



**strong
local
unions** 

**Building Stronger
Local Unions
Together:
Recommendations
and Action Plan**



Unifor

A union for everyone.

Table of Contents

Letter from Members of the Local Union Task Force	4
Executive Summary	6
I. Why Create a Local Union Task Force?	8
II. What did the Local Union Task Force do?	13
III. What Did We Hear?	18
1. Education	19
2. Communications	21
3. Collaboration and Resource Sharing	24
4. Community Solidarity and Profile	26
5. Connecting the Generations	28
6. Local Union Participation	30
7. Implementation and Evaluation	31
IV. Recommendations	37
1. Education	38
2. Communications	39
3. Collaboration and Resource Sharing	40
4. Community Solidarity and Profile	41
5. Connecting the Generations	42
6. Local Union Participation	43
7. Implementation and Evaluation	43
V. Action Plan	45

Letter from Members of the Local Union Task Force

Building stronger local unions is essential for our movement to grow, prosper and win the changes we need in our workplaces and communities. When Uni-for was created we knew that local unions were the key to the success of our project. And we knew that we needed to take a good hard look at the challenges we face, find the opportunities in front of us, and craft plans to strengthen our union.

Launched at the Local Union Presidents' Conference in April 2015, the work of the Task Force has been an enormous undertaking. We've brought the discussion about building stronger local unions to 49 town hall meetings in communities across the country, engaging 2,000 local union leaders, activists and members in the process. And more than 1,500 comprehensive surveys have been completed, providing valuable information and insights. The goal of this work has been to gather the widest possible input, and to learn more about the tremendous work, activism and creativity in our local unions.

For the Task Force to be a success we understood that our meetings had to be wide open, and they had to be focused on listening. Unlike many of our other gatherings, such as regional and national councils, these meetings were designed to ensure everyone had a voice, and in the vast majority of the meetings everyone spoke.

It has been a tremendous pleasure and honour to engage in these discussions, and to see the willingness of participants to share their experiences, raise the tough issues, and offer ideas to strengthen the movement that we all care so much about. If every one of our members could see what we've seen throughout the work of the Task Force, it's certain that their pride in our union would grow even stronger.

We also knew that this Task Force needed to be much more than a discussion. We had to take what we learned and build meaningful recommendations and a realistic action plan to move our union into the next phase of success. In our richly diverse union we heard about so many different challenges, experiences and opportunities from coast-to-coast. And, strikingly, we also heard that there is much we have in common.

After careful consideration and discussion, we have developed 28 recommendations addressing education, communications, collaboration and resource sharing, community solidarity and profile, connecting the generations, local union participation and evaluating the Task Force. Some of the recommendations in this report are very practical, immediate in terms of outcomes, and relatively easy to do. While others address much longer term issues, are about investing in our knowledge and culture, and are more difficult to accomplish. We know that we face many challenges. The work of the Task Force helped us focus more clearly on them, and provides us with more direction

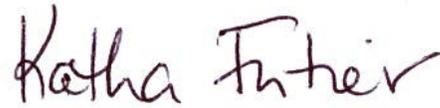
on how to make progress. To get the most we can from this Task Force we need to focus both on what's immediately achievable, but push ourselves as well.

When we founded Unifor we set our sights high, and the work of the Task Force is about just that: the potential of our union to transform our working lives and the labour movement, and to win justice for our members and all workers.

We encourage you to read this report, support its recommendations and work hard to make the action plan a reality. And we urge you to bring this report back to your local union, members and communities so they can see the results and good work; and be a part of building stronger local unions, and a stronger Unifor together.

Thank you for stepping forward, participating in your union, and for the work that you do every day on behalf of our members.

In solidarity,



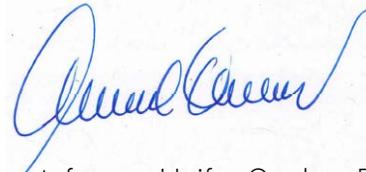
Katha Fortier, Ontario Region Director



Renaud Gagné, Quebec Director



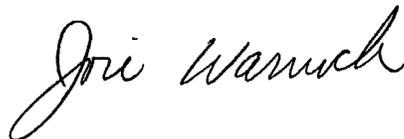
Ken Lewenza, former CAW President
Special Advisor to the Local Union Task Force



Michel Ouimet, former Unifor Quebec Director
Special Advisor to the Local Union Task Force



Lana Payne, Atlantic Region Director



Joie Warnock, Western Region Director

Executive Summary

The formation of Unifor represented an incredible opportunity to transform our union and the broader labour movement by building stronger local unions and grass roots community activism.

In order to build this movement, we first needed to hear from our local unions, to hear what their challenges are, and to discover the best practices that we know are out there waiting to be shared. That is why the Local Union Task Force was formed.

The Task Force was launched in April 2015 at a Local Union Presidents' Conference. The conference was followed by 49 town hall meetings over the course of ten months, and on-line local union and members' surveys providing detailed information about the challenges faced, and the successes that our local unions have had across the country.

The Local Union Task Force is one of the most significant undertakings of Unifor in its first three years. The

broad-based interactive discussion with a wide variety of participants has been a Unifor-building moment. Participants clearly enjoyed the opportunity to engage in real conversation where their ideas and input were sought. They felt valued and respected, and our union will be even stronger as a result.

This report is a synthesis of those meetings and surveys. It outlines the key themes that were heard from our members around our discussion tables and from the surveys. The report makes 28 recommendations grouped into seven themes aimed at strengthening our local unions by overcoming barriers to participation, training and empowering activists, and increasing connections between locals. This report concludes with a detailed action plan outlining who holds responsibility for each action item and the targeted date of completion.



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North York, Ontario

**why create
a local union
task force?**

why create a local union task force?

The Local Union Task Force began as a project to reach out to local unions, members and leadership and discover what is needed in order to strengthen our locals and become a stronger national union.

The local is our most visible presence in the community. It's where union activity and action begin. Our members go to meetings, hold votes, participate in campaigns, join sports teams and volunteer together in broader community life. The local union is also where we elect leadership and delegates, and where co-workers come together to discuss strategies to make the workplace a better place to be.

Many participants expressed anxiety and frustration with the relationships they have with their employers. Canada's economy is changing, the labour market and our workplaces are changing too, and that means our response has to change.

At Unifor's founding convention we committed to undertake a careful review of our local unions and to ask a number of very important questions: How do we build more engagement and participation in the life of the union? What are the biggest challenges faced by our local unions? How do we build stronger connec-

tions in each community? How can locals cooperate more closely with each other to share resources and best practices and build local solidarity?

There is tremendous diversity in how our locals are structured. Some locals are very large, others are quite small. Some have one bargaining unit, while others have dozens. Some are focused in one sector, while others cover a wide range of sectors and industries. Some have paid leadership positions, while some local union leaders do the work of the union during their lunch hours and off-hours in the evenings. Unifor was built not just from two unions, but through the more than 80 unions that have joined together over more than a century to become better and stronger together.

Many of our members have seen tough times this last decade. Workers have seen their colleagues and brothers and sisters lose their jobs to globalization or technological change. And aggressive employers sought many concessions during the 2008-09 global financial crisis and recession, often looking for more even as the economy recovered. It's been hard to make gains for most workers, and it's been a hard time to be a local union leader and activist.

why create a local union task force?

Many participants expressed anxiety and frustration with the relationships they have with their employers. Canada's economy is changing, the labour market and our workplaces are changing too, and that means our response has to change.

Despite the enormous challenges, we have a strong track record of activism and advocacy already. The sheer number of local union executives, union chairs, committees, stewards, volunteers and participants add up to several thousand people in Unifor alone. But we also know we face serious challenges that require a targeted strategy and response. We've got the structures and the people in place, but too often we struggle to get more members out to meetings, to participate in campaigns or to fill spots on committees and volunteer at events.

