movement, because of its refusal of both structure and, in many ways, debate. Decision-making processes in the anti-globalization movement were unstructured and there was a real fetishisation of “diversity of tactics” type stuff. Even though it was trying to do the opposite, this ended up closing down spaces for really open discussions and disagreements, less spaces for the whole movement, or whole groups of people, to democratically get together and find a way forward collectively. Rather it resulted in fracturing and I think assemblies are experiments in addressing this fracturing.

Assemblies arise as a way to gather all the forces of one movement together, as disparate as the internal character of those groups may be, and debate and question and attempt to come to agreements that everyone can abide by. This is obviously an imperfect process, but it is an attempt to counteract the free-for-all that was the decision-making process in the anti-globalization movement, while not condemning oneself to a party structure or to having a very vertical decision-making structure where decisions are made from above and carried out by cadres or cells. It's important to engage with it as an experiment and to remember the old Beckett chestnut that we should try again and fail again and fail better.

**CHW:** Which assemblies do you find particularly interesting, currently or from the past?

**ET:** The example from Spain in the 1970s is one that we have to learn from because it was an attempt to try something really new in organizing against the state. The workers' assemblies in Spain at that time were an attempt to deal with a very reformist trade union movement that wasn't particularly radical, and a left-wing socialist party that was going to capitulate to the demands of capital and was not responsive to workers' demands or needs. They were spaces where workers could come together, share skills, learn, and organize. In a sense they were like the

feminist consciousness-raising groups of the 1960s and 1970s where you would have a space for disenfranchised people – so in this case, workers disenfranchised by political party structures and by a labour bureaucracy that wasn't responsive to their concerns - where they could talk about their situation, recognize it as structural and organize to change it. Assemblies were not considered a friendly force by either the trade unions or the left parties, and so were viciously attacked by both. They ended up lasting only two years, from 1972 to 1974, and then ultimately they were destroyed. This is a really interesting example that as the GTWA we should know more about and consider as part of our historical lineage.

The other example is the assembly that was formed at the thirty-five-day occupation at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb in 2009. Students and faculty in Zagreb occupied the FHSS because of the imposition of tuition fees at universities and they used assemblies to maintain their occupation. They called them plenums, not assemblies, but they are essentially the same thing. While they are not like the GTWA, which is creating a longer-term institution, these plenums were constructed to deal with the particular needs of the occupiers at the university. They were trying to converge two tendencies – the horizontal and the vertical – being both and neither simultaneously. They wrote a book called *The Occupation Cookbook* which lays out what they did and how they did it. In fact, in the introduction, they refer to a sleeping Lenin at the back of the room that is awoken and that is hungry. They ask themselves: “What do we do with this Lenin?” And they say: “We will bring him a delicacy from the Zagreb miracle kitchen so that, well-fed, he can sleep again.” I like that image because it demonstrates the complexity of left political organizing and of the assembly experiments today. It demonstrates that their assembly has historical memory and learns from that memory. They recognize the necessity of certain elements of the Leninist ideal – the structure, the discipline, the commitment it takes to have an occupation, or to have a revolution, or to commit to working for long-term political change. But they want Lenin to remain sleeping, and he'll never again awaken to be the whole of how they organize.

**CHW:** What makes for a healthy assembly?

**ET:** I think assemblies like the GTWA, which is attempting to enact a long-term vision and to create a structure – what I think Alan Sears called the infrastructures of dissent – are totally experimental,

so its hard to say without speculating what makes them healthy. In general I think assemblies will only be healthy if they are cognizant of their past in particular and of the history of the left in general. So first, we can't fetishise those leaderless, structureless movements or the tightly controlled vanguardist projects that make up our collective history. It's a total illusion to imagine that the veritably powerless can prevail over the powerful, that the unorganized can supercede the organized, without there being a concentration and, yes, organization of forces. The left – the radical, militant, anti-capitalist left – must now come to recognize that the systems and capacities, those ideologies and practices which were the labour of several generations, can't be entirely abandoned and destroyed but must, in maybe the smallest yet most meaningful ways, be appropriated and reconfigured and used in our struggle.

