

Action Plan 2022–2025



Expanding worker power, growing union influence
and winning a fairer economy



1 Introduction

Affecting Change in a Climate of Inequality 1

Inspiring the Fight for Fairness 2

Avoiding False Political Promises 3

How Does Unifor Respond? 4

7 Expanding Collective Bargaining and Union Rights

Key Facts 9

Unifor's Vision 10

Unifor Plan of Action 10

13 Confronting the Affordability Crisis

Key Facts 15

Unifor's Vision 16

Unifor Plan of Action 16

19 Securing Fairer, Safer Work

Key Facts 20

Unifor's Vision 21

Unifor Plan of Action 21

25 Strengthening Democracy

Key Facts 26

Unifor's Vision 27

Unifor Plan of Action 27

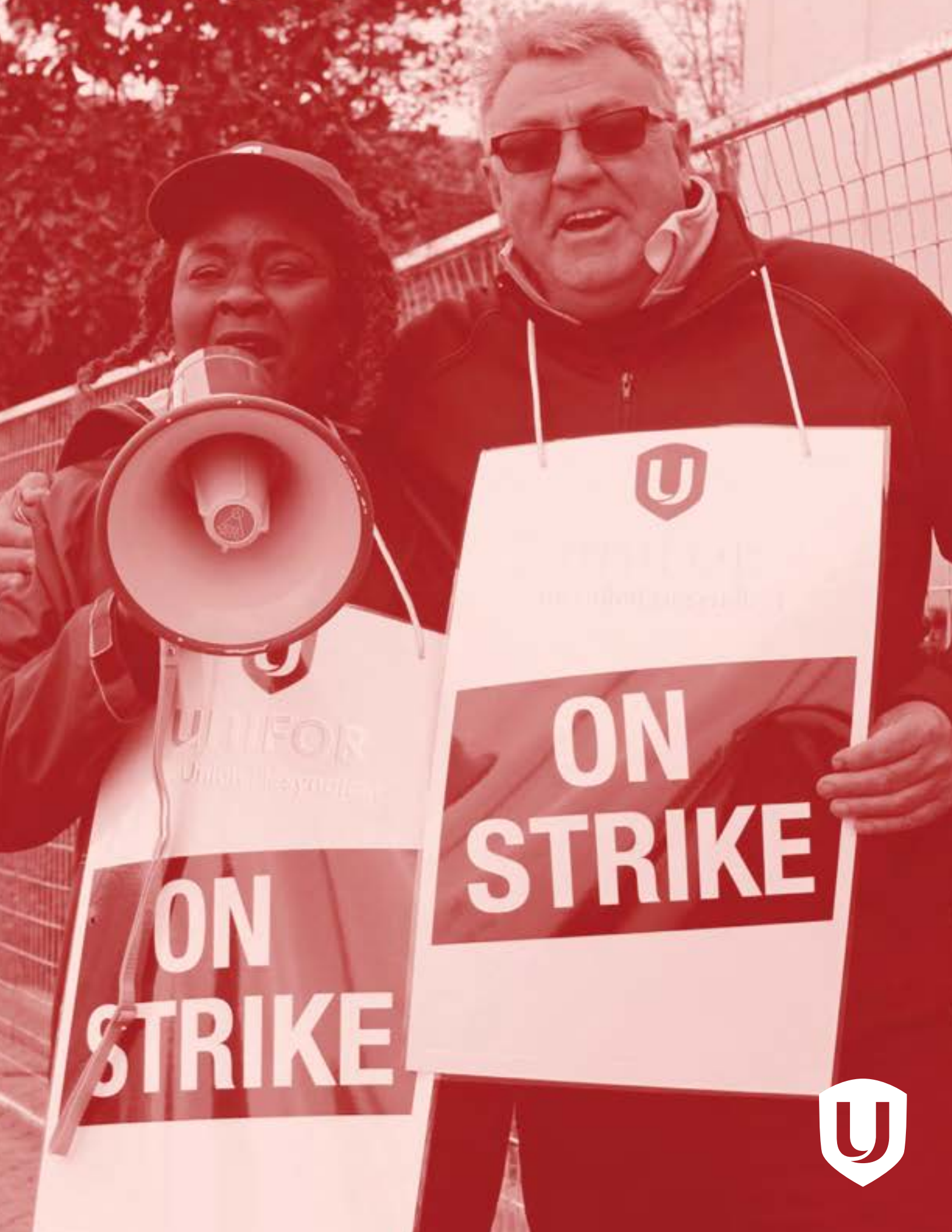
31 Building Solidarity

Key Facts 32

Unifor's Vision 33

Unifor Plan of Action 33

37 Conclusion



Introduction

Building a fair, inclusive and sustainable economy is a vision that has guided Unifor's work since our founding in 2013. Our statement of principles and constitution reflect this vision and it threads through our founding documents. It drives our activism, solidarity and struggles.

We know there is nothing automatic about safety in workplaces, fair wages, equal treatment, gender and racial equity, and income security. These are not benefits bestowed on us by benevolent employers or governments. Workers must strategize, organize, and fight for what we need, just as we have done for generations.

The benefits we enjoy today are a product of our forbearers who dared believe a better world was not only possible, but also within reach. That includes the formation of Unifor itself, an act of hope and transformation for the Canadian labour movement – an effort to re-assert the power workers wield in society, and the positive influence of trade unions in the economy.

Today, we fight to preserve those hard-won gains – and build on our accomplishments. We do this with an unwavering eye on the future, especially in light of a pandemic that gripped our world, an evolving and deep economic shock and new momentum with which to address historical social injustices.

Our responsibility as a trade union is to be a relentless champion for progressive change. We do this by empowering workers to take on fights that benefit the many – not the few. We also do this by expanding the voices within the movement by both identifying and breaking down barriers to workforce participation to encourage worker activism to build a better,

fairer, future for everyone. Over the years, and through various efforts, Unifor is moving the yardsticks forward. We know there is more work to do.

Affecting Change in a Climate of Inequality

The sobering reality is this: social change often reflects the political priorities society sets. Those with privilege and power have an outsized influence on politics and priority setting.

Is it any surprise that efforts to rebalance the scales of economic prosperity – everything from demanding the wealthiest pay their fair share, to greater access to affordable public services – is met with aggressive opposition by conservative politicians, private corporations and the most affluent in society? The fact that, in 2020, all of the world's 2,153 billionaires have more wealth than 60% of the world's population (approximately 4.6 billion people) is one devastating consequence of this.

Tackling this level of extreme inequity (to which Canada is not immune) requires substantial change to how our economy functions: how we organize our workplaces, how we manage our economy, how we engage in politics, how we build our communities. Unions have a key role to play in agitating for this change, by organizing workers, building their confidence, and providing a platform by which they may raise their collective voice.

As one of Canada's largest and most influential unions, Unifor has a special role to play.

Unifor believes that independent and democratic trade unions remain the most important and effective means to support working people throughout the world. This is true despite relentless attacks by corporate

power brokers and conservative governments to deny worker's right to form unions, to silence their voices, and to limit their influence. These concerted efforts have slowed union growth in virtually every developed economy in the world, but not weakened workers' resolve.