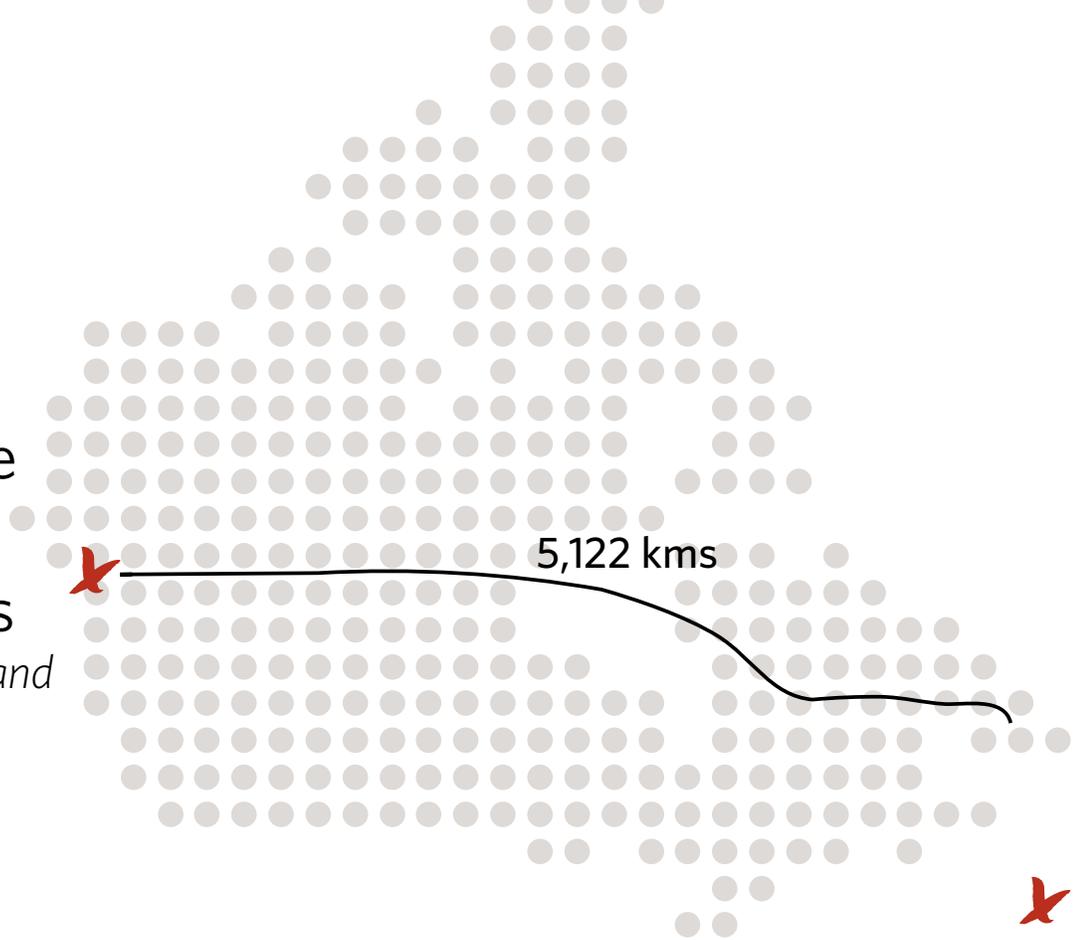
The Local Union Task Force was the first step in investigating these challenges. We participated in an open discussion where members were given the opportunity to share their challenges and concerns, share their ideas, and provide input on how we move forward together.

Of course, the Task Force has been about far more than our day-to-day work. It has also focused on building stronger ties in the community and our broader goals of social unionism. Our founding convention document affirmed that social unionism is one of the core shared principles that led to the formation of Unifor:

In addition to effectively representing our members in the workplace and negotiating the best possible collective agreements, the role of our union extends to our communities and broader society. Social unionism recognizes that the well-being of our members and their families is determined, to a great degree, by social, economic and

why create
a local union
task force?

Longest distance
between two
locals: 5,122 kms
(Local 2301 in Kitimat and
Local 597 in St. John's)



government policies. Our role is to be a powerful voice and tireless advocate for progressive public policies and social programs. Social unionism sees the labour movement as part of a broader movement for social change. It commits us to working with others to improve not only our own conditions, but the lives of others as well.

The scope and scale of Unifor – all 310,000 members in hundreds of communities across the country – makes it easy to see the potential we have to make change. The Local Union Task Force provided us with the opportunity to interact with locals across the country to discuss the challenges but also to discover the strategies and best practices that have worked to build engagement, support and solidarity from all of Unifor's local unions.

The kind of movement we envision is one that takes place on the shop floor, in the lunch room, on sidewalks and in coffee shops across the country. Important events and decisions occur on the national stage, but this is not where powerful movements are formed. Instead we need strong local unions and strong community relationships in order to bring about the changes we wish to see in our workplaces and on our streets.

**why create
a local union
task force?**

local union fact box

- 🔗 Number of local unions in Unifor: 730
- 🔗 Average size: 425 members
- 🔗 Two-thirds of locals have fewer than 200 members
- 🔗 Two-thirds of members are in a local with more than 1,000 members
- 🔗 2% of locals have more than 3,000 members
- 🔗 Longest distance between two locals: 5,122 kms (Local 2301 in Kitimat and Local 597 in St. John's)
- 🔗 Share of locals that are amalgamated: 80%
- 🔗 Share of locals with 5 or more bargaining units: 15%
- 🔗 Northernmost local union address: Local 862, Fort Nelson B.C.
- 🔗 Locals representing members covering a large geographical area: 20%

(See discussion paper: "Building Stronger Local Unions Together: Reaching our full potential" unifor.org/lutf click on "Download the Report".)

why create
a local union
task force?



Edmundston, New Brunswick

**what did the
local union
task force do?**

what did the local union task force do?

A recommendation to create and support the Local Union Task Force was adopted at the September 2014 meetings of the Canadian Council. The work of the Task Force included a Local Union Presidents' Conference in April 2015; 49 town hall meetings in communities across the country; and two surveys: a survey for local unions, and a members' survey where individuals could share their views on the challenges locals face and their ideas for strengthening their local union.

The Presidents' Conference included general discussion and debate around the process by which the Task Force would carry out its mandate. Discussion included the structure and key questions to be asked at Town Hall meetings, as well as the design and content of the surveys.

At each Town Hall meeting participants were asked five questions:

1. What are the key challenges you face as a local union?
2. How can we build stronger member support and engagement in our local unions?
3. Are there some best practices and good ideas from your local union that you can share?
4. What ideas do you have for working with other Unifor local unions in your community?
5. What do you need to strengthen your local union?