So, this is a long way of saying that I think a healthy and successful assembly works to bring together a series divergent tendencies and modes of organizing and makes use of a blend of those things *without ever setting up hard and fast leadership structures* imposing political decisions on a general membership. So I think the way the GTWA has constructed itself so far is interesting and good – a recognition that a body can't exist as a merely collection of its component parts but does need a kind of coordinating committee that is always beholden to the demands of its membership. This is the only way to maintain the health of the assembly. I think it's important, too, that these roles within the assembly body are constantly rotated so that people don't become fossilized within their positions, because then ideas get stale and people get worn out. Also, once you concretize your position in the assembly, it's easier to have a greater sense of ownership. So in order to facilitate a really participatory ethos, rotation of roles needs to be prioritised. And the other element of a healthy assembly and one that the GTWA is doing really well is to create the space for dialogue between various left tendencies. We are not papering over the divisions that exist between us, but rather trying to work productively together to come to a mutual understanding and to build on this experiment that we have begun.

**CHW:** Can assemblies be revolutionary institutions?

**ET:** Yes, I think so. The current moment has proven that an older way of doing politics is dying out – it is not going to die easily, but it is dying out. There is a sense of disillusionment with and cynicism around existing political institutions. We can see this in the rise of populist movements of the right and left. The

dramatic decrease in voting rates is symptomatic of this. With caveats, I'd say that the changes we are seeing can hold the promise of revolution because they will mean a complete rethinking of existing political structures and institutions. I think assemblies are at the forefront of this, in prefiguring what a post-state political landscape could look like, and how we can organize in radical new ways. In that way I think they serve revolutionary purposes and are revolutionary institutions.



(Above: a popular assembly in Belgium, summer 2011)

**CHW:** Do assemblies have staying power and can they be used to build dual power?

**ET:** It's hard to speculate on their staying power but they are igniting people's imaginations. Their staying power will stem from how well they open up and give space to people to resist, participate, and make decisions to seize the destiny of left movements. But also they don't operate simply as sites of protest. They are prefigurative structures for how we can organize ourselves. So assemblies don't just challenge something, or resist something - they also *offer* something, and I think that gives them staying power.

I think they could contribute to dual power – by being a parallel structure that makes the state redundant and simultaneously chips away at it – but this has to be negotiated carefully so that they are not just subsumed into the state. In a lot of ways the state is flexible and chameleon-like; it can take lots of shapes and graft things onto its body in similar ways, say, that capitalism can co-opt and graft things on to its body and adapt to resistances and so we need to proceed with care. We can't just imagine that the assembly as a revolutionary institution will arise spontaneously, and that we don't have to be extremely cautious when and how we interact with the state.

**CHW:** Is the assembly a political instrument in the sense that Marta Harnecker uses this term?

**ET:** Marta Harnecker's idea of the political instrument is extremely interesting and very complex because she's trying to do those things that I discussed in terms of the assembly. She's trying to move away from verticalist modes of organizing. But simultaneously the political instrument she's talking about is supposed to counteract the multitudinous nature of the anti-globalization movement. For Harnecker, the political instrument is attempting to harness the forces of insurrectionary political activity and give them a revolutionary potential. The point is to cohere an abundance of energies into a decisive force.

This is absolutely how I envision the assembly – as a gathering of forces, as a cohering of diverse energies;

not creating a homogenous structure but allowing for heterogeneous identities and tendencies to operate within it. The assembly as I see it, and the political instrument as I read Marta Harnecker, is to imagine entirely new ways of doing politics. I don't think she's talking about building the party but instead about changing the political culture of the left. So as Marta Harnecker says it's about both building a political force and a social force. For me that takes place outside of the party structure.

I don't agree with all of Marta Harnecker's constructions of the political which is why I prefer to continue the project of the GTWA as an assembly. We should move forward with our project as such and to try to reimagine political cultures, political landscapes, political institutions through this laboratory that we've constructed.

# Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly

## ***Solidarity Platform***

(Adopted 17 September 2011)

### ***Preamble***

In the fall of 2008, the third great crisis of capitalism steadily brewed and then nearly boiled over. For a brief period of time, it was not just radicals that questioned capitalism – the ruling classes themselves were starting to question their continued hegemony. While a global meltdown did not occur, crises-within-crises became the new normal in capitalist relations, and have provided a key tool to the ruling classes for maintaining their control. This exposes the defining constitutive feature of capitalism: the formal separation of economics, the realm of the market, from politics, the realm of parliament and official state power. The new patterns of governance – punitive austerity, increased criminalization and militarized law enforcement, growth of far-right populist movements – are correlative but distinct social relations from the economic mechanisms of the capitalist market itself. As such, we must take the official domain of politics, seemingly separate from the domain of economics, seriously in the struggle against exploitation and oppression.

The objective of the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly in developing a Solidarity Platform is to fight capitalist social relations on all fronts – 'political' and economic. Yet it is also to undertake a scientific analysis of the balance of forces, the capacities, both operationalized and latent within and beyond our organization. In turn, this must be examined against the context of the global conjuncture, of capitalist crisis and recovery, of imperialist rivalry and co-operation, and as well, how successful and unsuccessful various fightbacks have been in both the North and the South. In examining our own capacities, we can hone in on where we can make a contribution, either modest or profound. In examining the global context, we can see ourselves as part of an international struggle that unites the human race.

Over the past three decades Ontario, like Canada, has seen huge job losses in the public and industrial sectors and a steady deterioration in the availability and quality of social services and benefits such as health care, long-term care, education, legal aid, unemployment benefits, pensions, social assistance, and social housing. Under a series of neoliberal governments at all three levels, the rights of working people have come under attack. Our living standards, especially of those of us engaged in precarious or low-

waged labour, have remained stagnant if not declined, while the opulent have amassed ever-greater wealth. Policing has become increasingly punitive against dissent. Indigenous persons, migrants, the working poor and marginalized continue to be targeted and criminalized. Right wing populist movements have come to govern while left wing spaces are fragmented.

As an anti-capitalist organization, the Workers' Assembly stands for a fundamental transformation of social relations. We stand for a solidaristic, associative society not of rule by a small minority of the rich, of exploitation, oppression and inequality but one based on social justice which gives priority to the needs and interests of the working class, the marginalized and the dispossessed. The Workers' Assembly has produced this Solidarity Platform in order to strengthen the capacities of action and analysis of working people, so as to bring us closer to the day when we end exploitation and oppression.

It is recognized that the Canadian state is constitutionally divided in a way that grants distinct powers on the federal and provincial level and that the provincial is further divided with the municipal level. This platform was designed by Workers' Assembly members through working groups, membership input, and the incorporation of demands from several social justice, community and trade union organizations to propose measures that apply to all three levels of government. The purpose of this platform is to provide a working class alternative to the platforms of existing political parties, and as such addresses transitional measures aimed to move us towards a truly democratic society that functions without exploitation and oppression. The positions taken in the platform are designed to strengthen the power of the working class.

It is a living document subject to improvement. Help us improve it by getting involved in the Workers' Assembly.

In this view, we propose the following:

***Principle: Democratic control of the economy.***

***Transitional Demands:***

- Public ownership, regulation and democratization of banks and financial institutions.

- Increase the minimum wage to allow wage earners to live above the poverty line, adjust the minimum wage yearly according to the cost of living.
- Reform of the taxation system to close loopholes, reverse corporate tax cuts and increase corporate taxes. Eliminate preferential tax rates for corporate capital gains and stock options.
- Implement a tax system to ensure that the wealthy pay a higher and just rate of taxation. Standardize these reforms internationally via treaties.
- No government interference in collective bargaining through back to work or unreasonable essential service legislation.
- Increased investment in the arts, including an expanded social safety net for artists.
- The banning of the use of scab labour.
- Work with unions and communities to develop good green jobs by developing the infrastructure to produce green energy alternatives and other socially useful enterprises.
- The development of publicly owned green energy alternatives.
- Retool existing unproductive facilities into democratically controlled socially useful enterprises.
- Give agriculture workers the right to collectively bargain.
- Card check certification to increase levels of unionization.
- Free, accessible and massively expanded public transportation. Transform existing infrastructure to make it accessible for the disabled.
- Review and reform of employment standards and occupational health and safety legislation to make them more worker friendly. Real inspection and enforcement of such legislation. Education programs informing workers of these rights.
- No privatization or use of public private partnerships.
- Facilitation and recognition of the right of precarious workers to collectively organize along sectoral lines.
- Protected right of workers to form democratic system of worker assemblies to direct economic policy.