Today, workers are unionizing in places once thought impossible to organize. At Amazon. At WestJet. In office towers and coffee shops. On farms. In the gig economy. In some of the most repressive places for unions on earth, such as Mexico.

In the United States, where unionization rates are among the lowest in the world, public favour toward unions has hit highs not seen since 1965. In Canada and elsewhere a renewed sense of militancy among workers in the face of lingering workplace safety concerns, chronically low wages and high inflation, is inspiring others to demand better from their employers, and to hit picket lines if necessary. In 2020, more workers in Canada were involved in labour disputes (strikes and lockouts) than at any point since 1976.

Inspiring the Fight for Fairness

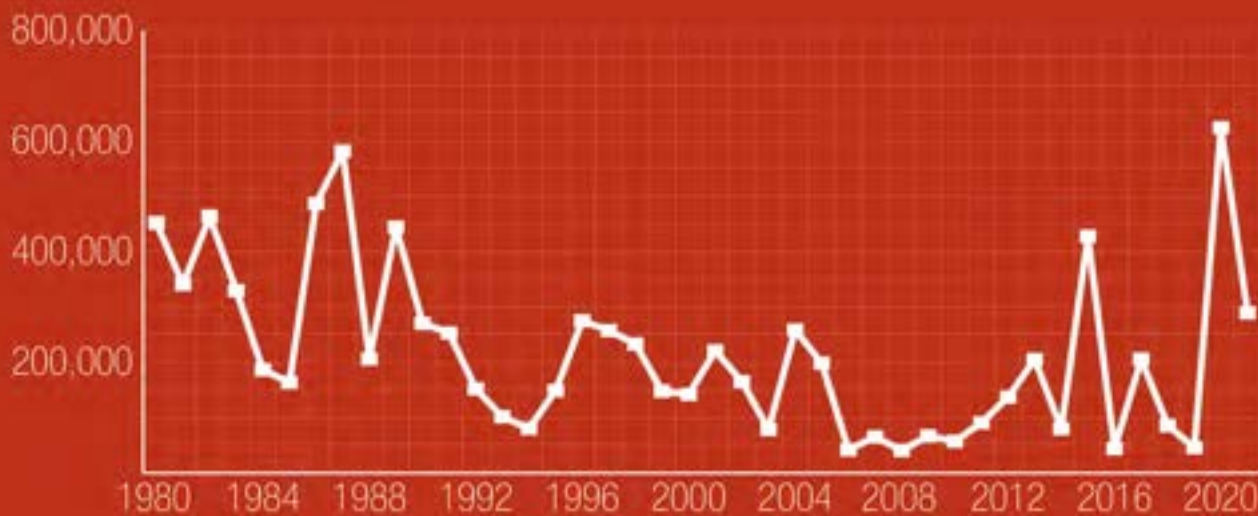
This rise in worker militancy is not a surprise. It is a response to decades of stagnating wages, a rise in precarious (i.e. unstable, unpredictable) forms of work, persistent gender pay gaps, and slow-moving progress on improvements to labour standards, among other challenges.

Militancy is a byproduct of lingering feelings of insecurity driven by a mix of technological change and inadequate income supports. It is a reaction to offshoring, downsizing, "lean" production and productivity-boosting efforts poorly managed by callous, unresponsive employers. It is also the result of an economy restructuring after the pandemic, with workers refusing low-paid, stopgap jobs and employers scrambling to back-fill the work.

For the first time in a long time workers in key sectors are flexing their labour market muscle in an attempt to boost pay and benefits.

Yet, despite all of this positive news, workers are still struggling to get by.

Figure 1: Union Members Involved in Work Stoppages, Canada, 1980-2021



The rising cost of living and rising consumer prices are swallowing most workers' wage gains. As of March 2022, workers' wages rose at half the pace of inflation. Most lack the savings and institutional resources (e.g. Employment Insurance) to be without work, even for brief periods, creating a desperation that tethers them to bad employers. Deep-rooted inequities faced by women, workers of colour and workers with disabilities continue to reproduce bad jobs and limit opportunities for large segments of workers.

At the same time, large corporations – including banks and financial institutions – are reaping the benefits. After-tax corporate profits in the first quarter of 2022 rose to record highs.

Traditional efforts to slow inflation, including by raising interest rates, will likely plunge Canada into a recession, resulting in workplace closures, layoffs and further hardship for millions of workers. This is tough medicine for workers who bear no responsibility for Canada's high cost of living.

Economic instability is the ground upon which unions must present powerful, creative alternatives to inspire workers. In the absence of strong unions and visionary working class narratives, political opportunists – including right-wing conservatives – will claim this space.

Avoiding False Political Promises

Right-wing populism has not only risen over the past decade, gaining steam in the wake of the 2009 recession, it has now found its way into the political mainstream.

Anti-government, pro-corporate voices – who have spent decades campaigning to eradicate

Post-Pandemic Inflation Driven by Soaring Profits, Not Wages

“Centre for Future Work analysis of national income accounts released...by Statistics Canada indicate that after-tax corporate profits reached their highest share of GDP ever in the first quarter of 2022, as inflation surged. After-tax profits grew 11% in the quarter (compared to the fourth quarter of 2021), to an annualized total of over \$500 billion. That represents the highest share of total GDP (18.8%) since Statistics Canada began collecting GDP data

Labour compensation in the first quarter equalled 50.2% of GDP, down almost one percentage point from pre-pandemic levels. In contrast, the share of GDP going to after-tax corporate profits has increased by over 4 percentage points since before the pandemic.”

—Excerpt from *Centre for Future Work* (June 1, 2022), *Business Profits from Inflation, but Workers Will Pay to Bring it Down*

unions, and weaken workers' rights – are courting workers, using outdated tactics of fear (e.g. economic and income insecurity) and division (e.g. racism, anti-immigration, public versus private sector) to build support.

Gimmicky promises, like Conservative Party leadership candidate Pierre Poilievre's proposal to fire the Bank of Canada governor because of rising inflation, do nothing to solve what are deep-rooted economic problems. Funneling worker dissatisfaction through a new brand of divisive, short-sighted and (often) hate-fuelled politics threatens to further destabilize our democracy, undermine worker solidarity and leave workers worse off.

Instead, workers must stand united in common cause to present their own assessment of the challenges and their own ideas to build a fairer economy.

How Does Unifor Respond?

At a time of extreme inequality, excessive corporate wealth, economic uncertainty and an increasingly fragile democracy, how do we advance our foundational goals to become an even stronger social union, inclusive union, responsive union and an organizing union – a union for everyone?

This document provides a guideline. It lays out a set of detailed, ambitious and strategic activities that will form Unifor's union-building and policy development efforts over the next three years (reporting to the next National Convention in 2025).

It is presented in the spirit of membership engagement, solidarity building and unity. It is a program inspired by Unifor's founding vision and past efforts, and grows out of the union's successful 2020 Build Back Better campaign. It presents a forward-looking vision for the union's work that reflects the challenges members face today, across workplaces, without limiting the union's ability to respond to new struggles and timely issues as they arise.

This program intends to develop tools that enable members to champion workplace and social change, to explore new ways of growing union membership and extending the influence of collective bargaining, to advance equity, to expand our political mobilization, build global solidarity, and find ways to support workers – across all sectors – in the face of climate and technological transitions.