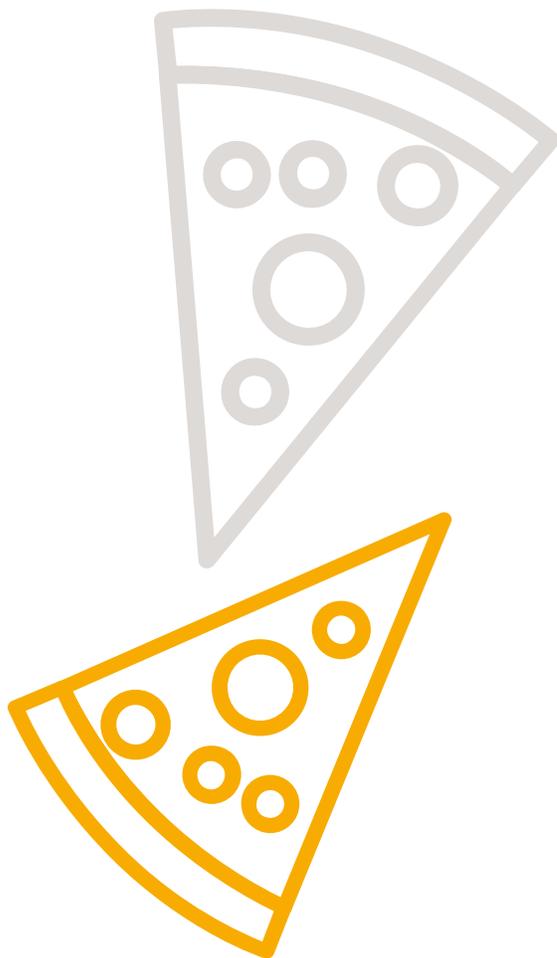
Overall, 49 Town Hall meetings were held across the country and 2,000 local union leaders and members participated from local unions representing more than 80% of Unifor's membership. In total, more than

what did the local union task force do?

6,000 person hours were dedicated to strategizing around how to strengthen our local unions.

In addition, the majority of our local unions filled out a survey, also representing 80% of the membership. And over fifteen hundred individual members completed the membership survey as well.

In total, more than 150 pages of meeting notes and best practices have been compiled into a clear set of recommendations and actions that can be taken in order to strengthen our local unions, and build a stronger union and revitalized social movement for the future.



town halls by the numbers

- 49 Town Hall meetings
- 2,000 participants
- Participants from 350 local unions
- Participating local unions represent more than 80% of our membership
- Months with the most Town Hall meetings: October and November 2015
- Estimated number of pizzas consumed: 400

what did the local union task force do?

49 Local Union Task Force Town Hall Meetings

Town Hall Meetings in 2015

June 22, 2015	Regina	October 7, 2015	Trois Rivieres
June 23, 2015	Saskatoon	October 15, 2015	Montreal Day
June 25, 2015	St. Catharines	October 15, 2015	Montreal Night
September 8, 2015	Edmundston	October 20, 2015	Quebec
September 9, 2015	Saint John	October 22, 2015	Gatineau
September 10, 2015	Moncton	November 2, 2015	Peterborough
September 15, 2015	Halifax	November 3, 2015	Oshawa
September 28, 2015	Victoria	November 4, 2015	Belleville
September 29, 2015	Edmonton	November 5, 2015	Ottawa
September 30, 2015	Calgary	November 5, 2015	Baie Comeau
October 1, 2015	Winnipeg	November 23, 2015	Vancouver
October 5, 2015	Timmins	November 24, 2015	Kamloops
October 6, 2015	Oakville	November 25, 2015	Prince George
October 6, 2015	Jonquiere	November 26, 2015	Nanaimo
October 7, 2015	Barrie	December 11, 2015	Amos

what did the
local union
task force do?

Town Hall Meetings in 2016

January 11, 2016	Windsor	March 3, 2016	North Bay
January 12, 2016	Sarnia	March 8, 2016	St. John's
February 8, 2016	Sudbury	March 9, 2016	Corner Brook
February 9, 2016	Brampton	March 15, 2016	Kitimat
February 10, 2016	London	March 30, 2016	Sault Ste. Marie
February 15, 2016	Woodstock	March 31, 2016	Toronto North
February 16, 2016	Kitchener	April 5, 2016	Antigonish
February 17, 2016	Fort McMurray	April 6, 2016	Sydney
March 1, 2016	Thunder Bay	April 27, 2016	Brockville
March 2, 2016	Toronto Centre		

Check out the online appendix for all the detailed notes from the town hall meetings, and a full report from the survey results: unifor.org/lutf

**what did the
local union
task force do?**



Kitchener, Ontario

**what did
we hear?**

what did we hear?

The Task Force heard from 2,000 local union leaders, activists, members, staff and retirees, and several hundred local union surveys were completed. Compiling all the voices, views, ideas and opinions into a short document is a challenge. After careful review, discussion and consideration, what follows are our observations of what we heard across the country, organized around the seven themes of the Task Force recommendations.



I thoroughly enjoyed the Local Union Task Force meeting that we attended. Questions asked were answered and good discussion was had.

- Local union survey respondent



what did we hear?

1. Education

We heard that education is key. Not only do our members want more of it, updated content, addressing new issues, and increased offerings, they also want more equitable and easier access to all of the resources and materials that fall under the Unifor umbrella.

Both small locals and locals more than six hours from Port Elgin expressed difficulty in accessing the full range of educational tools offered by Unifor. Many were unaware of the educational subsidies available for travel to Port Elgin, and still more were unaware of the standing offer from the education department to bring the educational program to the community when at least 15 members are ready and willing to fill the seats.

Also of note was a general understanding that members aren't necessarily aware of the full range of services Unifor has to offer. For example: what is the value added that Unifor brings? What are the general roles of shop stewards, local union leaders, staff representatives? These are questions that participants believed need to be directly addressed when new members join the union. Our members want to be better equipped to explain the history of the union and the local as well as develop new tools and strategies for building the union in the 21st Century. It was evident that people want the tools to be able to do things differently to overcome the barriers our locals currently face to participation.

There was a strong and persistent call for tools that immediately engage new members in the life of the union, and to ensure local union leaders are meeting new members as part of the workplace orientation process. This was seen as an important opportunity

for new members to get to know the union, and for the union to find out what members hope that the union offers.

There was also recognition of the fact that education and training does not end in the classroom. Our members need the opportunity to put the training into use and to have a way to get answers to follow-up questions as they arise. This is particularly important when it comes to the use of new technology. The training is important, but having a way to follow-up with questions after the training is over is equally important.

The term "guest speaker" came up often during the Task Force town hall meetings. Our local union leaders would like to offer some value added at meetings (beyond great pizza and pop). It was suggested that access to guest speakers on relevant topics could add a lot of value to both educating members, and providing an extra incentive to attend events and participate in union life.

We have an annual golf tournament and we raise funds for local charities. We support the local food bank and soup kitchen. We also have a very close relationship with the students of the local University and college working together on different projects for the community and the students.

- Local union survey respondent

**what did
we hear?**

survey says...

Some of what the Local Union Task Force surveys tell us about;
...our union and the opportunities we provide for education and training:

More than 71% of local unions provide opportunities for education and skills training to all interested members, and the local executive board.

7% of local unions say they do not provide these opportunities.

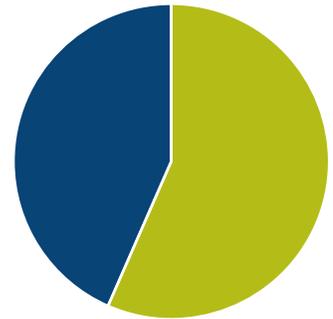


43%

43% of local unions send members (either regularly or occasionally) to participate in Unifor Paid Education Leave (PEL)-funded programs.

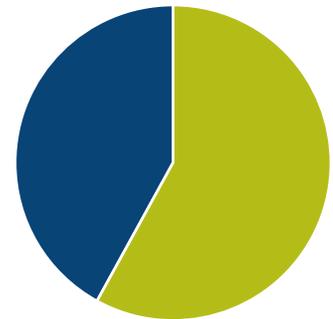
56%

However, more than half (56%) of local unions do not participate in PEL-funded programs - and among those, nearly 52% are locals with less than 100 members.



42%

Nearly half (42%) of all local unions with active standing committees have established a Local Union Education Committee.



what did we hear?

2. Communications

Communication was another hot topic across the country. We were struck by the fact that communication is a two-way street, not only an exercise in sending information to our members, but must also be a conversation where we find out about our members' lives, what interests them and what it might take to get them involved. More listening is key at every level of the union.

