



SOCIETY *of*
UNITED PROFESSIONALS
IFPTE 160

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SOCIETY OF UNITED PROFESSIONALS



BUILDING A STRONGER UNION

The Society was founded in 1944 by a group of engineers employed by Ontario Hydro. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the scope of the Society's bargaining unit expanded to include all professional and trades supervisory employees. For many decades, the Society operated as a professional association where Ontario Hydro voluntarily recognized the association through a Master Agreement.

In 1983, Ontario Hydro unilaterally terminated its Master Agreement with the Society. Although a replacement Master Agreement was bargained later that year, the experience made Society members realize their bargaining rights were not secure without the Society being a certified trade union. In 1986, the Society applied for certification. Ontario Hydro initially opposed this application and protracted litigation between the parties ensued for a number of years at the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

Following the election of an NDP government in September 1990 and the appointment of a new Ontario Hydro President, the Society and Ontario Hydro successfully negotiated a Voluntary Recognition Agreement (VRA) that took effect on January 14, 1992. The first collective agreement between the parties was negotiated in 1992 and took effect on January 1, 1993. When Ontario Hydro was broken up in 1999, the successor companies (including Hydro One, Independent Electricity System Operator and Ontario Power Generation) inherited the collective agreements with the Society, including its obligations under the VRA.

In 2003, the Society affiliated with the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) and formed Local 160. This affiliation strengthened our base, increased our organizing capacity and provided us access to local, national and international labour movements at a time when our members were seeing their jobs spun off to companies with multinational ownership groups. The Society's joint organizing program with IFPTE has grown the Society's membership by approximately 10%.

The first strike in the Society's history occurred in 2005. Over 1,000 Hydro One members were engaged in a strike lasting 105 days. The employer wanted to create two-tier compensation and working conditions that would have hurt the next generation of workers. Society members were not willing to betray future employees by negotiating pension, wage, job security and health benefits schemes that would be worse for all new hires. Unwilling to give away the next generation's good jobs, Society members went to the picket lines to try to stop it.

In 2011, lawyers from Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) expressed interest in joining the Society. Practicing lawyers in Ontario are exempt from the Ontario Labour Relations Act (OLRA), which governs the unionization process. Therefore, the Society worked with the lawyers to develop a campaign to win collective bargaining rights. Eighty percent of LAO lawyers signed a petition requesting that LAO voluntarily recognize the Society as their bargaining agent. LAO refused the

request. As a result, the Society shifted the campaign to advocacy directed at the decision-makers at Queen's Park, which oversees LAO. We did this by building support in the legal community and labour movement, as well as mounting a legal challenge against the exclusion of lawyers from the OLRA. In September 2015, the government finally realized the Society would not stop until we won. Within weeks a framework agreement was negotiated with LAO and a vote was held for LAO lawyers to join the Society. Seventy-six percent of LAO lawyers voted in favour of recognizing the Society as their bargaining agent.

“Today, the Society represents over 11,000 employees in 23 different companies and we continue to grow.”

On March 7, 2018 members from all Society locals voted overwhelmingly in support of changing our name to Society of United Professionals (formerly the Society of Energy Professionals) to recognize the diverse membership our union represents.

In late 2025, IFPTE Local 222 representing 450 municipal professionals working for the City of Saskatoon voted to merge with the Society of United Professionals, IFPTE Local 160. Today, the Society represents over 11,000 employees across 23 collective agreements and we continue to grow.

OUR APPROACH TO BARGAINING AND MEMBERSHIP REPRESENTATION

The Society of United Professionals is a member-led movement for better workplaces. We represent over 11,000 professionals including engineers, scientists, supervisors, and lawyers. Through our democratic structures, the Society of United Professionals has developed a governance system that ensures the organization runs according to the interests and values of our membership. For over eight decades, the Society has developed a distinctive approach to labour negotiations that focuses on developing solutions rather than creating conflict.

Our union also has special expertise in representing professionally regulated employees. Many of our members work in regulated professions such as engineers, accountants, lawyers, and paralegals. We understand the challenges faced by employees when they encounter issues of employers attempting to undermine their professional and ethical obligations.