The ideas presented here aim to give workers greater voice in their workplaces, greater

control over their work and working conditions, and greater opportunity to shape a future that is fair and equitable – in short, it is about how we further build workers' power.

The document looks at growing our union and undertaking work that supports our founding vision in five key ways, including by:

Expanding Collective Bargaining and Union Rights:

- advancing strategic collective bargaining;
- growing union membership;
- exploring policies that expand collective bargaining coverage;
- advocating for worker-friendly labour laws;
- creating new opportunities for marginalized workers to inform union policy.

Confronting the Affordability Crisis:

- developing inflation-guarding bargaining strategies;
- promoting affordable housing;
- reforming Employment Insurance;
- defending and growing public services;
- advocating for tax and fiscal policy reform;
- expanding efforts to tackle poverty;
- improving pension literacy and retirement security.

Securing Fairer, Safer Workplaces:

- establishing a Unifor Climate Task Force;
- strengthening labour and health and safety standards;
- advancing mental health supports;
- improving workers compensation;
- managing technological change;
- pursuing pay equity and employment equity;
- negotiating workplace equity representatives.

Strengthening Democracy:

- continuing members' mobilization in electoral campaigns;
- exploring greater engagement in municipal elections;
- fighting to stop public service privatization;
- encouraging member participation in electoral politics;
- improving member engagement;

- defending human rights in Canada and around the world.

Building Solidarity:

- engaging with global union partners;
- developing alternatives to unfair free trade agreements;
- recommitting to reconciliation;
- combatting racism and hate.





 **uniforvotes**

 **uniforvotes**



Expanding Collective Bargaining and Union Rights

Despite the fact that Canada is a democracy where citizens elect governments and individuals enjoy fundamental freedoms, workplaces in Canada are not. Employers hire and fire workers and dictate how work is done. Workers do not elect their bosses. Most have no say in how the workplace runs, what products to build, how investments are made, what resources to mine, or services to provide, nor do they determine the conditions of work.

This is where unions come in. Unions provide voice to workers who, without them, are largely voiceless. Unions bring some semblance of democracy into our workplaces, enabling workers (through collective agreements) to maintain a degree of control over their work. Unions, as democratic institutions themselves, empower workers to share their views, engage in debate, and collectively influence the direction of the country. At a moment in time when democracy is under threat by populist outrage, hate-fueled political rhetoric and public disengagement, the world needs unions more than ever.

Unions act as a counterbalance to employers' near universal power in the workplace. Therefore, it is no surprise that employers will exert power to keep unions away.

Some non-union employers provide wages and benefits that are comparable to unionized workplaces, simply to discourage them from forming a union. Others will adapt more

aggressive tactics to intimidate or threaten workers with firings and layoffs. Complicated, multi-step union certification laws in most Canadian jurisdictions make organizing new members difficult, while some workers in growing sectors (e.g. gig workers) as well as temporary migrant workers have few, if any, recourse to form unions.

Over the last four decades, Canada's unionization rates have fallen from nearly 40% of the workforce in the 1970s to just below 30% today – a trend that exists in most developed economies.

Figure 3: Trade Union Membership (2000–Present*)

	Unionization Rate (2000)	Unionization Rate (today)	Change (p.p.)
Iceland	89.1%	92.0%	2.9
Denmark	74.5%	67.0%	-7.5
Sweden	81.0%	65.2%	-15.8
Finland	74.2%	58.8%	-15.4
Norway	53.6%	50.4%	-3.2
Belgium	56.6%	49.1%	-7.5
Italy	34.8%	32.5%	-2.3
Canada	28.2%	27.2%	-1.0
Ireland	35.9%	26.2%	-9.7
U.K.	29.8%	23.5%	-6.3
Japan	21.5%	16.8%	-4.7
Spain	17.5%	12.5%	-5.0
Mexico	16.7%	12.4%	-4.3
U.S.A.	12.9%	10.3%	-2.6
<i>*represents the most recent figures published by the OECD</i>			
<i>Source: OECD.Stat Trade Union Dataset</i>			

The COVID crisis offered skeptical workers new perspectives on the valuable role unions play, from negotiated job protection, to income security, to health and safety and advocacy. This resulted in renewed interest in unions, widely reported throughout North America – bolstered by significant organizing drives at workplaces including Amazon, WestJet, Starbucks and other notoriously anti-union worksites. In fact, Canada's unionized workforce topped 5 million for the first time in 2021– lead by women in the public sector, according to Statistics Canada.

This is positive news. However, it is too early to tell whether these recent developments prove to be early signs of a renaissance of union-led workplace democracy. More needs doing to ensure all workers who desire trade union freedoms have access to them. The underlying labour laws that enable unionizing are largely unchanged. Aside from the NDP government of British Columbia reintroducing single-step (i.e. card-check) union certification rules in 2022, little changed in Canada to improve – and encourage – workers' participation in unions.

Despite political overtures to unionized voters and steady improvement to legislated labour standards, few governments have presented any meaningful improvements to expand collective bargaining.

In fact, government actions in recent years has resulted in a weakening of trade union rights. Efforts by conservative governments in Alberta (Bill 2) and Manitoba (Bill 7) to restrict single-step access to unionization have set workers further back. In Saskatchewan, Bill 85 continues to restrict workers' access to unions and restrain collective bargaining. In Ontario, important gains in the Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act were reversed by the Ford government and later coupled with harsh wage freezes for public sector

workers (Bill 124). In Nova Scotia, the provincial government imposed contract terms on teachers (Bill 75) that were later deemed unconstitutional by the courts. In New Brunswick, the government took extreme steps to order health care workers back to work as workers fought for wage gains and pension protections.

Inspired by radical anti-union forces in the U.S., the Alberta government introduced unprecedented legislation (Bill 32) designed to impede unions from participating in political activities.

Significant work is needed to modernize labour laws to not just tolerate workers' constitutional rights to collective bargaining – but to actively encourage unionization as an equalizing force in an increasingly unequal economy.



Key Facts

16%
higher

On average, workers in Canada covered by a collective agreement in 2021 earned wages 16% higher than workers not covered by a collective agreement. For women covered by a collective agreement, the average wage premium is 23% higher. (Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 14-10-0066-01).

5
million

In 2021, union membership in Canada topped 5 million workers for the first time in history, the majority (53%) of whom are women. Since 1997, annual growth in trade union membership is four times higher for women (2.1%), compared to men (0.5%). (Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 14-10-0070-01).

77%

Unionization in the public sector has risen since 1997, with union members now representing 77% of all public sector workers (compared to 75% in 1997). In the private sector, however, the share of union members continues to fall – down from 21% in 1997 to 15% in 2021. (Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM Table 14-10-0070-01).

down
5%

Union density, when taken together, has fallen across OECD nations (a group of mostly advanced Western economies) from a combined average of 21% in 2000 to 16% in 2020. Global nations with the highest rates of union coverage (ranging from 50%–90%) all support models of sector-wide and broad-based collective bargaining (Source: OECD).