We heard that locals are struggling to find the best ways to communicate with members. Keeping up with contact information is a challenge as phone numbers and email addresses change, and individual members have their own preference in how they engage, or don't engage, with different types of communications – some want only emails and to engage through social media; others like paper copies of newsletters and pamphlets; some look at the union bulletin board regularly, while some never see it. Many local union leaders expressed concerns about information or communication fatigue. It is difficult to keep up with everything that is going on.

Many locals expressed the need for a database system to better track contact information of members, of locals, of local leadership and elected representatives, and even of what Unifor members produce and where they work. Our members want to support each other, but we don't always know who other Unifor members are or where they work in our own communities, let alone across the country.

We heard of the desire members have for advanced notice of meetings and events, as well as more information on what the goals or agenda of the meeting are. More intentional agenda setting, and an assurance that the meeting will be chaired effectively, goes

a long way to increasing engagement of the members who are on the margins of participating.

Locals of every size and location expressed the need for Unifor to better communicate and advertise the full range of resources and tools that are already available – everything from Unifor swag, to the pamphlets on different issues were mentioned. Many members expressed the need for a website that is more user-friendly; one that is easily searchable and more intuitive. The good news is this is already in progress.

Each meeting was host to a discussion about improved use of social media. Our locals want to know how to use social media tools more effectively, as well as how to know which tools to use, and which ones to avoid, as new applications and communications software seem to pop up regularly. Many meetings also included a discussion of the importance of paid advertising, whether it is a billboard, a television commercial or a radio spot.

There was much discussion of a Unifor smart phone application (app). Though there were wide-ranging views as to what the app might do, our members like the idea of a one-stop-shop for information and sharing, and the ease of use an app may provide.

At the same time, we also heard that face-to-face communication is important and a personal touch can go a long way when it comes to engaging with members. When it comes to communication, the latest software or shiny new tool is not always the greatest. This serves as a reminder that social media enhances our ability to disseminate information, but it is not a replacement for personal contact.

There was an acknowledgement that the materials

what did
we hear?

coming from the National office and local unions must better reflect the full diversity of our membership – including Aboriginal and workers of colour, women, young workers, workers with disabilities, LGBTQ members, among others. If we want to see more diversity in union participation we must ensure there are diverse avenues for participation and that members can actively see themselves in the communications materials that are dispersed at all levels of the union.

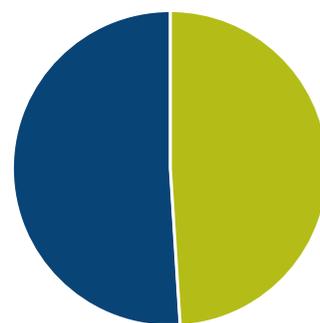
There were many observations on the vital role of National Service Department Representatives as an important conduit in the communications pipeline. They are often the gatekeepers for what information moves from our members up through to the National Office and vice versa. Improved communications needs to ensure the fullest participation and involvement of Service Department Representatives. We also heard just how much our members appreciate when national leaders of our union visit the communities where they live. There were many requests for local and national leadership and representatives to be even more present in the workplace and at local union meetings and events.

survey says...

...how we communicate with our members:

51%

More than half (51%) of responding Unifor members say they receive information from their local union on a regular basis.

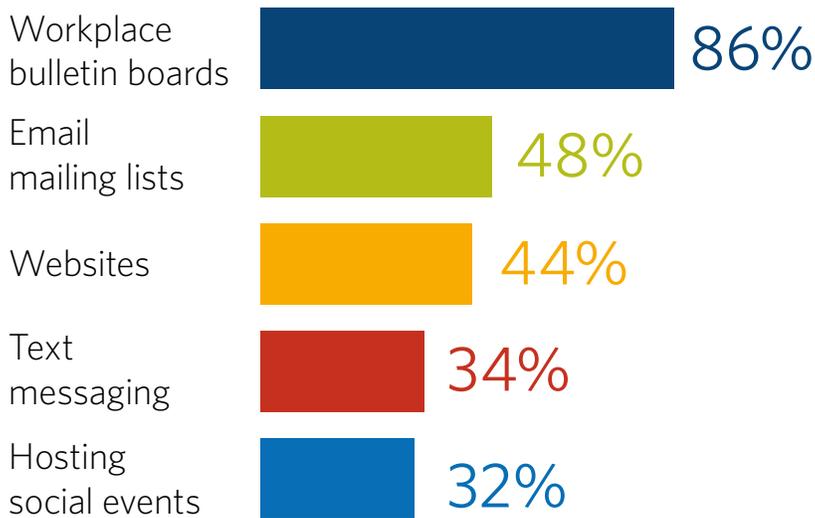


10%

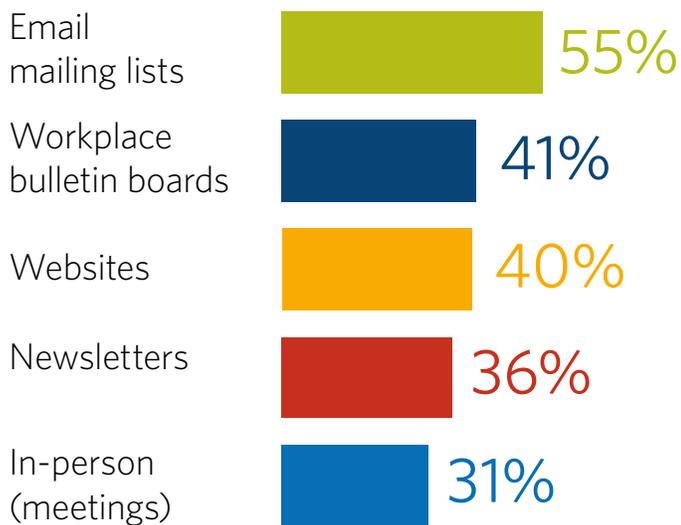
Nearly 1 in 10 report not receiving any information from their local union, even though they actively seek it out.

what did we hear?

Unifor local unions utilize a variety of communications tools to share information with members. According to the survey, here are the top 5 most used communication tools:



Based on survey results from Unifor members, these communications tools are also among the most sought after. The most preferred communication channels for members include:



what did
we hear?

3. Collaboration and Resource Sharing

We heard that there is both a strong desire, and myriad of opportunities, for locals to share resources and collaborate on events and actions. For many locals, the Town Hall meeting was an opportunity to meet other Unifor locals from the community for the first time. In some communities it was clear that bonds between locals were already quite strong. Many members described the difficulty in identifying Unifor members and workplaces – which spoke to the need for a directory and for contact information as a next step in getting to know each other. Some locals discussed the possibility of meeting regularly to get to know each other and to collaborate on community events such as a Labour Day picnic or a fundraiser. Others suggested opening up local-specific committees to membership and participation from multiple locals in the community, such as a Women’s Committee, Environmental Committee, or LGBTQ Committee, for example. The possibility of sharing office and meeting space was repeated multiple times over, and some locals began discussions around what mergers and amalgamation might look like. At the same time it was quite clear that many locals were apprehensive about amalgamation and wanted more information about the pros and cons. Others saw community collaboration and resource-sharing as the best option.

Our locals consistently encouraged all of us to build more fun into the union: to play baseball together, attend Diwali celebrations, and encourage social interaction and informal get-togethers where people have the opportunity to get to know each other better and find out what we have in common. There was also a persistent reminder to broaden the definition of participation. Our union is more than just meetings

and procedures; it is also about doing the work of social justice which includes community involvement, volunteering, fundraising, and political activism.