“The Society has developed a distinctive approach to labour negotiations that focuses on developing solutions rather than creating conflict.”

We have a well-established reputation for negotiating strong collective agreements, and are often recognized for leading industry standards.

We are a well-funded and well-resourced organization. The Society's annual operating budget is more than \$17 million. We also have a collective agreement negotiations fund which all bargaining units can access to cover the cost of establishing or renewing a collective agreement. The Society's revenues come from a combination of membership dues and investments.

The Society has 30 highly experienced full-time staff engaged in labour relations, research, education and training, communications, government relations, organizing, IT support, and administration. Society bargaining units are assigned a Labour Relations Staff Officer who is a specialist in supporting and guiding employer interactions, negotiating agreements, and handling grievances. The Society also provides a comprehensive training program for local elected representatives, including bargaining teams. Often local leaders will work with the Society research, organizing, external relations and communications staff on projects to advance their members' interests such as collective agreement negotiations.

Our union also recognizes the importance of our members having input into public policy that affects them at work and in the community. We provide staff resourcing as well as

“Our union has special expertise in representing professionally regulated employees.”

membership training and engagement opportunities for advocacy at all levels of government. This is often of particular interest to our members who work for employers that place restrictions on employees speaking out about public policy issues related to their jobs. As union members and elected representatives, employees are able to speak on behalf of their members while the Society as a whole is able to advocate around employee concerns to affect meaningful change.

The Society is Local 160 of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), an international union that has represented professionals since 1918. IFPTE has 90,000 members across North America. IFPTE combines the strength of collective bargaining with the autonomy and specialization of a professional association. Belonging to IFPTE gives the Society access to the broader labour movement and the ability to participate in the Canadian Labour Congress, Ontario Federation of Labour and local labour councils.

SOCIETY OF UNITED PROFESSIONALS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

MEMBERSHIP

Constitution, referenda



SOCIETY COUNCIL

Elected representatives, can take any constitutional decision



EXECUTIVE BOARD

Elected representatives, provide financial control, acts as Council between meetings



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Operational control, coordination

SOCIETY LOCALS

- locals are governed according to their own by-laws
- responsible for collective bargaining and handling grievances
- provide local services and engagement
- led by local vice-president
- unit directors and delegates assist in serving members
- each local is assigned a staff labour relations officer

SOCIETY STRUCTURE AND GOVERNANCE

The Society is made up of 16 groups we refer to as “Locals”. Locals can service a single collective agreement with a single employer, more than one collective agreement at a single employer, or the collective agreement for multiple, similar employers.

Each Local has elected Delegates, Unit Director(s) and a Local Vice-President (LVP). The number of Delegates and Unit Directors per Local is determined by the number of members in the Local. The number of members also determines the number of seats a Local has on the Society’s Executive Board. Specifics regarding these ratios can be found in the Society Constitution, a copy of which can be found on the [Society website](#).

Each elected role in the Society has a specific set of accountabilities. These accountabilities and responsibilities are outlined in the [Constitution and Bylaws](#) for each elected position. To ensure that the needs of each Local are heard, the Local’s members elect individuals to represent them from amongst their own membership.

SOCIETY COMPOSITION BY LOCAL

LOCAL	# OF MEMBERS
Aboriginal Legal Services	63
Bruce Power	1389
Electrical Safety Authority	88
Hydro One	2177
Independent Electricity System Operator	832
Kinectrics	594
Chinese and Southeast Asian Legal Clinic	6
Legal Aid Ontario & LEAF (Lawyers, Articling students)	486
Local 164 (Andritz Hydro, Babcock & Wilcox Canada, BWXT Nuclear Canada)	31
National Judicial Institute	42
Nuclear Waste Management Organization	136
Ontario Energy Board	192
Ontario Power Generation (OPG, Laurentis, PowerON, Atura)	4555
Toronto Hydro (Engineers and IT)	177
Technical Standards and Safety Authority	43
City of Saskatoon 222	450
Total	11279



Society Council Meeting

SOCIETY ROLES

The Society has a number of elected and non-elected roles within our structure:

MEMBER: An employee of an employer for which the Society has been granted bargaining rights and who is eligible to be represented by the Society, subject to the qualifications in the Constitution, and who has submitted a membership application. This role is not elected.