6
times
longer

In Canada, only two provinces currently legislate enforceable restrictions on the use of replacement workers during a labour dispute: Quebec and British Columbia. According to internal data on Unifor members' strikes and lockouts from September 2013 to May 2021, labour disputes lasted 6 times longer (an average of 265.1 days) whenever an employer hired "scabs" (Source: Unifor, Fairness on the Line).

Unifor's Vision

It is easy for activists to lament the decline of union membership. The challenge is far greater than any one union to solve, and there are no quick fixes. As we know, this trend affects workers in nations all over the world. The root causes are deep-seated, structural and – to some extent – cultural. The good news is that there is a lot unions can do to help reverse this trend. Unions must continue to put in the hard work, find ways to improve the efficacy of collective bargaining (including by encouraging a diversity of voices in union work) and advance creative proposals, legislative or otherwise, to support and encourage worker organizing. Vocal and supportive political leaders, government officials and community allies, and even employers, can go a long way to supporting workplace democracy. Unifor not only has the internal capacity and strong local union leadership but also the breadth of sectoral expertise to strengthen collective bargaining and broaden union membership in a modern economy.

Unifor Plan of Action

1.1. Update Unifor's National Collective Bargaining Program, informed through a cross-country engagement of Unifor local union leadership, bargaining committee representatives, activists and staff.

1.2. Explore necessary labour law reforms and coordinating activities needed to facilitate "broad-based bargaining" and greater union representation in key economic sectors, regions and among historically marginalized communities of workers. This work will include the formation of an internal Working Group, led by representatives of the National Executive Board, as well as engagement with

various Unifor industry councils, academics, researchers and international partners. The Working Group will present an interim report at the 2023 Canadian Council.

1.3. Develop a comprehensive package of union-supporting labour law proposals and best practices, to ensure Canadian laws better facilitate union organizing, neutralize employer opposition to certification drives, streamline certification processes especially among precarious workers, gig workers and historically marginalized groups, and expedite the settlement of first contracts, among other aims. These proposals shall factor into all Unifor government relations and pre-election lobby work in the coming years, with a full report on progress at the 2025 Convention.

1.4. Build on the recommendations outlined in Unifor's "Fairness on the Line" policy paper and engage with governments at the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal levels, calling for legislation or the reinforcement of existing statutes that ban the use of replacement workers during labour disputes. The union will undertake to organize a targeted lobby in every province before the next Convention.

1.5. Assign additional resources to re-invigorate and expand the Unifor Community Chapter project. This includes additional resources to service existing Community Chapters, undertake a full and critical program evaluation since its inception in 2013, and develop recommendations to National Executive Board on how to strategically advance the work of Community Chapters and integrate these members into the broader work of the union.

1.6. Establish a Unifor National Migrant/Immigrant Worker Advisory Committee, comprised of Unifor members who are either newcomers, refugees, temporary migrant workers or any worker without full immigration

status, to provide input and recommendations to the union in several key areas, including:

- Organizing: helping to identify strategies and opportunities to effectively organize workplaces where a large segment of the workforce may be comprised of migrant workers or newcomer workers;
- Collective bargaining: provide input on Unifor bargaining programs and/or model contract language to reflect issues facing migrant workers in workplaces, while providing staff with suggestions to increase migrant worker engagement and inclusion;
- Advocacy: assist in education and awareness of migrant issues for members, local unions, standing committees, industry councils, etc. and represent the union on any national, regional and/or local migrant rights advocacy groups or participating coalitions;
- Outreach: help to guide and inform the development of internal and external communications, at a national, regional and local level, to ensure that the union's communications provide a space and voice for migrant/immigrant workers and their issues.





Confronting the Affordability Crisis

Canada is facing an affordability crisis that disproportionately affects working people and their families.

The cost of living is skyrocketing, thanks in good measure to supply chain shortages, profiteering in specific industries including staple goods such as food and gasoline, the sudden impact of war in the Ukraine on energy prices, and pent-up demand for other goods impacted by the COVID pandemic. However, it is important to note that recent spikes in year-over-year inflation are only part of what is driving this crisis.

Long before the pandemic, Canadians faced extraordinarily high – and fast rising – costs for goods like housing (accounting for about 30% of household spending), prescription medications (Canadians spent the third most on prescription drugs of any country in the world) and child and elderly care. Couple that with stagnating incomes, unreliable and precarious jobs and diminishing retirement security, and it is no surprise that living costs are running out of control. COVID did not create the affordability crisis—it simply contributed to it.

Traditional approaches to tackling high inflation by central banks, such as hiking interest rates, are sometimes more painful for workers than inflation itself. Raising the cost of borrowing too fast, and too high, will certainly slow the economy by reducing consumer demand (thus lowering prices) but it will inevitably result in mass layoffs and major pain – putting an unfair

and disproportionate burden on workers for a crisis they didn't create.

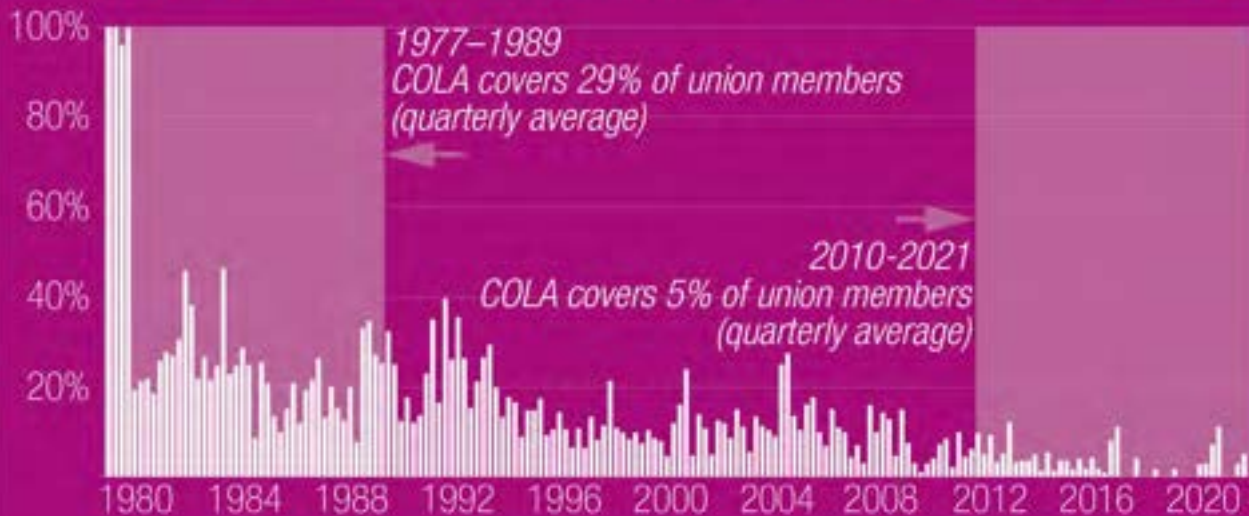
Over-reacting to inflation is dangerous. Workers in Canada are still reeling from the aftershocks of the COVID-led recession. Low unemployment levels and claims of worker shortages mask what is a still-shaky recovery for many. Canada's Employment Insurance program failed to deliver for workers at the onset of the pandemic, and the return to pre-COVID qualifying rules and benefit entitlements, raises flags for workers heading into another recession. The cost-savings on families from promised pharmacare and child care are still years away, while Canadians can expect no meaningful changes to a shattered long-term care system (aside from political platitudes) in the near term. In short, workers cannot afford another economic crisis.