Task Force participants asked that more space for open discussion and dialogue be created where members can discuss the goals and objectives of the unit, the local and beyond, and be actively involved in developing strategies. Whatever the suggestion, every community expressed a willingness and desire to work together and collaborate on issues and events important to the members and to the community.

We are a small local so we watch our financial situation quite close.

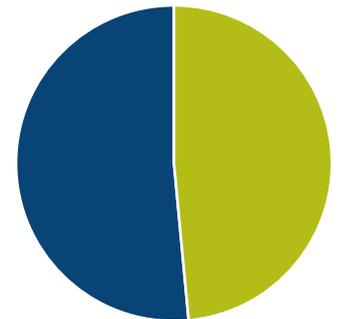
- Local union survey respondent

survey says...

...the opportunities to collaborate and share resources:

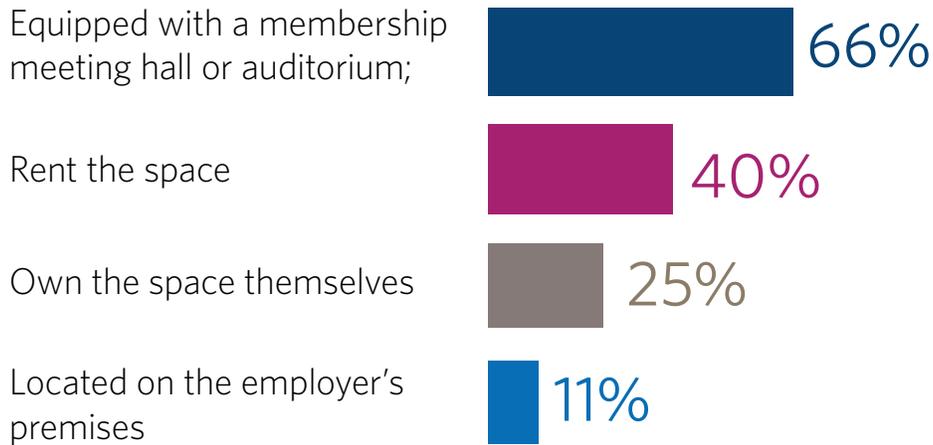
52%

Over half (52%) of local unions report having a dedicated union office space, while 48% report having no dedicated space.



what did we hear?

Among those that do have office space:



24%

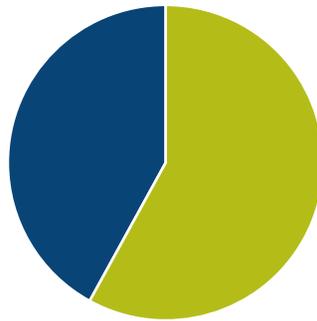
Only 24% of Unifor local unions employ paid staff, whether full- or part-time.

2/3

And for two-thirds of all local unions, the Local President performs union work only on a part-time basis, and most often (47% of the locals) with no predetermined time-off and only as required.

42%

42% of local unions consider the perceived "lack of access to national union services and resources" a significant challenge.



**what did
we hear?**

4. Community Solidarity and Profile

We heard that connections to each other and to the broader community are increasingly important. People have become increasingly busy and our connections to each other have become weaker. This has had an effect on solidarity as well. Whether playing on a sports team, or getting together for popcorn; whether volunteering for a community cause, or participating in a cultural event, informal get-togethers are seen as an important avenue to build community connections and rebuild solidarity across the country.

Community organizations and events are where our members participate in broader community life. Our members celebrate the events that are important to friends and family and to their communities and our members volunteer for causes that are important in building the quality of life of society at large.

We heard many ideas come to the forefront of conversation as we discussed how to build community connections and solidarity. And many of the ideas have the potential to do both simultaneously. Our members suggested locals come together in their communities to participate in fundraisers and to volunteer with community groups. Some suggested specific events and others suggested regular involvement with a local group. We heard that many locals already have committees that do this work – the suggestions were made as a way to broaden, enhance and publicize the good work that is already being done. In addition, many participants suggested more casual social events like movie nights, beer and wings or family friendly events with no agenda other than for people to get together and have fun. It was suggested that a greater emphasis on social and recreation committees could accomplish this work.

We also heard of the need for a broader public relations effort to increase engagement between Unifor and the community. Our members want our communities to know who Unifor is, and to associate our name with being a steward of the public good, reminding people (and ourselves) that although we certainly work tirelessly to increase the quality of life of our members, we do so for society as well. Stronger social supports, a higher floor for low-wage and precarious workers, a more robust pension plan and higher safety standards are just a few examples of topics we care about and efforts we have participated in or even spearheaded.

Our Local is a family and our small size combined with a low worker turnover makes it possible to assess and address all family members' issues and concerns. Any issue that touches a member affects the well-being of the local and the overall workplace.

- Local union survey respondent

The world is changing and there is never enough time to juggle work and family, let alone participate in union activities on your own time.

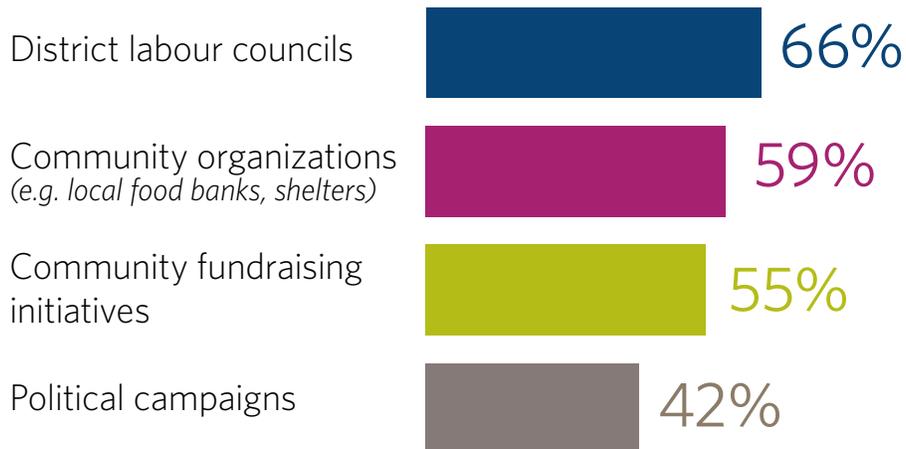
- Local union survey respondent

**what did
we hear?**

survey says...

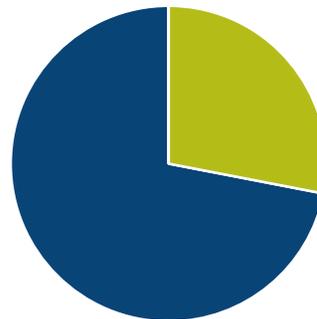
...how we foster community solidarity:

Many local unions undertake some level of engagement in the broader community, including participation in:



70%

More than 70% of responding members agrees that Unifor should be actively involved in broader community work, like supporting food banks and women's shelters.



77%

An even greater number (77%) agree that the union should be actively involved in political work that serves to benefit its members and all working people.

what did we hear?

5. Connecting the Generations

The need for bridge-building between generations came out loud and clear during the Task Force process. Many members expressed concern for a disengaged generation that is unaware of the sacrifices older workers have made in building the decent job that is available in the workplace today. And many expressed difficulty in building relationships and solidarity when the generations in one workplace have such different experiences in terms of living through periods of hardship, education, use of communications technology, and more.

At the same time, many young workers expressed a strong desire to be acknowledged as more than just a challenge, or problem to be addressed. Many young members are highly engaged both in the union as well as in the broader community advocating for social justice and important causes in Canada and around the world. What came out as lacking in the workplace and the union was authentic and proactive interaction across generational lines that builds friendship, understanding and empathy.