DELEGATE : A delegate is a member who is elected by a group of fellow members (called a “delegate group”) to represent that group in accordance with the constitution. This individual is typically the key point of contact for members. The delegates provide communications from members to the Society, as well as from the Society to the members. Delegates typically play an intake role for grievances, help members find information in their collective agreements, encourage members to participate in Society campaigns and activities, and share updates about the union with members. Whether a local has delegate groups is determined by the ratios set out in the Constitution and Bylaws.

UNIT DIRECTOR: Delegates report to Unit Directors (UD) in locals that have more than 50 members or collective agreement provisions that specify Unit Directors. Unit Directors are elected by individual members from a number of delegate groups to provide representation to those delegates and the members within their group. For example, one Unit Director, might have three delegates who report to them, and each delegate may have 30-40 members for and to whom they are responsible. The Unit Director acts as an escalation point for delegates on workplace issues and a leader for campaigns in the workplace. Unit Directors have visibility to a larger group of members and delegates, making it easier to catch cross-company or departmental collective agreement violations or implementation issues. A Unit Director represents between 50 and 400 members.

LOCAL VICE-PRESIDENT: Each local, regardless of the number of members they have, elects one Local Vice- President (LVP). Each Local Vice-President is a voting member of the Society’s Executive Board. Generally, the LVP, has signing authority for local decisions, and is the escalation point for all elected members (Delegates and Unit Directors) in their local. LVPs generally lead collective agreement negotiations and the overall relationship with their members’ employer.

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS: The Society has three elected Principal Officers (POs), President, Secretary Treasurer and Executive Vice-President. Principal Officers sit on the Executive Board and the Executive Committee. These positions are filled by members who are on full-time release from their work and are voted on by the entire Society membership.

Note: Elections for Unit Directors, Local Vice-Presidents and Principal Officers are held every three years. Incumbents are required to run for election in each cycle.

LOCAL AUTONOMY

Each Society bargaining unit has the right to negotiate and manage its operations, in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws, to best serve their members. In doing so, each local acts fairly autonomously, with the common objective to increase benefits, opportunities and rights for the Society Membership as a whole.

This means locals can:

- Negotiate settlements and interim agreements in the best interest of the local's members without approval from Society Central bodies (i.e. Executive Board).
- Negotiate Collective Agreement language based on the needs of their Local.
- Each LVP has a vote on the Executive Board, which provides a voice to the Local's members in decision making processes that affect the Society membership as a whole, including governance of the union.

Limitations:

- In accordance with the Society Policy: **Governing Principles When Bargaining**, locals cannot agree to negotiated changes to the following Collective Agreement provisions without the approval of the Executive Board:

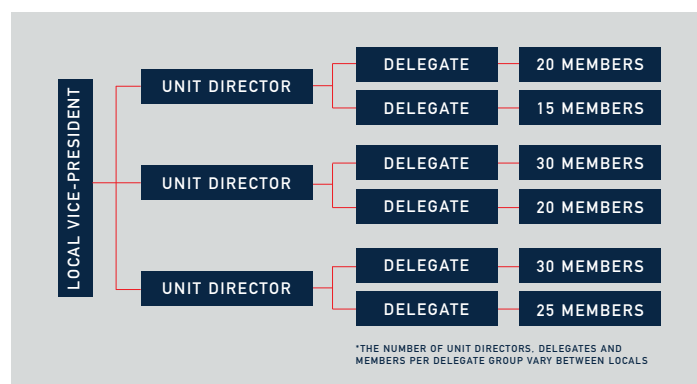
• Jurisdiction, scope and voluntary recognition agreement clauses	• Mediation/arbitration
• Hours of work	• Pensions and significant benefits
• Compensation systems	• Contracting out and purchased service agreements
• Employee privacy	• Employment security
• Release time	• Health and safety