Worker wages are growing at less than half the rate of inflation. According to Statistics Canada, average hourly wages in Canada grew by \$3.40 in between March 2019 and March 2022 (dampened by public sector wage caps in various jurisdictions). Inflation consumed 82 per cent of that increase (or \$2.80 per hour), leaving workers earning only 60 cents more on average than they were prior to the pandemic.

In the 1970s and 1980s, nearly 30% of union members had their wages guarded against volatile swings in inflation through automatic cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) in collective agreements. Over the past 30 years, Canadian employers crusaded against these COLA clauses, virtually eliminating them from union contracts. Today, COLA clauses cover only 5% of union members, based on average quarterly wage settlements over the past decade (see Figure 4).

Understanding the root causes of inflation as well as lingering affordability issues is imperative for government. Targeting policy

Figure 4: Share of Major Wage Settlements* in Canada with Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA), Canada Quarterly (Source: Statistics Canada 14-10-0348-01, ESDC)



responses to specific problem areas is a much more constructive way to deflate rising consumer costs than a blanket approach. Focusing efforts on corporations that are profiteering from rising costs is a good place to start. In fact, after-tax corporate profits are at their highest rate (as a share of Canada's GDP) in recorded history – with oil and gas firms, banking and financial institutions, and food suppliers (and their executives) reaping the benefits. Government must bring these inflation profiteers and price gougers in check.



Key Facts

7.7%

In May 2022, Canada's year-over-year inflation hit a 39-year high of 7.7%. According to Food Banks Canada, in adjusting to the higher costs of goods, 1 in 5 Canadians are eating less than they should in order to make ends meet (Sources: Statistics Canada, CANSIM table 18-10-0256-01; Food Banks Canada)

**2.4
million**

Despite steady progress to tackle income insecurity (including deep poverty) in Canada, still 2.4 million (6.4%) live below the official poverty line – including a disproportionate share of children and female single-parents (Source: Statistics Canada Poverty Dimensions Hub).

\$811

In 2019, Canadians paid a per capita average of \$811 USD on retail pharmaceuticals, the third highest cost in the world (Source: OECD Health at a Glance, 2021).

**up
10.9%**

Between February 2021 and February 2022, new home prices in Canada rose 10.9%. From April 2021 to April 2022, rental prices in Canada grew by 9% - including rapid rises in cities like Vancouver (23.7%) and Toronto (17.2%) (Source: Statistics Canada; Canada Mortgage Trends)

**\$500
billion**

After-tax corporate profits reached their highest share of GDP ever in the first quarter of 2022, to an annualized total of over \$500 billion (Source: Centre for Future Work).

Unifor's Vision

Tackling the affordability crisis will continue to serve as a major priority for unions in the coming years. Efforts to avoid reactionary, short-term and blanket fixes to deflate consumer prices must not come at the expense of working people, jobs or job security. What Canada needs are durable, long-term fixes that aim to lower the cost-of-living. This must include socializing the costs of key goods and services such as child care, elder care and prescription drugs and ensure workers' wages are guarded against inflationary price surges (e.g. establishing automatic inflation-adjustments into public income transfers as well as collective agreements). Access to affordable social services, good jobs and decent wages remains the most appropriate policy approach to eradicating poverty.

Unifor Plan of Action

2.1 Pursue bargaining strategies that raise wages as well as protect those wages against inflation pressures and the rising cost of living.

2.2 Advance the union's campaign to reform Canada's Employment Insurance program, in an effort to improve access and increase benefits for all working people in Canada, with specific emphasis on access for historically excluded groups, including women, Indigenous workers, seasonal workers, workers with disabilities, workers of colour and workers in precarious employment.

2.3 Develop a first-ever Unifor Affordable Housing Policy, including a set of concrete recommendations, that will inform a membership-driven political action campaign. Guided by the input of Unifor members and the National Executive Board this work will

also involve input from housing advocates, community partners and developed through an equity lens. This work will link to associated issues around urban planning, land-use planning, alternative ownership models and public transit. The union will present a draft policy to Unifor delegates at the 2024 Canadian Council.

2.4 Advocate both in defense of and for the expansion of universal, accessible, affordable and publicly funded social services, including through an internal awareness-raising campaign on the economic advantages and equity-responsive outcomes for workers of universal public health care, long-term care, education, seniors care, dental care, child care, and Pharmacare, among others.

2.5 Foster relationships with national anti-poverty organizations and advocates and support national campaigns aimed at eradicating poverty in Canada. As part of this work, the union will continue to advocate for federal and provincial policies and programs that directly affect low-income workers and low-income communities. These include calling for higher minimum wage rates, stronger labour and employment standards and enhanced enforcement of laws to curb employer abuses, increases to social assistance and disability benefits, affordable or free public transit, the elimination of tuition fees, affordable and accessible child care, rent controls, enhanced public pension benefits and employment and pay equity legislation.

2.6 Develop a detailed program of tax and fiscal policy proposals intended to promote tax fairness, restore balance to the tax system to ensure corporations and the rich pay their fair share and ensure an inclusive, worker-centred social development model.

2.7 Undertake efforts to strengthen "pension literacy" of Unifor members, through various educational tools, training

modules and popular resources as a means to empower workers to defend, improve, and expand workplace pensions and make informed decisions about retirement. Over the next three years, the union will continue efforts to improve the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans (“C/QPP”), Old Age Security

and other policies to boost retirement security for all. Unifor will collaborate with partner organizations to advance training for union trustees on issues of responsible investing, good corporate governance and explore ways of leveraging pension assets to advance the interests of workers.





Securing Fairer, Safer Work

Workers cannot build power while in competition with one another. Structuring workplaces in a way that enables favouritism and provides special benefits based on subjective criteria stands in stark contrast to the principles of unionism.

Allowing one person's prosperity to come at the expense of another's failure diminishes solidarity and discourages workers from finding common solutions to pressing challenges. This includes fractious regional divisions (e.g. urban versus rural) and sectoral divisions (e.g. private versus public), gendered and racial divisions, generational divisions as well as divisions of employment status (e.g. part-time versus full-time; temporary versus permanent; active versus retired), among others. Unifor, aspiring to be a "union for everyone," must work to build a workers' consensus, prevent such misalignment from forming, and find ways to overcome these differences wherever they exist.

The stakes are high for workers in Canada today. The climate crisis – already afflicting communities and ecosystems in Canada – is a constant reminder of the need to swiftly, and smartly, carve a path toward net-zero. Managing this transition effectively by guaranteeing full employment, income protection, skills enhancement, and collective bargaining rights requires workers to be at the frontline of the discussion, informing government policy. Coupled with this are rapidly advancing automated technologies that, if not managed properly, threaten to upend jobs, workers' livelihoods and create new occupational health and safety dangers.

