

Recommendations

Atlantic Regional Council 2026



Atlantic Regional Director Recommendation #1

Protect Canadian Jobs – Holding Government to Account

Canadian workers continue to navigate a U.S.-provoked trade war that has caused industrial upheaval, broken supply chains and lost manufacturing jobs on both sides of the border. The Trump Administration has abused trade remedy laws to extort concessions from workers in other countries. These bad faith actions, and the resulting economic damage to Canada, demonstrate the pitfalls of championing policies to empower multinational corporations, deregulate domestic markets, and liberalize trade without meaningful protections for workers and their communities. By linking Canada's economic strategy with U.S. interests, these concessionary policies – however advantageous in the short term – have inevitably led to the loss of economic sovereignty.

Unifor recognizes the complexity of this crisis. There is no quick solution. Canadian and American workers, for better or worse, have had their jobs, skills, and livelihoods tied to interconnected supply chains built over 60 years, which cannot be untangled without severe costs.

The Carney government has so far offered a bold, but incomplete vision for Canadian workers facing an unprecedented industrial crisis. Investments in major projects, anchored in industrial strategy and Buy Canadian policies, that reduce – rather than eliminate – exposure to the U.S. economy is the right objective. However, efforts to deregulate inter-provincial trade, rapidly sign more free trade agreements, further integrate Canada's economy into global markets (including China), and place limits on the right to strike, take Canada down the wrong path. At Unifor's 2025 Convention, delegates endorsed an alternative economy-building strategy that we must continue to fight for in the months ahead.

Therefore, I recommend Atlantic Regional Council:

- Oppose the federal government's rapid push to diversify trade by signing more 'free trade agreements',
- including with countries such as India. Any negotiations must be subject to close public scrutiny, must protect and enforce workers' rights, and must not come at the expense of Canadian jobs.
- Urge the federal government to focus attention on resolving the U.S. trade dispute. As Canada heads into the CUSMA review, the government must be prepared to walk away from the accord if confronted by extreme concessionary demands from the U.S.
- Demand provincial governments across the Atlantic Region guard workplaces and critical assets against any new wave of Trump's tariffs, as well as directly invest in strategic industrial capacity and push back against corporate efforts to offshore or relocate work.
- Promote Unifor's Protect Canadian Jobs campaign demands across all provincial governments in the Atlantic Region, as well all local union members and community allies, including:
 - Requiring companies that sell in Canada to build in Canada, including establishing strong and coordinated Buy Canadian policies for metals, transit, forestry, energy, etc. and using every legal tool to stop the offshoring of Canadian jobs.
 - Supporting coordinated and sector-specific industrial strategies with clear targets to reinforce Canada's industrial base and worker input to prioritize job quality and protect good jobs in every sector.
 - Ensuring provincial public dollars go to companies that respect workers' rights, including requirements for employers to sign 'union neutrality' covenants when receiving government contracts.

Atlantic Regional Director Recommendation #2

Supporting the Fight and Moving Forward Together

The name Unifor wasn't chosen by accident. In English we can see that the name embodies "A Union for All". But just as importantly, in French we can see the combination of two fundamental principals "Uni et Fort". United and Strong.

Our name embodies the strength we find when we come together and fight as one.

This is a strength we have found time and again here in the Atlantic region. We rallied in Gander to support our siblings at D-J Composites. We sent a united message to CN, from across Canada, when members of Local 100 needed us at Autoport Eastern Passage. We pushed Nova Scotia's legislature to pass anti-scab legislation.

Across the Atlantic we've been building a network of partnerships in the fight against IPV. Our partnerships have seen IPV declared an epidemic in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and most recently in Newfoundland and Labrador. We've helped groups like Silent Witness, who raise awareness by memorializing women who have lost their lives to IPV, and We're Here for You Canada, who provide comfort, support and dignity to victims IPV with comfort kits distributed through hospitals.

We work with politicians and governments across the region not just to advance our members' causes, but to move the needle on all workers' rights. We've helped defeat incumbent Conservative governments. We've fortified worker-friendly representation. And we've contributed to discussions on trade, economic stability and development.

These partnerships and alliances have achieved greater gains than we could have done alone. These relationships will continue to bring gains for everyone if we foster them and work in solidarity on issues that support each other.

I therefore recommend that:

- Local Unions establish political action committees to engage members in campaigns, advocacy work and lobbying;
- Area Recreation Councils be established to organize events where members from different locals and industries meet, connect and form relationships;
- Members attend and show solidarity for the rallies, picket lines and events of their fellow Unifor siblings in other locals, industries and communities;
- Local Unions engage in lobbying efforts across the region and at various levels of government to support important issues and build relationships.

Atlantic Regional Director Recommendation #3

Defend and Transform Canada's Forestry Sector

The forestry sector in Atlantic Canada continues to face a series of related and ongoing crises, including – most recently – the U.S. tariffs and trade war. This most recent crisis arrives even as forestry workers and employers were already grappling with the effects of climate change, droughts and wildfires, insect infestations, the softwood lumber dispute, a struggling economy, high energy prices, and a wave of curtailments and closures.

First and foremost, the sector requires a comprehensive, strategic plan that brings together all levels of government, forestry workers and their unions, local communities, Indigenous communities, forestry companies and investors, academics and industry experts, and other stakeholders. An industrial strategy for the forestry sector would provide stability and coordination, which would encourage private-sector investment and innovation.

Canada's forestry sector will require urgent, immediate support to weather the financial storm caused by the U.S. tariffs and trade war, but in the longer term, the sector must transform itself into a more sustainable, inclusive, and stable industry.