***Principle: Universal right to basic quality of life.***

*Transitional Demands:*

- Universal daycare.
- The development and funding of widespread drop-in childcare facilities.
- The merging of the CPP and private pension plans into a universal public pension plan to ensure the ability to retire for all in comfort and dignity.
- Lower the qualifying hours for EI, an increase in the collection period and an increase in benefits.
- Effective rent control.

- Universal wage paid by the state for all unpaid domestic labour and the right to collectively bargain for all domestic workers.
- Increase funding to and expansion of social housing.
- The payment of an 'empty homes tax' for those private properties deliberately kept unoccupied.
- Increase funding to income security programs as to put users above the poverty line.
- Improve access to disability support programs and welfare with increased flexibility to eligibility and other application processes.
- Free universal access to high-speed world wide web and email.

***Principle: The right to work and services for all people regardless of citizenship status. International working class solidarity.***

*Transitional Demands:*

- The right to public services for all people regardless of immigration status.
- Equal status and protection for all workers regardless of immigration status, including the right to collective bargaining.
- End to temporary workers programs and replacement with "good enough to work good enough to stay" legislation.
- An end to immigration detentions.
- Police force and any other service provider to be prevented from sharing information or in any way assisting with immigration enforcement.
- The implementation of an inclusive regularization program for non-status people that does not discriminate against working class/poor applicants.
- Expansion and community control of settlement services.
- Immediate asylum and assistance provided to those displaced by war (including deserters), disaster, persecution due to trade union activity, political activity, or discrimination (based on gender, sexuality, "race," disability).

***Principle: Universal right to lifelong education.***

*Transitional Demands:*

- Increased funding to education to meet social need.
- An end to the growing role of the private sector in public education.
- Provision of school breakfast program to be sourced to local organic farmers where possible, from k-gr. 12.
- No state funding to religious schools of any denomination.
- Roll back and eventually eliminate tuition fees for post-secondary institutions.
- Universal grants as opposed to selective student loans to assist post-secondary students.

- Forgiveness of outstanding student loan debts.
- Development and encouragement of lifelong learning adult education programs.
- Introduction of labour studies into public school curriculum.
- Expansion and investment in library system and community centres.
- Increased funding to publicly owned and democratically controlled media.
- Protect the right to academic freedom and free expression for teachers and students in schools, colleges and universities.

***Principle: Universal right to quality healthcare.***

*Transitional Demands:*

- Expansion and increased funding to healthcare to meet social need (including, ambulance, hospital, primary care, home care, elder care and public health).
- An end to the growing role of the private sector in healthcare. No privatization of healthcare and elimination of P3's.
- Expansion and increased role of publicly funded health research and development.
- Elimination of user fees.
- Socialized dental, vision, pharmaceutical and mental healthcare.
- Universal right to free and clean drinking water.

***Principle: Elimination of the economic and social roots of crime. The right to security and access to justice for all.***

*Transitional Demands:*

- Ongoing police accountability forums incorporating councilors, community representatives, tenant association representatives, youth organizations and community workers to set police priorities and to hold police accountable to community. Forums will develop and facilitate ongoing police training.
- Real civilian oversight of police and prison system. Democratically run and community controlled body with powers to investigate and prosecute.
- Regular audits of police detention centres and prison system to ensure against human rights violations.
- The development of community restorative justice schemes that allow community input into addressing community based crime in order to increase community cohesiveness.
- Protection of the right to public assembly and demonstration free of harassment, assault, arbitrary arrest or violence by police, private security or provocateurs/police agents. Immediate investigation and if called for prosecution of those violating such rights.