There is nothing more irresponsible than modern-day corporate sloganeering, to "move

fast and break things", as coined by much maligned Facebook (now Meta) CEO Mark Zuckerberg. While masquerading as a call for greater innovation (without fear of reprisal for making mistakes) it illustrates the callous and manipulative agenda of capitalism's modern, digital-era adherents – dismissing rules and regulations as optional and voluntary, including the rights of workers to good jobs and fair work standards. How else to explain the unrepentant trampling of democratic rights by firms such as Facebook, Amazon, Uber, Tesla and the like. The three R's (rules, regulations and rights) exist for a reason and need defending – an act of building workers' power.

Unions are at their best when approaching their work through a broad societal and social justice lens. Connecting workplace struggles to larger political and worker-led movements, at home and around the world, is the essence of social unionism – a creed Unifor stands by.

When Unifor bargains innovative contract provisions such as a workplace Women's Advocate and Racial Justice Advocate, it uses the power of collective bargaining to embolden fights for equality, safety and social justice. When we bargain higher wages, pay equity, and tools like cost-of-living-adjustments (COLA), we raise market wages that benefit all workers.

Likewise, when Unifor supports community efforts, such as Drag the Red (searching the Manitoba's Red River for evidence of missing murdered Indigenous women and girls), or organizes Pride events that give political voice to those of us that identify as LGBTQIA2S+, we bring these social struggles into our own workplaces – a virtuous cycle of empowerment.

Winning greater prosperity for workers, including safe workplaces, requires unions to advocate for strong legislative foundations as well. Using our political influence (and bargaining successes) to improve workplace safety, mental health supports, and paid sick days ensures that these best standards apply to all workers.

Key Facts

880k

Approximately 880,000 workers in Canada are in climate transition-vulnerable sectors (5% of the workforce). Impacts will be regionally uneven, e.g. almost two-thirds of Canada's oil and gas jobs are located in Alberta (Source: Canadian Institute for Climate Choices).

69%

Persistent concerns of job-altering technologies continue to affect workers in sectors where tasks are most susceptible to automation, including hospitality (69%) warehousing (61%), manufacturing (61%) and resources (52%) (Source: Brookfield Institute; Unifor - The Future of Work is Ours).

23%

Just one-quarter (23%) of workers in Canada report feeling comfortable talking to their boss about mental illness, for fear of reprisal and discrimination (Source: Canadian Centre for Occupation Health and Safety).

3 of 10

As of June 2022, workers in just three jurisdictions in Canada have access to permanent, employer-paid personal illness days under law, including British Columbia (5 days), Quebec (2 days) and Prince Edward Island (1 day).

925

In 2019, 925 workers in Canada died because of a workplace injury or workplace-related illness. (Source: 2021 Report on Work Fatality and Injury Rates in Canada, University of Regina).

375
149

As of June 2022, Unifor has negotiated 375 Women's Advocates and 149 Racial Justice Advocates in workplaces across Canada.

Unifor's Vision

Any program designed to advance Unifor's vision and build worker power requires a long-term view. Unions must think about changing social, economic, environmental and political trends and approach these challenges with a sense of urgency. Thinking forward on how best to bridge worker divides and grow solidarity across a range of substantive issues such as climate change, income inequality, technological change and social justice is essential union work – and always will be. Workers must be fully vested in the belief “an injury to one is an injury to all” if they can ever hope to build fairer, safer workplaces in future. On this front, Unifor must lead the charge.

Unifor Plan of Action

3.1 Undertake regular, cross-sectoral dialogue through the Unifor Climate Change Task Force on climate policies, clean industrial growth strategies and labour market regulations needed to support workers in the transition to net zero. The Task Force work, led through the President's Office, will encourage local union and rank-and-file member participation (including member training and knowledge building) and will strive to create a cohesive and consistent climate policy framework, as well as guidance on collective bargaining provisions, to inform Unifor's interventions with governments, Non-Government Organizations and employers.

3.2 Advocate for world-leading, stringent, comprehensive and proactive workplace health and safety standards in every jurisdiction of the country. As Canada continues to grapple with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the union will prioritize among its list of proposals a demand that

lawmakers introduce mandatory workplace infection control preparedness plans, including Right to Know provisions, as well as a mandatory inquest in the event of a fatality. Detailed language, tailored to Unifor sectors, will be co-developed and made available to local leadership and national representatives.

3.3 Position the union as a champion for mental health awareness and support by enhancing and promoting Unifor's mental health resources to all local unions, assisting locals in negotiating expanded mental health benefit coverage, language that addresses and manages workplace stress, and partnering with organizations to expand mental health supports to marginalized and vulnerable communities. Unifor will mobilize nation-wide activities in conjunction with the Canadian Mental Health Association's Mental Health Week (in May) and Recovery Month (September). The union will also provide practical examples of best practices and programs.

3.4 Undertake a national campaign to improve worker compensation systems based on a set of core principles (including sustainable funding, universal coverage, fair treatment and dignity) and tailored to individual provinces. Unifor's Health, Safety & Environment Department will lead this work, informed by Unifor activists, Regional Council bodies and internal worker's compensation experts and supported by all Unifor national resource departments.

3.5 Advance Unifor's "Future of Work is Ours" campaign by organizing sector-based dialogues and strategies, led by Industry Councils, to confront the challenges and harness the opportunities of new workplace technologies and innovations. This includes efforts to preserve scopes of practice for skilled trades workers and proactively ensure the health and safety of members. This also

includes support for local bargaining strategies to ensure workers benefit from technological changes, through income, training and job security enhancements. The union will provide staff and local unions sample collective agreement language to support work at bargaining tables.

3.6 Advocate for pay equity legislation in all jurisdictions, following the success of Unifor's campaign to win pay equity in the federal jurisdiction. In addition, Unifor will explore ways to advance pay equity through its collective bargaining – across sectors – even where pay equity laws do not yet exist. The union will continue encouraging participation in its federal pay equity training courses for new pay equity committees, but will also deploy existing tools and resources developed to staff and local bargaining committees in other jurisdictions, modifying them as appropriate, and provide tailored training as needed. The union will present an update on progress made at the 2025 convention.

3.7 Continue to deliver education and training courses on employment equity with staff and members, particularly those in the federally regulated private sector. The union will monitor developments around the modernization of the Federal Employment Equity Act, while also applying stronger pressure to employers who fall under this (or related provincial) legislation to comply with their responsibilities. Unifor will advocate for the introduction of provincial Employment Equity legislation in jurisdictions where none is currently in place.

3.8 Continue to negotiate equity-based workplace advocacy programs, including the Unifor Women's Advocate and Racial Justice Advocate, in all collective agreements. The union will continue to raise awareness of these programs and their positive outcomes at union

events as well as with researchers, community activists, allies and global union federations.

3.9 Advocate for labour standards that aim to improve working conditions for all workers across federal, provincial and territorial jurisdictions, as well as an expansion of coverage to as many workers as possible. The union will work in coordination with rank-and-file members, local unions and allies on local campaigns, but will also develop a set of ambitious and universal demands for labour protections that shall apply in all jurisdictions, including (but not limited to):

- Higher minimum wages;
- Limiting precarious work;
- Banning scabs;
- Fair scheduling;
- Equal treatment and equal pay;
- Paid sick and emergency leave;
- Monitoring and enforcement;
- Workplace safety.