The importance of mentoring and relationship development was expressed over and over again. The need to build mutual respect among workers was a key theme. What also became clear was the necessity of creating space for new and young leaders. Young leaders want the opportunity to participate, to use their skills and to be innovative in how they put their leadership skills to use and engage their brothers and sisters in the union. Young workers need space to test their skills, to develop their abilities, and to be able to try again when one attempt falls flat.

Society and the labour market have changed dramatically over the last 30 years. Many young workers are

working two jobs, or are in families where both adults must work to make ends meet and to build their careers. As a result, people are busier than ever – including our members. That means we need to ensure that union meetings are efficient, effective and accessible to accomplish the goal intended at the outset. Some younger members noted that our actions and traditions may actually discourage participation even though this is the last thing we want. We need to be engaging people, including young workers, to find out what interests and concerns them and develop plans to engage.

Other pressures like childcare, distance from work, and shift work were also mentioned as barriers to participation. This is where we heard many ideas about the use of technology to potentially widen access. Making childcare available eliminates one of many barriers as does the use of conference calling, virtual meeting technology or even live streaming. Again, technology cannot serve as a substitute for personal connection, but it can extend the length of time necessary between face-to-face meetings in order to maintain healthy relationships.

Also mentioned repeatedly was the important role that retirees can play in building solidarity and supporting our members. Retirees have been very active in certain sectors in advocating for the rights of workers across the country. They can also play an important institutional role by telling their stories and transferring their knowledge to the next generation. In the past this work may have happened organically as new and experienced workers worked side-by-side. Today, we need to find new processes as workplaces have changed over time.

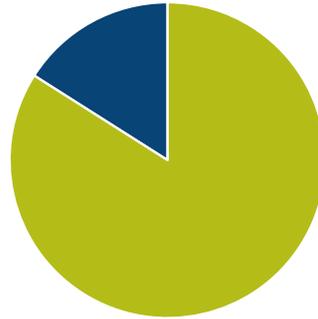
what did
we hear?

survey says...

...how we promote inter-generational solidarity:

16%

Only 16% of Unifor local unions has established a Retired Workers Chapter.

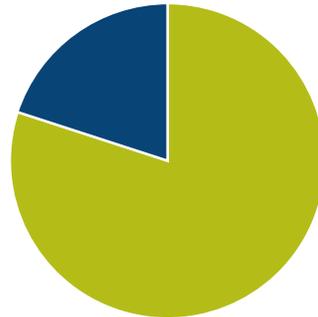


2/3

More than two-thirds of survey participants over 65 are active members of a Retired Workers Chapter.

22%

Conversely, just 22% of local unions report having a Young Workers Committee



16%

Only 16% of survey respondents 35 years old or younger are active members of a Young Workers Committee.

60%

The good news: 60% of young survey respondents stated their interest in getting “more involved” in the union, as compared to 39% of those 36 years and older.

what did we hear?

6. Local Union Participation

In total, locals representing more than 80 percent of our membership participated in the Task Force across the country. That is a good turnout. But it also means that locals representing 1 in 5 members did not participate. While we recognizes that not every local union could make the time and place set for the Town Hall meetings, it became increasingly clear after extensive efforts at outreach to minimally complete the local union survey that some locals do not regularly participate in the broader activities of the union.

During the process we were also struck by the number of participants who had not previously participated in a Council meeting or Convention, but took the opportunity to engage with the Task Force. Often that participation was the result of an invitation from a Service Representative who reached out to request their valuable input.

Town hall participants regularly emphasized that all locals should be actively engaged in the wider union to strengthen Unifor and ensure that members have access to the services, activities, and representation that they deserve.

We participated in the Local Union Task Force meeting. As a group we found it inspirational, the problem was we were speaking to the converted. We need to find a way to make a similar presentation to those who don't participate.

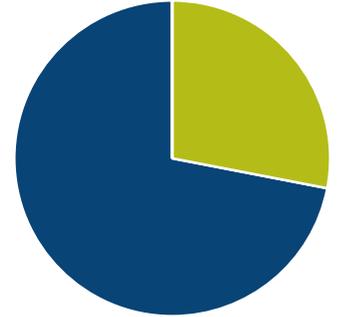
- Local union survey respondent

survey says...

...how our local unions participate in the broader democratic structures of Unifor:

68%

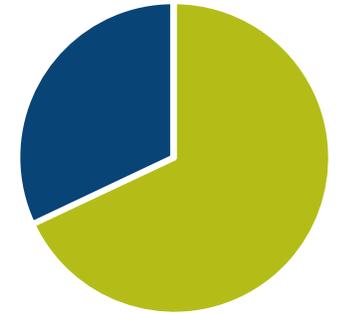
More than 68% of responding local unions have sent a full or partial delegation to Unifor's Canadian Council or Regional Councils.



Large locals (i.e. more than 1,000 members) are more likely to send a full complement of delegates to these Councils (over 68% of the time for Regional Councils and 76% of the time for Canadian Councils), than smaller locals.

32%

In fact, a full 32% of responding locals have never participated in a Canadian Council and 28% have not participated in a Regional Council meeting.



Of those who have not attended a Canadian Council meeting, 65% are small locals (i.e. fewer than 100 members) and have not participated for a variety of reasons, including the lack of financial resources. Among locals who have not attended a Regional Council, 59% are small locals.

what did we hear?

7. Implementation and Evaluation

Throughout the work of the Task Force, and particularly at the Town Hall meetings held across the country, there was a tremendous level of goodwill and positive feelings about the union, about the fact that the Task Force came to different communities, and that we were having open discussions about our tough challenges and the opportunities we have in front of us, and are crafting plans to strengthen our local unions.

One refrain heard regularly, however, was that these meetings must not be the end of the process. And there were many words of caution about having a lot of discussions, and talking about good ideas, and making nice reports, but then not following through afterwards. Many participants rightfully noted the experience of participating in meetings that set high expectations, only to see the initiatives falter, or run out of steam.

It was noted that the Task Force needed to develop a concrete set of recommendations and action plan, that the union at all levels be accountable for carrying out the work, and that we commit to monitor our progress, evaluate the work, and report back to the union on the outcomes of the Task Force.

All bargaining unit members who voted in the last local election received a Red Umbrella from the local with the Unifor logo and local number on it. Now when it rains the Local has everyone covered!

- Local union survey respondent

I believe our local does try to encourage membership participation but our members are not all local residents and their job, not their union, is their number one priority.

- Member survey respondent

what did
we hear?

Best Practices and Good Ideas:

- ✓ “We couldn’t get many people to participate at the meetings, and there were lots of workplace locations, so we tried a Skype meeting and got 20 new people to join in.”
- ✓ “Lots of people don’t want to come to long meetings, so we decided to do half-hour “lunch-and-learn” sessions on key elements of the agreement, or issues that we’re facing. They’ve been very popular.”
- ✓ “Our Local created a smart phone app that provides easy access to events, news flashes and more.”
- ✓ “We had a few people really interested in environmental issues, but not quite enough to work well on their own. So, we’ve joined forces with some other locals to create an Area Environmental Committee.”
- ✓ “We successfully merged units, pooled resources and assembled most activities into one local union hall. We now have a stronger sense of community and the move made member mobilization, educational activities and communications much easier to plan and execute.”
- ✓ “Our local union has put a lot of effort into new member orientation. When a new member joins we make sure a local representative meets with them to say hello and introduce them to the union – not just the workplace – right away.”
- ✓ “We share a local union hall with two other locals and a retiree chapter. The hall has an auditorium and office space and is bustling with both union and community activities – it embodies the purpose of social unionism.”
- ✓ “We established a special education fund aimed at helping to cover the costs of members attending union-sponsored workshops, conferences and other learning events.”
- ✓ “Our local travelled to workplaces across the region with a BBQ. It allowed a space for members to interact with us and each other – to have conversation and ask questions about upcoming and current negotiations.”
- ✓ “We were having trouble getting people out to local meetings so we changed the format. We invited guest speakers, we shortened meetings and made them more interactive and discussion based. We now have higher participation.”

what did
we hear?