And/or which:

- Establishes a precedent, or yields the employees' or union's legal rights, or expands management rights
- Has a financial cost for the Society as a whole
- Interprets the Collective Agreement in a manner that is significantly less provident than the original intent, long-standing interpretation or established past practice

Society locals are assigned a Labour Relations Staff Officer who is a specialist in supporting and guiding employer interactions, agreement negotiations, and grievance handling. The Society also provides a comprehensive training program for local elected representatives including bargaining teams. Often locals will also work with the Society researcher, organizer, external relations, and communications staff on specific issues or to support their negotiations. However, it is the locals and their elected representatives who hold decision-making responsibilities.

LOCAL STRUCTURE - EXAMPLE



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The Society of United Professionals is self-governing and operates under our own Constitution and Bylaws, which cannot be changed without conducting a membership referendum. We maintain a set of governing documents and policies which detail the rules we operate under. These documents explain and describe our accountabilities for revenues and expenditures and the policies and practices that set out the way members and their representatives relate to each other, industry and the outside world.

These governing documents are divided into four categories:

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE
Constitution	Fundamental principles and established precedents / practices which the Society adheres to.	• Election process • Elected representative responsibilities, • Composition of Executive Board / Executive Committee
Finance	The Management Control Framework (MCF) is a series of policies, procedures, forms and Constitution articles related to how and which expenses and purchases are incurred, approved and reported.	• Financially related Constitution and Bylaw articles • Financially related Society policies • Expense Claim Form • Income Statement
Policies	Outline the day-to-day governance of the Society – policies are reviewed and approved by the Society Council delegates.	• Records and information management • Guests at Society Board meetings • Editorial Policy • Code of Conduct
Procedures	Specific directions for conducting the work of the Society or Local – procedures are approved by the Executive Board.	• Election Procedure • Expenses and Travel Procedure • Workplan and Budget Manual • Election of Members to Audit Committee

SOCIETY BUDGET AND FINANCES

ANNUAL BUDGET PROCESS

The Society undergoes a centralized annual budget process. All union dues are paid to the Society directly from the employers. To set its budget, the Society's locals, committees, and departments create and submit individual budget requests based on their planned activities for the coming year. The Society's Executive Board is the ultimate decision-making body for the budget.

Once approved, the money is still held centrally, and the locals, committees, and departments either submit expense claims or request direct payment of invoices. Grievance expenses do not come out of the locals' budgets, they are drawn from a central pool.

The Society's annual operating budget is over \$17 million. We also have a collective agreement negotiations fund of \$30 million, which all bargaining units can access for collective agreement renewals. The Society's revenues come from a combination of membership dues and investments.

The Society undergoes an annual external audit and maintains an internal audit committee in accordance with its Constitution and Bylaws.

SOCIETY DUES

Dues are democratically decided upon by the membership of the Society. For new Locals Society-represented employees pay dues equal to 1% of base weekly salary, up to a maximum of the effective dues rate for all other Society-represented employees. The effective dues rate for fiscal year 2026 is \$26.32/week.

As per the Society Constitution and Bylaws, the effective dues rate will increase each April 1 by the weighted average of the economic increases the Society negotiated for its members during the fiscal year prior to each April 1. This dues formula was set through and can only be amended by a constitutional referendum supported by two-thirds of members that vote.



Society IESO Local members at work.

SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP PROGRAMS

AFFINITY PROGRAM

The Society offers a Deals and Discounts affinity program to members, including members of the Pensioner's Chapter, that provides savings at dozens of retailers. Included in the program are discounts on attractions, travel, wellness, insurance, clothing retailers, and many others.

The discount program is accessible to members via the membership portal on the Society's website.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

The Society's scholarship program supports children and grandchildren of Society members and pensioners. The more than 30 annual winners receive \$1,500 or \$1,000 to help with the cost of an education that will advance the student's career goals and contribute to their efforts to improve society as a whole.