Strengthening Democracy

Four tumultuous years of Donald Trump's time as U.S. president culminated in one of the most shocking displays of anti-democratic activity in recent memory, as scores of violent protestors stampeded Capitol Hill on January 6, 2021 in hopes of overturning the election. One year later, a parade of protestors clogged the streets of downtown Ottawa, including a vocal cohort expressing a desire to overthrow the federal government. Fueled by conspiracy theories, an underlying distrust of authority and news media, intolerance and hate, violent attitudes and political disenfranchisement, such actions are (at least in part) a symptom of a fractured democracy.

Unions stand among the most democratic organizations within civil society. We practice democracy every day, from floor debates and votes at national conventions to workplace elections for union stewards to holding our elected leaders to account. Unions—more than most organizations—understand that democracy is not perfect, that it has challenges and requires nurturing, diplomacy, criticism and active participation in order to succeed.

Democracy is under threat across the world. According to the 2022 Freedom in the World report, 60 countries saw democratic declines over the past year with nearly 40% of people living in countries considered "not free". Of course, democracy means more than just majority rule. Democracy is a system that gives voice to citizens, fosters consent, holds those in power to account and supports the development of human rights.

Sadly, private corporations (as non-democratic entities) play an increasingly dominant role within society – at the expense of democratically elected governments and public institutions. For nearly 40 years, Western nations – including Canada – faced a targeted, ideological campaign led by private business and conservative politicians intended to undermine governments, blaming them for virtually all of our economic ills. The campaign to reduce the role of democratic involvement and oversight led to attacks other institutions such as public interest regulators, public service agencies, publicly owned enterprises and (of course) trade unions.

A steady sell-off of democratically held assets into private hands followed, including airlines, railways, health and education services, public broadcasting and transit. Privatizations coupled with tax cuts for corporations and the rich as well as legislative efforts to undermine unions, including by restricting unions' political activity, served as a massive public subsidy driving income inequality, bleeding governments of financial resources, and transferring wealth into the hands of private corporations and investors.

In fact, the vestiges of this intentional strategy still exist today in Canada. Corporate tax rates are at record lows, corporations have disproportionate influence over industry regulation and rule setting and there are constant pressures for governments to sell off assets to private investors (e.g. the proposed sale of Via Rail's Quebec City-to-Toronto high frequency rail corridor).

If the intent of conservative governments is to fuel citizens' distrust in government, disappointment in public services and vitriol toward democratic trade unions, is there any wonder the world faces a growing democratic deficit? Asking citizens to defend institutions that many politicians have spent 40 years

trying to dismantle is a challenging proposition. Fanning distrust towards government and political figures only threatens to weaken democracy and erode political engagement. The recent Ontario election is a prime example, which saw the lowest voter turnout in provincial election history.

The less exposed workers are to well-functioning democratic practices, the less

practiced workers are in the way democracy works. The less trust workers have in democratic systems, the less they are able to understand and utilize channels at their disposal to push for change. The less democracy acts as a vehicle for change, the less likely they are to participate in it, and defend it.

Key Facts

38%

In 2021, some 38% of the global population live in countries that are “not free” — the highest proportion since 1997 (Source: Freedom House).

15%

Since 1980, federal corporate income tax rates in Canada dropped from 40% to 15% today (Source: Bruce Campbell, Rabble.ca).

<50%

Despite significant tax savings provided to large corporations, by 2019 Canadian corporate spending on research and development was less than half the average (as a share of GDP) of other industrial countries (Source: Jim Stanford, Centre for Future Work).

15%

Corporate tax rates have fallen so low that a group of global nations (led by the OECD) proposed to set a new minimum tax floor of 15% by 2023 – although it remains unclear if all governments will enforce this rule.

Unifor's Vision

Unifor must be ready to campaign loudly against any effort to stymie workplace democracy, including efforts to silence union voices in politics. The union must further expand its member-to-member engagement work and explore new forms of activism and participation. Fighting for democracy also requires the union to take a broad social view. Defending democracy means defending publicly owned institutions and public services. It means defending an independent and free press. It means championing universal human rights both at home and around the world.

Unifor Plan of Action

4.1 Aggressively campaign against any proposed weakening of democratic union freedoms in Canada, laws that unfairly discriminate against unions or undermine the ability of unions to advocate on behalf of members, including the introduction of U.S.-style "free-riding" laws. Any such proposal introduced by government will trigger the convening of a special Unifor Task Force and full-scale union response.

4.2 Continue to engage with rank-and-file members in the course of federal and provincial election campaigns, on issues deemed critical to advancing the interests of workers. The union will continue to run its "Unifor Votes" campaign, along with tailored strategies in each election, to encourage voter turnout among members, raise awareness of issues and train activists in strategic campaign work. Over the next year, the union will undertake a strategic assessment to determine the feasibility of expanding the Unifor Votes campaign to include elections at the municipal level. The union will also assess

the outcomes of its Unifor Votes campaign to determine how this effort is effectively engaging marginalized and disenfranchised groups of workers, notably racialized workers, newcomers, young workers and workers with disabilities.

4.3 Recommit to the fight to stop privatization schemes and actively champion public ownership structures, especially as it relates to critical infrastructure. This includes public ownership of road and railways (e.g. Via Rail), ports and waterways, inter and inner-city transportation, utilities, broadband, financial services, media (e.g. the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) and the production of other socially useful goods and services. The union will undertake an internal awareness-raising effort, outlining the positive economic benefits of public ownership and democratic oversight of key industries.

4.4 Provide targeted supports, including specialized education, training and mentorship modules to Unifor members interested in running for elected office. Encouraging more worker voices in government, at all levels, can enrich public dialogue on workers' rights and influence more informed policy-making. Such a program can draw on the extensive experiences of current and former Unifor activists and staff who held such positions, and must target members from under-represented equity-seeking groups, including women, racialized workers, LGBTQ2S+, young workers and workers with disabilities.

4.5 Convene a working group comprised of Unifor leadership, members of the National Executive Board, staff, select local union leadership and rank and file activists to develop a strategy and action plan to enhance member engagement and local union participation in all aspects of the union's work. The union will convene this working group before the end of 2022.

4.6 Continue to advocate for independent, professional, well-funded news journalism and local news media and draw links between high quality news media and the strength of democratic institutions and citizen engagement. Unifor will recommit support to its Media Action Plan and the fight to protect and grow local news in Canada.

4.7 Defend and protect fundamental human rights for workers throughout Canada

and around the world, including the right to justice, freedom, security, equality, privacy and other civil liberties. Unifor will champion efforts to ensure universal access to human rights and take swift and decisive action to respond to any actions intended to restrict or weaken human rights, including any denial of rights for people with disabilities as well as ensuring all women's rights to dignity, autonomy, and bodily integrity.







Building Solidarity

It is impossible to confine the challenges that working people face to any one workplace, community, province or region. The deep-seated struggle for fairness, dignity and decent work transcends any particular job, and international border. Understanding the common grievances workers share is the bedrock upon which we build solidarity and workers' power.

Decent work is a core pillar of the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals and a rallying cry for workers campaigning to build a fair, safe and inclusive economy. The rising tide of precarious forms of work, including the growth of a hyper-flexible on-demand jobs (e.g. gig work), afflicts workers in every country. Downward pressure on unionization rates in most countries makes collective bargaining more challenging especially in the face of privatization threats, greater use of sub-contracting, contract-flipping, temporary work and heavy corporate concentration. These economic threats, among others, are the ties that bind workers regardless of place or nationality; whether they are championing higher minimum wages, greater access to unions and safer working standards or striving to build alternative modes of trade and pushing back against unfair, corporate-led globalization.