Best Practices and Good Ideas:

- ✓ "A council of locals with a common employer meets twice a year to discuss concerns and share bargaining strategies. Some also discuss how they can work on broader objectives of the union."
- ✓ "We offer \$\$ for child/elderly care in order for members to attend meetings in hopes of removing this obstacle."
- ✓ "We developed an organizing training course for our members who wanted to be involved in organizing to help them with the basics. To date 18 members have attended and the feedback was great."



what did
we hear?

Visualizing What We Heard

This word cloud is a visualization of what was heard, said or written at Local Union Task Force meetings. The largest words represent the themes heard most often; smaller words were heard less often.



what did we hear?



what did
we hear?



Amos, Quebec

recommendations

recommendations

Following extensive consultation across the union, thorough discussion and evaluation of the results, the Task Force has developed 28 recommendations organized into seven themes: education, communications, collaboration and resource sharing, community solidarity and profile, connecting the generations, local union participation, and implementation and evaluation.

Moving forward with these recommendations will require a lot of work and participation from local union leaders, activists, and staff from across the union. In order to succeed, plans to implement these recommendations will need wide input, and be tailored to the situation in each region, working under the guidance of the Quebec Director and Regional Directors. In Quebec, ensuring that all materials and plans to implement recommendations fully reflect the unique cultural, political and linguistic dynamic will require the direct guidance of Quebec local union leaders, and staff, under the coordination of the Quebec Director.



recommendations

1. Education

Education was highlighted as a top priority throughout the work of the Task Force for its vital role in building activism and strengthening local unions. The Task Force recommends:

- a. **Expand knowledge about existing resources:** Unifor Education Department, working with the Communications Department and local union Education Committees review existing outreach and publicity materials and methods, identify gaps and develop a strengthened plan to further expand knowledge about our existing courses, their content, the process for participation, funding options and opportunities for regional courses. Progress report to Spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting, key elements implemented by 2017 Canadian Council.
- b. **New member orientation kit:** Unifor Communications Department develop and make available a high-quality new member orientation kit for all incoming members that provides an introduction to Unifor, basic information on how the union functions, and outlines ways for members to participate. The kit could include printed materials, access to a welcome video message, and electronic copies of key documents and would be designed to be supplemented by local union materials such as a copy of the collective agreement, newsletters, and contact information, among others. Completed kits made available by 2017 Canadian Council.
- c. **Paid Education Leave:** Unifor Education Department develop an inventory of bargaining units with Paid Education Leave provisions, provide targeted outreach to Service Representatives and local unions about the program, and report to each Regional Council on progress toward expanded coverage and strengthened provisions. Report on inventory to spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting, targeted outreach by 2017 Canadian Council.
- d. **Develop more on-line resources:** Unifor Education Department review the potential for more on-line education for both group and independent study, and consider the development of short self-serve education modules that local unions could independently incorporate into other meetings and functions. Report on progress to spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting.
- e. **Expanded courses on use of technology:** Unifor Education Department expand regional and short course offerings on the use of technology including social media for building local unions, planning and running a virtual meeting, and use of on-line survey tools to survey membership, among others. Report on progress to spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting.
- f. **Regional speakers' bureau:** Unifor Education and Research Departments outreach to academics and other social justice organizations to develop lists of guest speakers in various regions and communities willing to speak to local union gatherings on topics of interest. Speakers' bureau lists and contacts will be made available in the spring of 2017.

recommendations

2. Communications

The need to connect, and stay connected, with our members was highlighted across the work of the Task Force, noting the many barriers but also new opportunities. The Task Force recommends:

- a. **Membership contact tools:** Unifor National Office develop and make available to local unions state-of-the-art membership contact and tracking tools to gather, organize and use membership contact information such as mailing addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and demographic characteristics, among others. Such tools will be developed to ensure appropriate privacy protections, and the ability for local unions to integrate and share information with national membership information systems. Report on progress to spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting.
- b. **Smart phone app:** Unifor National Office review existing local union smart phone apps, and develop and make available to Local Unions a smart phone app that will provide access to National and possibly even local union information updates and materials, and offer a customizable means for local unions to communicate with members. Report on progress to spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting, smart phone app to be available by 2017 Canadian Council.
- c. **Improve access to on-line resources:** Unifor Communications Department review the existing organization of national and Quebec website resources and make adjustments as needed with a view toward greater accessibility and ease of use. Report on progress to fall 2016 National Executive Board meeting.
- d. **Multiple language translation:** Unifor National office develop best-practice guidelines for the development of multiple language materials, and coordinate lists and provide contact information to local unions of approved regional translators. Translator lists to be made available in the spring of 2017.

3. Collaboration and Resource Sharing

Bringing local unions together in our communities represents enormous potential for collaboration, resource sharing and more. Throughout the work of the Task Force there was strong support for continued and deepened community connections. The Task Force recommends:

- a. **Regular Unifor community meetings:** Encourage local unions meet with other local unions in the same community up to two times per year for general discussion about ongoing issues, to consider areas of collaboration, to share information on existing community connections, and to develop joint initiatives. Co-ordinated through the offices of the Quebec Director and Regional Directors to reflect needs and regional dynamics, initial meetings will be targeted for the spring of 2017 in the communities that hosted a Local Union Task Force Town Hall meeting. Reports on progress and developments will be made at Quebec and Regional Councils.
- b. **Community contact directory:** Unifor National Office will develop and maintain an on-line directory accessible to local unions providing contact information for officers and committee members of other local unions, searchable by region and community. Report on progress to spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting.
- c. **Guide to resource sharing:** Unifor Secretary-Treasurers' office develop guidelines and best-practices for local unions about resource sharing, such as co-locating, joint-ownership of property, shared leasing, shared personnel, among other initiatives. Guide to be available by 2017 Canadian Council.
- d. **Guide to mergers:** Unifor National Office will develop educational materials, guidelines and best-practices for local unions considering mergers; and will identify national and regional staff to provide guidance and facilitate discussions as requested. Guide and identified facilitators to be available by 2017 Canadian Council.
- e. **Guide to amalgamated and composite Local Unions:** Unifor National Office will develop and make available to local unions educational materials, guidelines and best practices concerning effective organization and equitable representation for units within amalgamated and composite local unions. Guide to be available by 2017 Canadian Council.
- f. **Services for smaller bargaining units:** Unifor National Office will review the existing practices of bargaining units serviced directly by local unions, and establish appropriate guidelines and standards with the goal of ensuring equitable access to services, National Union staff and resources for both existing and newly-organized smaller bargaining units. A report and guidelines to be presented to the Fall 2017 meeting of the National Executive Board.