Winners are scored based on their current volunteer work, a personal statement describing the applicant's interest in impacting their community or broader society, as well as a short essay on the Canadian labour movement. Qualified applicants' submissions were assessed by a committee after applicants names had been removed to ensure objectivity.

PENSIONERS' CHAPTER

In 2005, the Society created a **Pensioners' Chapter** to advocate for retirees, both within the Society and beyond. The prime objective of the chapter is to protect the interests of the Society's pensioners and of the Society itself, especially pension, health and dental benefits. The chapter listens to members and acts on their concerns within the Society and externally.

There are more than 1,000 members in the Pensioner's Chapter, which has its own elected executive body. The executive runs the chapter but depends on chapter members to promote the organization's goals, often in the political arena.

Membership is open to retirees of any Society bargaining unit in addition to other membership levels to recognize and include different employment/pension circumstances.

SOCIETY EQUITY COMMITTEES

UNITED SISTERS

United Sisters began as the Women's Committee. It was initially formed at a time when Ontario Hydro began hiring greater numbers of women into Society jobs. They were becoming a significant Society demographic but "unseen" in terms of Society involvement. At that time, there was an effort to recruit women into Society Committees, including the creation of Committees focused on what were considered to be women's issues – the Work and Family Committee and an Employment Equity Committee.

United Sisters works in the workplace, union and society as a whole to identify and take action on issues that affect the status of women. United Sisters recommends measures to eliminate barriers to women's full participation in the Society, and undertakes education, activism and communication to advance gender equity and women's rights everywhere.

INDIGENOUS RELATIONS CIRCLE

The Society of United Professionals and the **Indigenous Relations Circle** are committed to addressing and advancing the economic and social conditions of Indigenous people in Canada (First Nations, Metis and Inuit). As a union, we have taken this position for two important reasons. First, alleviating the poverty, social disconnection and historical disadvantages to ensure that all Indigenous people are given appropriate opportunities and resources for advancement is simply the right thing to do. Second, we know that there are many members within the Society who identify as Indigenous and would like to advance the status of Indigenous people in Society-represented workplaces and in society more broadly.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NETWORK

The **Young Professionals Network (YPN)** is comprised of Society of United Professionals members 35 and under. The goal of creating this network is to help increase the participation and representation of young Society members in the union and in the broader labour movement. The YPN organizes activities that enrich the experience of young members, brings voice to issues of shared concern for young members and encourages young members to become involved in all aspects of the union.

PRIDE & SOLIDARITY COMMITTEE

The **Pride & Solidarity Committee** meets regularly to discuss creating education opportunities and awareness of 2SLGBTQI+ issues in the workplace and our union. The Committee mandate is to advance two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bi, trans, queer, intersex, plus (“2SLGBTQI+”) issues in the union, the workplace and the communities where we live. Membership on the committee is open to Society members who are committed to furthering discussions either identifying as a member of the community or as an ally.

BLACK AND RACIALIZED PROFESSIONALS COMMITTEE

The **Black and Racialized Professionals Committee** is a space for Society members to organize for racial justice within their union, workplaces and communities. The Coalition of Racialized Professionals meets regularly to discuss creating education opportunities and awareness of issues affecting racialized professionals in the workplace and our union. The committee’s mandate is to advance issues affecting racialized professionals in the union, the workplace and the communities where we live. Membership on the committee is open to all Society members who are committed to furthering discussions on issues of importance to racialized professionals in their workplaces and planning education and awareness events.

PROFESSIONALS WITH DISABILITIES COMMITTEE

The **Professionals with Disabilities Committee** works to advance the interests of persons with disabilities and injured workers within the Society, employer workplaces and the communities where we live and work. Its mandate is to provide a forum to discuss and identify cultural, economic, social and career-related issues impacting members with a disability in the workplace, with an aim to incorporate these issues into Society Policies and provide recommendations for improvements to collective agreement language.

