

National President's Recommendations

Canadian Council 2017

SOLIDARITY 
FOR A **BETTER WORLD**

Equity

At a time when right wing populism and hateful, discriminatory messages are dominating the political discourse, actions to promote inclusion and equity are more important than ever to the success of our union and the continued progress of society. Unifor can and will lead on this front.

Feminism, anti-racism, reconciliation, inclusion and human rights are all central to our struggle as a labour movement. Unifor's equity program, which includes increasing diversity in representation across the organization, is essential to building a stronger union.

The equity audit is a major investment by Unifor in measuring ourselves against our own goals. The preliminary report, *Building Solidarity in Diversity*, is a first step in this process. The preliminary report's findings offer a reference point to highlight our challenges and strengths, and are a tool to help us reach our goal of becoming an organization that is truly reflective and representative of its members.

I recommend that:

- Unifor establish a special Equity Advisory Panel that shall include select members of the National Executive Board along with representatives of Unifor's Equity Standing Committees, and other experts as deemed necessary. The Advisory Panel will be tasked with continuing the equity audit of local unions, regional councils and the national union, including further study into the gaps identified in the preliminary report's findings.
- The Advisory Panel's work will be bound by clear terms of reference (guided by the principles of Unifor's Constitution) and will be responsible for developing a set of recommended action items that will be presented to delegates at the 2018 Canadian Council. These action items will focus on ways in which Unifor can become a more inclusive and more responsive union to the needs of its members.

Human Rights

Canada's contribution to the advancement of international human rights is notable. However, each day we see constant reminders of how racism and Islamophobia, sexism, gender-based violence, ableism, homophobia and transphobia permeate Canadian society, including in our communities, neighbourhoods and workplaces.

Solidarity is the key to building a better world – a world that is inclusive, respectful, accessible, fearless and more equal. True solidarity is both boundless and borderless. It is reinforced by drawing strategic links between social and class struggles. Unifor is well positioned to foster these bonds of solidarity through our collective bargaining, political action and our international development work.

The advancement of human rights is a pillar upon which Unifor was built, and must remain a priority in the union's work over the next year.

I recommend that Unifor:

- Initiate a national dialogue on racism and Islamophobia, including by convening a national, multi-stakeholder, round-table before the 2018 Unifor Canadian Council. This initiative will be organized in conjunction with civil society partners, including indigenous communities.
- Recommit our support to the 94 recommendations outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including immediate action from federal officials to ensure a full and timely inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls that has so far been plagued by setbacks.
- Urge the Federal Government to comply with the decisions and the orders of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, which found the systemic underfunding of First Nations child and family services to be discriminatory, and end Canada's discrimination against First Nations children.
- Continue to raise awareness on the gender wage gap in Canada, review collective agreements and address gender-based pay inequality, lobby federal and provincial governments to legislate paid domestic violence leave in all jurisdictions, and bargain these provisions for economic security into our collective agreements.
- Support the passage of legislation creating a buffer or bubble zone around health clinics allowing women to access reproductive health services, including abortions, without fear of intimidation, violence or public humiliation because of their choice.
- Engage with the federal Ministry of Sport and Persons with Disabilities to ensure the promised Canadians with Disabilities Act is brought to Parliament as quickly as possible and that it reflects the various principles and recommendations tabled by Unifor.

- Lead a national campaign calling on Canadian Blood Services to lift the discriminatory restrictions on blood donations for men who have sex with men.
- Recommit to the fight for decent work, which includes measures to alleviate the specific challenges faced by young workers entering the job market such as youth employment opportunities and access to retirement security for older workers.



Trade

Trade has become the formative political issue of today. Rising inequality and job uncertainty, alongside unmatched corporate power and influence, has reached a boiling point. The decades-old model of “free trade” has been called into question by many, including working people faced with persistent economic insecurity.

Globalization is at a crossroads. The growth of alternative and populist political movements, both left and right, signals a desire for change – a chance to reform the investor-first approach to global trade and put the rights of workers, international development, and the needs of our environment at the forefront. Despite meaningful steps taken to better involve unions in broader trade discussions, the Trudeau government is doubling-down on troubling trade deals like the Canada-EU trade deal, a revised Trans-Pacific Partnership and a possible trade pact with China. Amid regular trade threats posed by the Trump Administration, our federal government appears to be taking a stay-the-course approach on the renegotiation of NAFTA.

Canada has an opportunity to redefine its approach to fair trade, and fully define what a “progressive trade agenda” really means in NAFTA and other deals. Countless jobs in Canada rely on trade. More bad trade deals mean many are at risk.

I recommend that Unifor:

- Participate, to the fullest degree possible, in ongoing federal consultations on trade and trade agreements to highlight the failures of the “free trade” model and articulate our demands for fair trade that promotes good jobs, stronger communities and that is based on progressive principles.
- Lead a national campaign on NAFTA renegotiation – one that is designed to engage and activate members and that promotes our key demands and negotiating priorities to politicians and the public.
- Continue to pressure the Canadian and U.S. governments to negotiate a new bilateral deal on softwood lumber that is fair for Canada and to ensure workers have access to a full range of government supports to mitigate the impact of job loss resulting from U.S. import duties.
- Monitor ongoing trade disputes, including in aerospace, steel, aluminum and others industries, and intervene in cases that directly affect Unifor members.
- Play an active role in developing a modern and alternative framework for global trade (a People’s Agenda for Trade), in collaboration with interested stakeholders and community partners across Canada and Quebec. This alternative framework should factor in to the union’s campaign strategy for the 2019 federal election.