4. Community Solidarity and Profile

Building our movement in the communities where we live is essential to achieve our goals and to strengthen our local unions. There was strong support for working together and expanding the visibility of our union and our work in the community. The Task Force recommends:

- a. **Proactive community engagement:** Local unions develop inventories of recent and existing connections to organizations in their communities, compile and share inventories with other local unions at Unifor community meetings, and discuss opportunities for collaboration while prioritizing outreach to a diversity of communities. The Quebec Director and Regional Directors will consider means to significantly expand recognition and visibility of the ongoing community engagement of local unions. Inventories to be prepared for spring 2017 Unifor local union community meetings.
- b. **Unifor signs and flags:** The National Office will coordinate with the Quebec Director, Regional Directors and local unions to conduct an inventory of local union offices requiring a Unifor sign and provide targeted outreach; additionally the National Office will initiate a campaign to erect Unifor flags at workplaces wherever feasible. Report on inventory and campaign plans to the spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting.
- c. **Unifor promotional materials:** The National Office will review and refresh existing offerings of promotional materials (e.g. shirts, hats, jackets, pens, pins, water bottles, etc.). In coordination with the Quebec Director and Regional Directors develop easy-to-use on-line ordering system, and provide regional links to approved unionized services offering customized Local Union material. Report on progress to spring 2017 meeting of the National Executive Board, improved ordering system implemented by 2017 Canadian Council.
- d. **Unifor goods and services directory:** The National Office in conjunction with local unions will develop an on-line directory of Unifor-made consumer products, and Unifor-staffed services, including the ability to search within specific regions and communities. Report on progress to spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting.

5. Connecting the Generations

Finding better ways to connect our members across the generations was a vital part of discussions throughout the work of the Task Force: identifying not only to connect with new members, and younger members, but also with our retirees. The Task Force recommends:

- a. **Mentorship program:** Unifor National Office establish a working group comprised of representatives from local unions, the Unifor Education Department, the Unifor Servicing Department, the Young Workers Committee and the Retirees Department to review mentorship programs in other organizations, past experiences with mentorship programs in our own union, and develop recommendations for a Unifor local union mentorship program with the goals of connecting young members and activists with mentors to share knowledge, insights, experiences and advice during a sustained mentorship period. Report on progress to the spring 2017 National Executive Board meeting and launch the program by 2017 Canadian Council.
- b. **Outreach to schools:** Unifor Communications and Education Departments will review existing materials from our own union and across the labour movement to develop high-quality materials, speaking notes and presentations on the role of unions, current issues, and labour history, among others, for local unions to use to speak with elementary and secondary students, and outreach to Boards of Educations to incorporate labour perspectives into curriculum. Report on progress to spring 2017 meeting of the National Executive Board, materials to be available by 2017 Canadian Council.
- c. **Retiree Chapters:** Unifor Retired Workers Department conduct an inventory of existing Retiree Chapters, review, and develop new materials as needed, to promote the establishment of Retiree Chapters, develop guidelines and best-practices for the development of area- or community-level Retiree Chapters with members from multiple local unions, and identify start-up facilitators in each region to assist new Retiree Chapters. Report on progress to spring 2017 meeting of the National Executive Board; materials, guidelines and facilitators to be available by 2017 Canadian Council.

recommendations

6. Local Union Participation

The work of the Task Force engaged with the majority of our local unions and 2,000 participants at Town Hall meetings. Local unions representing more than 80% of our total membership participated in the building of this report, but the fact remains that a number of locals did not participate. The Task Force recommends:

- a. **Identify locals that did not participate in the Task Force:** The Quebec Director and Regional Directors in cooperation with Area Directors and Staff Representatives will meet with local unions that have not participated in the Task Force.
- b. **Identifying barriers to participation:** Meetings will include a discussion of specific challenges and barriers to participation that may be faced, explore solutions, and consider further options.
- c. **Develop a pathway forward:** In cooperation with the local union, Staff Representatives and Area Directors, a plan will be developed to ensure the structures are in place that enable participation by the local union. The Quebec Director and Regional Directors will report on their progress, developments and possible recommendations at the spring 2017 meeting of the National Executive Board.

7. Implementation and Evaluation

The Task Force heard throughout its work that the overall initiative was vital and important to building stronger locals and a stronger Unifor, but that we need to ensure we move forward with the recommendations and action plan. The Task Force recommends:

- a. **Report back to membership:** Local unions bring the Task Force report and action plan back to membership; the National union will make all presentations, reports and multi-media available on-line. Printed hard copies will be available for membership meetings on request. Local unions to report to membership by spring 2017, materials to be available immediately upon adoption of report.
- b. **Evaluate the outcomes of Task Force:** Unifor National Office to track progress and review outcomes of Task Force, prepare and present evaluation report to 2018 Canadian Council.

recommendations



Sarnia, Ontario

action plan

1. Education

Action Item	Responsibility	Completion
a. Expand knowledge about existing resources	Education Department	☆ Progress report Spring 2017 NEB ☆ Plan implemented 2017 Canadian Council
b. New member orientation kit	Communications Department	☆ 2017 Canadian Council
c. Paid Education Leave outreach	Education Department	☆ Inventory Spring 2017 NEB ☆ Outreach 2017 Canadian Council
d. Develop more on-line resources	Education Department	☆ Progress report spring 2017 NEB
e. Expanded courses on use of technology	Education Department	☆ Progress report spring 2017 NEB
f. Regional speakers' bureau	Education and Research Departments	☆ Spring 2017

2. Communications

Action Item	Responsibility	Completion
a. Membership contact tools	National Office -multiple departments	☆ Progress report spring 2017 NEB
b. Smart phone app	Communications Department	☆ Progress report Spring 2017 NEB ☆ Available 2017 Canadian Council
c. Improve access to on-line resources	Communications Department	☆ Progress report to fall 2016 NEB
d. Multiple language translation	National Office -multiple departments	☆ Spring 2017

3. Collaboration and Resource Sharing

Action Item	Responsibility	Completion
a. Unifor community meetings	Quebec Director, Regional Directors and Local Unions	☆ First meetings fall 2016 and spring 2017 ☆ Progress reports to Regional Councils
b. Community contact directory	National Office - multiple departments	☆ Progress report spring 2017 NEB
c. Guide to resource sharing	National Secretary Treasurer's Office	☆ 2017 Canadian Council
d. Guide to mergers	National Office - multiple departments	☆ 2017 Canadian Council
e. Guide to amalgamated and composite locals	National Office - multiple departments	☆ 2017 Canadian Council
f. Services for smaller bargaining units	National Office - multiple departments	☆ Report and guidelines presented to NEB Spring 2017

4. Community Solidarity and Profile

Action Item	Responsibility	Completion
a. Proactive community engagement	Local Unions, Quebec Director and Regional Directors	☆ Inventory sharing spring 2017
b. Unifor signs and flags	National Office and Local Unions	☆ Sign inventory and outreach, flag campaign launch spring 2017 NEB
c. Unifor promotional materials	National Office - multiple departments	☆ Progress report spring 2017 NEB ☆ New ordering system 2017 Canadian Council

5. Connecting the Generations

Action Item	Responsibility	Completion
a. Mentorship program	National Office -multiple departments	☆ Progress report spring 2017 NEB ☆ Launch 2017 Canadian Council
b. Outreach to schools	Communications and Educations Departments	☆ Progress report spring 2017 NEB ☆ Materials by 2017 Canadian Council
c. Retiree Chapters	Retired Workers Department	☆ Progress report spring 2017 NEB ☆ Materials and facilitators 2017 Canadian Council.

6. Local Union Participation

Action Item	Responsibility	Completion
a. Identify locals that did not participate	Quebec Director and Regional Directors	☆ Summer and Fall 2016
b. Identify barriers to participation	Quebec Director and Regional Directors	☆ Meetings spring, summer and fall 2016.
c. Develop a pathway forward	Quebec Director and Regional Directors	☆ Progress report spring 2017 NEB

7. Implementation and Evaluation

Action Item	Responsibility	Completion
a. Report back to membership	National Union and Local Unions	☆ Task Force materials made available immediately on adoption. ☆ Local report to membership by spring 2017.
b. Evaluate Task Force outcomes	National Office - multiple departments	☆ Report to 2018 Canadian Council

For more information
please visit
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Prepared by Unifor Research Department