The committee strives to exchange information with persons with disabilities and injured workers, and with the general membership about relevant programs and issues of interest and engage in outreach to persons with disabilities and their allies to disseminate information and encourage participation of all members. It also works to help ensure employers do not discriminate based on a disability or a perceived disability and assists the union by providing elected representatives with tools to help eliminate this employer practice.

OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL AND TECHNICAL ENGINEERS

The **International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE)** is a non-profit, member-based organization made up of several autonomous affiliates and was founded in 1918. IFPTE advocates on behalf of more than 90,000 professional, technical, administrative and associated occupations employees within the private, public, and federal sectors in the United States and Canada. Unique in representing well-educated and skilled employees, IFPTE combines the strength of collective bargaining with the autonomy and specialization of a professional association.

As a local of the IFPTE, the Society receives assistance from and partners with the IFPTE to champion the rights of our members. We work in solidarity with IFPTE locals to assist each other. We are governed by the **IFPTE Constitution**. The **Society's Constitution** is subordinate to the IFPTE Constitution; this relationship is described in Article 1.0 Name and Jurisdiction of the Society's Constitution.

CANADIAN LABOUR CONGRESS

The **Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)** is the largest labour organization in Canada, bringing together national and international unions, provincial and territorial federations of labour and community-based labour councils to represent 3.3 million workers.

The CLC provides research and policy leadership on issues that impact the everyday lives of all working people such as wages, workplace health and safety, pensions and retirement security, social and economic justice and equality, access to public healthcare, and childcare.

The CLC advocates in support of policy goals in the courts and in parliament, and through public education and political mobilization. Internationally, the CLC is the voice of Canadian workers at the United Nations through the International Labour Organization.

The Society is an affiliate of the Canadian Labour Congress through our international union, the IFPTE. We also have direct involvement with the CLC by attending their conventions as well as frequently sending staff and elected representatives to work on policy determining committees and education initiatives. The Society's president is currently the IFPTE Canada representative on the CLC's Canada Council, which is the highest governing body between conventions.

ONTARIO FEDERATION OF LABOUR

The **Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL)** is the province's house of labour and serves as an umbrella group for working people and their unions. From its inception in 1957, the OFL has grown to represent over one million Ontario workers belonging to more than 1,500 locals from 54 affiliated unions, making it Canada's largest provincial labour federation.

The OFL advocates for legislative change in areas that affect people's daily lives, including health, education, workplace safety, minimum wage and other employment standards, human rights, women's rights, workers' compensation, and pensions. It also makes regular presentations and submissions to the Ontario government and mounts internal and public awareness campaigns to mobilize the kind of political pressure that secures positive change for all workers – whether or not they belong to a union.

In order to accomplish these goals, the OFL works with affiliated local unions and labour councils in municipal and regional areas across the province. The OFL also partners with community and social justice organizations to work on initiatives that build a strong economy and inclusive society that meets everyone's needs.

The Society is an affiliate of the Ontario Federation of Labour, holds a seat on its board of directors and the Society's president was recently elected to the OFL's Executive Committee for the first time in our union's history.

SASKATCHEWAN FEDERATION OF LABOUR

The **Saskatchewan Federation of Labour** represents over 100,000 members, from 26 national and international unions. Our affiliate membership belongs to over 500 locals across Saskatchewan and represents dozens of communities. We strive to improve working people's lives throughout the province, whether organized or unorganized, and regardless of affiliation to the Federation. The SFL serves as Saskatchewan's "voice of working people" in speaking on local, provincial, national, and even international issues. We support the principles of social unionism and struggle for social and economic justice for all.



Society members march in the Toronto Labour Day parade.

SOCIETY OF UNITED PROFESSIONALS

CONTACT US

Head Office:

2239 Yonge St.
Toronto, Ontario
M4S 2B5

Bruce Regional Office:

55 Main St.
Tiverton, Ontario
N0G 2T0

Saskatoon Regional Office:

511 1st Ave. N.
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
S7K 1X5

Society Organizing

(416) 979-2709
1 (866) 288-1788
organize@thesociety.ca



SOCIETY *of*
UNITED PROFESSIONALS
IFPTE 160