- Increased investigation and prosecution of so called "white collar" crimes and institutional corruption with increased penalties for both.
- Legalization of marijuana.
- Regulation and taxation of marijuana production and distribution.
- Investment in and expansion of harm reduction programs to address drug abuse and addiction (including safe use sites and counselling).
- Decriminalization of sex trade work for sex trade workers. Protection for sex trade workers from those who force or coerce them into sex work or to obtain their earnings.
- Increased services for the health and safety of sex workers, including services that provide assistance for those who want to exit the trade.
- Increased investment in programs for at risk youth.
- Increased investment in legal aid. Increased coverage and universal access.
- Increased funding to women's shelters and rape crisis services.
- An end to imperialist military interventions.

***Principle: working class self-determination and democratic control of governance.***

*Transitional Demands:*

- Formation of community based democratic bodies to make land use/ planning decisions which cannot be overturned by unelected bodies.
- Eradication of patronage appointments to the judiciary, government bodies and the civil service.
- Reduction of ward sizes to make councillors more accessible and accountable to their constituents.
- Direct discussions with indigenous nations with the aim of indigenous self-determination and autonomy.
- Respect the results of a referendum in Quebec on the basis of a simple majority (50% + 1).
- A proportional approach to voting systems.
- The minimum age to vote and stand in all elections to be lowered to sixteen.
- Future elections to be held on fixed dates and over Saturday and Sunday to maximise voter turnout.
- Democratic transformation of all governing bodies and institutions including the development and implementation of constituent assemblies made up of neighbourhood, workplace and campus assemblies with decision-making powers.
- Any major changes to services must be approved by democratic assemblies.

**\*Note:** The Solidarity Platform is a work in progress. When it was first ratified members noted that it required ongoing work and assessment particularly in the areas of ecology and indigenous nations.

## Call for Contributions to the November Bulletin

The GTWA's *Discussion Bulletin* is an open forum for members of the Workers' Assembly to discuss the Assembly and pressing practical questions facing radical activists in the Toronto area today. You may also be interesting in replying to the submissions circulated in this month's Bulletin, and respectful dialogue over political disagreements are also welcome in the Bulletin.

In fact, submissions are encouraged on any topic bearing on the Greater Toronto Workers' Assembly and the activism of its members.

Submissions to the Bulletin should meet the following criteria:

- Fewer than 2000 words
- Written in language that is accessible to non-academic audiences
- Pertaining to a topic or issue relevant to the Assembly
- Contains no inflammatory or libelous statements against Assembly members or constituent organizations
- Adheres to the Assembly's Policy on Harassment and Discrimination

The deadline for the next Bulletin is 20 November 2011 and submissions should be sent to [assembly.bulletin@gmail.com](mailto:assembly.bulletin@gmail.com). (The deadline for all issues of the Bulletin is the 20th of the month. Submissions received by the 20th will appear in the Bulletin published at the end of each month. Submissions after the 20<sup>th</sup> may still be included, time permitting.)

If you would like feedback on a first draft, or help with proofreading, etc., editorial volunteers are happy to provide such assistance and/or feedback, when time permits. (We would also welcome volunteers to help out with this.)

- ★ What is the significance for labour and social movement activists in general, and for anti-capitalist activists in particular, of the rise of Occupy Wall Street, Occupy Bay Street, and the wider Occupy Together movement?
- ★ Can we draw any conclusions about the state of the Assembly from reflecting on the strengths and weaknesses of its campaigns?
- ★ How best can we fight back against Rob Ford's agenda in Toronto?
- ★ Are there are lessons to be learned from the strengths and weaknesses of the early mobilizing against Mike Harris?
- ★ Are there aspects of the Assembly project that you feel need further clarification or practical development?
- ★ Are there lessons that need to be learned about how best to respond, or how not to respond, to state repression against activists, in light of the G20 crackdown?

These are just a few of the questions that we need to take up and discuss. If you have any thoughts to share on these or other questions facing activists today, please consider jotting down your thoughts and sending them in to our email address: [assembly.bulletin@gmail.com](mailto:assembly.bulletin@gmail.com)