Underlying these current economic issues are deeper, systemic challenges that workers must confront. Poor labour market conditions are almost invariably worse, on average, for women, Indigenous and racialized workers, workers with disabilities, young workers and those who are under-represented and

historically marginalized, including migrant workers. These dividing lines are not only present within workplaces and nations, but across them – including very stark divisions between the richer, developed "Global North" and the developing, poorer "Global South". Overcoming these divisions through solidarity and a celebration of diversity is of paramount importance.

For decades, Unifor has fostered bonds of solidarity with sister unions in Canada and around the world, including by playing an active and participatory role in various Global Union Federations (GUFs) – international organizations championing workers' rights across industrial sectors and along global supply lines. Unifor's North American Solidarity Project seeks to build stronger union alliances among like-minded unions across the continent and through Unifor's Social Justice Fund, the union collaborates with community organizations around the world, promoting the role of trade unions, strengthening democracy and championing equity. This complements the union's ongoing work with community-based social justice groups, Indigenous-led organizations and participation in social movements including Black Lives Matter, Justice for Workers, and Pride.

The COVID-19 pandemic called into question the highly globalized and loosely regulated nature of today's economy – an economy that continues to enable corporations to manipulate finances, avoid taxes, maintain pay inequities and repress workers' rights. The International Labour Organization, for instance, estimates that 25 million workers around the world are victims of forced labour. Campaigning for basic, fundamental human rights at home or in other parts of the world often feels like pushing a boulder uphill.

For people in Canada, the pandemic offered a stark reminder of Canada's over-

dependence on outsourcing, the inherent risk in global supply chains for critical goods (e.g. microchips and food), the dangers of losing local capacity to build and service things that people rely on in times of crisis, and the need for new economic strategies. It also raised challenging questions about why such disparities continue to exist, and calls for stronger bonds of solidarity between workers.

Demands for action on a range of policy fronts include areas like trade reform (with greater emphasis to support labour rights in trade deals, as is the case of the new Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement), corporate accountability across supply chains, as well as social justice (including fair outcomes and equal opportunities).

Key Facts

7

As of 2022, Unifor affiliates to seven different Global Union Federations, including UNI (Union Network International), IndustriALL, ITF (International Transport Workers Federation), BWI (Building and Wood Workers International), IUF (International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations), IFJ (International Federation of Journalists) and IFATCA International Federation of Air Traffic Controllers Associations).

>1,100

The Unifor Social Justice Fund (including predecessor funds under the CAW and CEP unions) have supported more than 1,100 projects. As of 2022, there are over 50 active projects in Canada and 28 others internationally.

25
million

The International Labour Organization estimates 25 million victims of forced labour worldwide, with women and girls vastly over-represented, making up 71% of victims (Source: International Labour Organization, 2017).

9.5%

As of January 2022, just 9.5% of people in the poorest countries of the world received COVID-19 vaccinations due, in part, to rigid intellectual property disciplines embedded in global trade treaties (Source: Ayoade Alakija, 2022).

Unifor's Vision

Solidarity across diverse groups of workers remains an essential ingredient to build a strong, global, workers' movement. Unifor must foster solidarity with like-minded unions, worker organizations and community partners that share common values, principles and priorities. Unifor will work to strengthen the capacity of vulnerable communities to secure fundamental human rights and economic justice, including through the Social Justice Fund—and distinguish Unifor's solidarity-building and internationalism as distinct from simple acts of charity. The union will continue to advocate for worker-empowering, alternative, fair trade policies and hold corporations to account for their global supply chain practices. Unifor will continue to collaborate with progressive groups determined to combat hate, racism and Islamophobia and actively support the ongoing process of de-colonialization and reconciliation in Canada.

Unifor Plan of Action

5.1 Engage and participate fully in the work of all Unifor-affiliated Global Union Federations (GUFs). Unifor will play an active role in all appropriate democratic structures, inform policy work and support all relevant campaigns and projects, in an effort to build closer ties to union activists around the world. The union will undertake to assign the appropriate national, regional, industry and local leadership to relevant GUF committees, including Unifor staff, and ensure representation among equity-seeking groups. The union will also keep a detailed list of committee representatives and establish reporting protocols to the Unifor National Executive Board and the broader rank-and-file membership.

5.2 Establish a Working Group of the National Executive Board responsible for examining Unifor's various strategic relationships and alliances among sister unions and community organizations, assessing (and reporting on) requests for mergers and special affiliations, and providing strategic guidance on Unifor's relationship with labour centrals.

5.3 Actively resist corporate globalization and provide alternatives to job-destroying trade deals and policies. Unifor will continue to advocate for trade policies that actively promote strong, and enforceable labour and environmental standards and local autonomy, while campaigning against trade rules that harm workers, undermine collective bargaining, facilitate outsourcing and contribute to rising inequality. The union will continue to monitor trade negotiations build lines of communication and solidarity with like-minded workers and community partners around the world, and advance a vision for a fair trade future.

5.4 The union will continue supporting national efforts towards Indigenous reconciliation and self-determination, while ensuring that solidarity work is grounded in the principles outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This includes calling on the federal government to make better progress on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 94 Calls to Action and the recommendations brought forth by the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Ongoing support will be provided to ensure that the quality of life for all Indigenous Peoples in Canada is enhanced, including ending long-term drinking water advisories on reserves, creating meaningful employment opportunities, improving housing conditions, and putting an end to the legacy of colonial violence that continues to negatively affect Indigenous communities today.

5.5 Strengthen the union's work and commitment to anti-racism by promoting racial justice in the workplace. Unifor will work with activists, Racial Justice Advocates and Black, Indigenous Workers of Colour standing committee members to roll out a new Racial Justice Toolkit. This resource will provide members with the necessary information to become anti-racism advocates in their locals, workplaces and communities. The union

will advocate at the provincial level for the development and implementation of Anti-Racism Action Plans and look to strengthen relationships with local and national groups focused on anti-hate, anti-racism, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. This work will include raising awareness among members regarding the rise of right-wing nationalist and white supremacist groups that pose a growing danger to democracy and our communities.







Conclusion

Unions must play an increasingly prominent role in society to expand workers' influence changing economic tides, to win fair and equitable outcomes in the workplace and rebalance rising inequality. At its founding convention in 2013, Unifor promised to lead this fight – and it has, to great effect. But this work is never complete, and we must push forward to deliver on the commitments we set out.

This program serves as a roadmap and a guideline for the union's work in the next three years. It provides recommendations to Unifor's leadership and activists on necessary steps that move the Unifor project forward – to guide future initiatives – but not to inhibit the union's necessary day-to-day work, or urgent attention to new crises or unforeseen matters.

Today the landscape is changing. In a world still mired by a pandemic, a crisis in affordability and deep fractures in our democracy, workers must confront new pressures. Staying true to its founding precepts and to be a force for positive change in the economy, Unifor must explore new bold campaigns and initiatives – to move our agenda forward.