Pharmacare

Canada remains the only country in the world with a universal health care system that doesn't include coverage for prescription drugs. Three million Canadians are unable to afford their prescribed medication and 9 in 10 Canadians support having a National Public Drug Plan that provides universal access to prescription drugs. It's time we made this a reality.

I recommend that Unifor:

- Participate in a national campaign, urging the federal government to institute a national, universally-accessible Pharmacare program in the 2018 Federal Budget.
- Synchronize our efforts with labour movement and community partners, including the Canadian Health Coalition, Canadian Labour Congress, Council of Canadians and other allies.
- Encourage our employers to speak out publicly in support of a national Pharmacare program, including through joint letters or other initiatives.
- Ensure that the voices of those most disadvantaged by the lack of national drug coverage, including women, retirees, newcomers, and unemployed workers are at the forefront of this struggle.
- Coordinate our campaign efforts alongside the Unifor Health Care Industry Council, the Unifor Retired Workers Council and Regional Council Political Action Committees.

Green jobs and sustainable development

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing workers in Canada. At its 2017 Convention, the Canadian Labour Congress adopted a plan, outlined in the Green Jobs for a Fair Future policy paper, to guide the country through a necessary just transition to a green economy. Unifor's delegation voted overwhelmingly to support the position paper and delegates pledged to take action for just transition.

I recommend that Unifor:

- Participate, to the fullest degree possible, in the Canadian Labour Congress' Green Jobs for a Fair Future strategy, which includes:
 - Sending a full complement of Unifor delegates to the CLC's National Conference on Climate Change in 2018;
 - Creating and training a network of environmental representatives at the workplace level, based on the occupational health and safety model;
 - Demanding a Just Transition program that supports workers displaced by climate change mitigation and adaptation policies; and
 - Establishing a union-led Climate Change Task Force to carry forward its climate change, green jobs and sustainable development strategy.
- Lead a national lobby effort of federal politicians and officials that calls for the adoption of a Just Transition program that shall guide the implementation of our government's climate change strategy, among other supports to develop a sustainable economy.

Technology, automation & the future of work

The world of work is changing rapidly. New technologies are being developed and deployed at a rapid speed. Advanced robotics, artificial intelligence, and the “Internet of Things” are transforming our day-to-day lives. Our workplaces, and our work, are all susceptible to technological disruption. Our regulatory systems, unfortunately, don’t always keep pace. The expansion of Uber taxi services in Canada continues to expose major loopholes in government regulation. The popularity of some services, like Netflix, has forced regulators to simply stay on the sidelines. But the rise in new technology runs deeper. Automation, across a range of industries, threatens to displace millions of jobs – of all varieties. Self-driving vehicles are already threatening the jobs of truckers, transit drivers and couriers. Advanced computers and detailed algorithms will replace many run-of-the-mill tasks. Research suggests up to 7.5 million jobs could be displaced in the coming years in Canada, prompting a radical rethink on everything from industrial policy to income assistance.

Unifor must develop a stronger working knowledge of new technologies affecting our members, and also develop our internal capacities and strategies to manage them effectively, including at the bargaining table.

I recommend that Unifor:

- Organize a first-ever national conference to explore strategies in dealing with new technologies. This conference should be held over the next 12 months and include a cross-section of local union, industry council and workplace leaders. It should assist us in developing a deeper understanding of how technology will continue to affect jobs in our workplaces now and in the years ahead, allow us to share experiences and explore coordinated responses.
- The conference must also inform the ongoing development of national as well as industry-specific political action and collective bargaining strategies.

Politics

Unifor members continue to play an active role in the politics of the country. Why politics is so important to our union is well-stated in our 2014 policy paper, *Politics for Workers*. “We should be proud, not defensive, about expanding the union’s role in politics and raising expectations for enhanced rights and living standards. The involvement of unions beyond collective bargaining is fundamental to a democratic society.” Our union has proven in recent years to be an effective counterweight to right-wing government attacks on trade union principles, the rights of workers and democratic values.

Our ongoing political work is critical to building a fairer, most just country – perhaps now more than ever. As ultra-conservative, so-called “populist” and even neo-fascist political movements gain traction among workers in North America and around the world, we must vigorously defend progressive trade union values.

Our political work must focus on engagement: the engagement of our members and in the political process overall. It must inspire hope and optimism that, together, we can build a safe, prosperous and sustainable world. This can only happen as workers realize that the political power of the collective can match the power of private investors, corporate shareholders and the business elite. Our political work doesn’t just build the type of union we want, but the type of democratic, fair and inclusive society we need.

I recommend that Unifor:

- Make a sustained effort to fight back against a rising tide of ultra-conservative, right-wing political movements in Canada; to engage members in a working-class political dialogue that is inclusive, respectful, progressive, and internationalist in scope.
- Continue preparations for major provincial elections set to take place across the country, including in Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick, as well as various municipal elections in 2018.
- Further develop our relationships with multiple political parties, social justice movements, equity-seeking movements, NGOs and institutions that contribute to the advancement of our political, social and economic goals.
- Push forward on campaigns to win \$15 minimum wages along with fair and progressive labour standards, in all provinces, emboldened by the recent successes in both Ontario and Alberta.
- Make a concerted effort to collect contact information for active members from all local unions. This information will be used to populate Unifor’s new membership database, to ensure all members receive relevant and timely information in regards to the union’s ongoing advocacy work, campaigns and correspondence from the National union. This contact information must be collected and submitted prior to the 2018 Canadian Council.

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