Forestry workers, their families, and forestry-dependent communities need urgent action and support, driven by a shared vision of a more sustainable sector that will grow and prosper for decades to come.

Therefore, I recommend:

- That the Atlantic Regional Council continue to press federal and provincial ministers urgently for a coordinated Team Canada response across all provinces to the forestry tariff crisis, with particular attention to the pace of income support delivery to affected workers and emergency financial assistance to mills facing curtailment or closure.
- That the Atlantic Regional Council continue to demand a national industrial forestry strategy that prioritizes domestic processing, value-added manufacturing, and reduced dependence on the U.S. market, and that connects forestry sector capacity directly to a Made-in-Canada affordable housing strategy using Canadian wood.
- That the Atlantic Regional Council continue to advocate with the federal and provincial governments to support the development of innovative products and processes that make maximum use of domestic wood and wood products, and also support the development of co-generation and biomass energy production as an additional revenue stream for forestry employers.
- That the Atlantic Regional Council continue to sound the alarm publicly and through all available channels — to members, to governments, and to the broader public — that the tariff crisis is worsening and that the pace of government response must accelerate to match the pace of damage.
- That the Atlantic Regional Council work in solidarity with Indigenous partners, rural communities, industry stakeholders, and labour allies to ensure workers have a central voice in any forestry transformation strategy — and that no restructuring of the sector comes at the cost of the jobs, communities, and rights of the workers who built it.

Atlantic Regional Director Recommendation #4

Creating Psychologically Safe Environments to Alleviate the Stigma

Stigma surrounding mental health creates shame, which in turn, leads to silence, and all too often, to silent suffering. Recognizing and talking about the stigma, does not remove it. We must normalize the subject of mental health and addictions and converse directly about the struggles. We must be vulnerable and empathetic in how we deal with addiction and mental health and in how we interact with our colleagues, our peers and family members who may be dealing with a mental health or addictions illnesses.

Did you know:

- By age 40, half of Canadians will have, or have had, a mental illness¹.
- 70% of Canadian professionals have expressed concerns about the psychological health and safety of their workplaces².
- Only 23 % of workers would feel comfortable discussing psychological health concerns with their employer³.
- Stigma keeps 60 % of people with a mental health concern or illness from seeking help⁴.

These startling statistics do nothing to remove the stigma, let alone prevent further injury.

These conversations are often uncomfortable and it can be difficult to know how to approach them, but discomfort can promote growth.

I therefore recommend that:

- Unifor Atlantic Locals establish EFAP/Addictions Committees to help direct members to mental health and social resources;
- Unifor Atlantic Locals take advantage of Unifor mental health training opportunities such as the Mental Health Matters and Worker Referral Assistance Program PEL Courses, that they also send delegates to the EFAP Conference in Port Elgin, and that they consider outside training like Mental Health First Aid;
- The Atlantic Regional EFAP/Addictions update and expand the existing Mental Health and Social Services Resource guide;
- Atlantic Regional Council delegates take home the information Tammy Ward provides in her presentation to their locals, their workplaces and their communities to help guide and support those using their courageous voices to have difficult conversations.

1 Canadian Mental Health Association. Mental Illness and Addictions: Facts and Statistics. <https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics>

2 Canada Safety Training Centre. 20+ Must-Know Workplace Psychological Safety Statistics https://www.canadasafetytraining.com/Safety_Blog/workplace-psychological-safety-statistics.aspx?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=23802178057&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIipju-dbbLAMV7EH_AR0fgQk6EAAYASAAEgLJqvD_BwE

3 Government of Canada. Psychological Health in the Workplace. <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/health-safety/reports/psychological-health.html>

4 Canadian Mental Health Association. Mental Illness and Addictions: Facts and Statistics. <https://www.camh.ca/en/driving-change/the-crisis-is-real/mental-health-statistics>

Atlantic Regional Director Recommendation #5

Defending the Right to Strike in the Atlantic and Across Canada

The right to strike is an essential component of collective bargaining, as affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada and recognized as a fundamental human right under international law by the International Court of Justice. Unifor represents nearly 70,000 members in the federally regulated private sector (FRPS), including those in transportation, media, and telecommunications and many across the Atlantic provinces, who rely on the integrity of the Canada Labour Code to secure fair working conditions.

The federal government's recent "consultation" on modernizing the Canada Labour Code implies a flawed premise that "certainty" and the "national interest" should be prioritized over the practice of free collective bargaining. The recent use of Section 107 of the Code by the Minister of Labour to end lawful strikes and impose binding arbitration is an abusive and unconstitutional circumvention of Parliament that undermines the balance of power and removes incentives for employers to bargain in good faith.

Any restriction on the right to strike is a direct affront to the fundamental rights of workers and a threat to the ability of all unions to bargain effectively.

Therefore, I recommend that the Atlantic Regional Council and Locals in the Atlantic:

- Recommit to the defense of the right to strike as a non-negotiable Charter-protected right.
- Oppose any legislative or ministerial attempts to expand the definition of "essential services" or "national interest" for the purpose of restricting or delaying the right to strike.
- Demand that the federal government cease the use of Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code as a tool for ending labour disputes and imposing interest arbitration.
- Advocate for modernization of the Code that strengthens workers' rights, such as introducing successor rights for contract re-tendering, expedited grievance arbitration, and first-contract arbitration, rather than mechanisms that facilitate government interference.
- Mobilize members across the Atlantic region to engage in political action and public awareness campaigns that highlight the importance of the right to strike in maintaining a fair and democratic society.