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Saga Kwandibenz dancing at the Aboriginal History Month celebrations at Dundas Square / Photo Credit: Fred Martin



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Everyone wins when workers receive fair wages.

Higher wages mean more spending and that's good for the economy. A \$15 minimum wage will improve the earnings of over one-quarter of Ontario's workforce – about 1.5 million people.

\$15 Minimum Wage is a \$5 Billion Boost



Strengthen the local economy

Because minimum wage earners tend to spend most of their earnings, this money will be put to work where it's needed most – in local communities. Raising Ontario's minimum wage to \$15 an hour would stimulate Ontario's economy by putting more than \$5 billion additional dollars in workers' pockets.

This increased spending generates even more economic activity, creating an effect that cascades throughout the economy and multiplies the impact of the initial \$5 billion stimulus. And it wouldn't cost the Ontario government a cent.



Create jobs

Increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour makes good economic sense. Household spending is a key economic driver accounting for more than half – 54% – of Canada's GDP. Businesses need customers to thrive – and to generate job growth. Without customers who can afford to buy what businesses are selling, there's no point for them to produce more goods and services. This helps explain why tax cuts for corporations and the rich have failed to create the jobs we were promised.

No amount of tax cuts will convince businesses to produce more if they can't sell what they are already producing! So today businesses are not reinvesting their profits, but simply stockpiling them – to the tune of hundreds of billions of dollars. Even the big banks and the previous Bank of Canada Governor Mark Carney have warned about this stash of "dead money."

Increasing the minimum wage will put money to work and create demand for additional goods and services, which in turn creates jobs.



Reduce income inequality

Raising the minimum wage will benefit nearly 1.5 million people, almost 60% of whom are at least 25 years old. Women, newcomers and racialized workers face systemic discrimination in the labour market and this helps explain why they are over-represented among minimum wage earners. Over 58% of minimum wage earners are women and, according to the Wellesley Institute, 35% are racialized. The share of racialized employees earning minimum wage is 47% higher than for the total population. Raising the minimum wage will help close the income gap for workers facing barriers on the job market.

But workers under 25 also deserve higher wages. We cannot assume that young workers aren't also breadwinners supporting themselves and or dependents. Decent wages for all workers mean that young people can leave abusive situations to live independently when necessary. Moreover, young workers' are very often students whose earnings go toward the cost of education, including tuition fees, housing and living expenses.



15andfairness.org / fightfor15andfairness@gmail.com

[Fight for \\$15 & Fairness](#) / [@fairwagesnow](#) / [#15andfairness](#) [#MakeItFair](#)

Message from the President

YES WE CAN

The Ontario government has introduced important new legislation – Bill 148 – to amend Ontario’s outdated labour and employment laws. It is the result of a long struggle by the labour movement and community allies, as you can see throughout this edition of Labour Action. While union activists have been at the forefront of these efforts, the \$15 and Fairness Coalition deserves a lot of credit for building a powerful public campaign. Part of their efforts included an open letter signed by dozens of leaders from faith communities. It reads in part:

“As religious and spiritual leaders, we have a history of pursuing fairness, justice, and compassion in our communities. We know that decent working conditions are essential to strong and prosperous communities, and are distressed that Ontario’s current labour laws do not protect workers from poverty. We believe that change is urgently needed, and call on the Ontario Government - which is currently reviewing the Employment Standards Act and Labour Relations Act - to increase the minimum wage and improve working conditions across Ontario.”

As it stands, there are many gaps in basic employment standards that make workers vulnerable to exploitation and unfair working conditions, leaving many people in our faith communities unable to support themselves and their families. Many - including first and second-generation citizens, immigrants and refugees - are working precarious jobs that lack benefits and do not pay a decent wage, leaving them below the poverty line. In a wealthy country like Canada, no person should be living in poverty. Decent work must be a core aspect of Ontario’s anti-poverty agenda, along with other measures to ensure that all of us live in dignity.”

As good as it is, we need to continue to point to key elements of Bill 148 that need to be strengthened: extending card-check certification to all workers; providing greater access to first contract arbitration; protecting everyone from contract-flipping; banning replacement workers; removing exemptions for minimum wage; extending just cause provisions to all workers and more. You can find the full list at makeitfair.ca

We have crucial weeks over the summer and into September to make our voice heard by every politician at Queen’s Park. Please call your MPP and let them know you want Bill 148 strengthened and passed without delay. It’s easy to find their number at labourcouncil.ca/political-contacts.html. And make sure you spread the word among members and their families.

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John Cartwright – President for Toronto & York Region Labour Council

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Open Letter on Raising the Minimum Wage

Fifty leading Canadian economists recently published an open letter supporting the decision to increase the minimum wage in Ontario to \$15 an hour. This is an excerpt from their statement:

RAISING THE WAGE FLOOR MAKES GOOD ECONOMIC SENSE

Today, Ontario's minimum wage is \$11.40 per hour. Adjusted for inflation, this is barely one dollar higher than its value in 1977. Yet over the same four decades, the average productivity of workers has increased by 40%. And the prevalence of minimum wage work is spreading. Around 1 in 10 Ontario workers make minimum wage today, with a large increase in this proportion over the last two decades.

Low wages are bad for workers as individuals. An individual working full-year, full-time on the minimum wage can still fall short of the poverty line. The situation for minimum wage workers trying to support families is no better—and evidence shows that this is increasingly what is asked of minimum-wage workers. The stereotype of the teenager living at home making minimum wage is out of date: over 60% of workers earning minimum wage in Ontario in 2015 were over the age of 20, as were over 80% of those making \$15 or less.

But low wages are also bad for the economy. There are good economic reasons to raise the incomes of low-wage workers. Aggregate demand needs a boost. While Canada escaped the harshest impacts of the 2007-08 financial crisis, our country has also seen a slowdown in growth. We risk further stagnation without reinvigorated economic motors. As

those with lower incomes spend more of what they earn than do those with higher incomes, raising the minimum wage could play a role in economic revival, improving macroeconomic conditions.

For years, we have heard that raising the minimum wage will kill jobs, raise prices and cause businesses to flee Ontario. This is fear-mongering that is out of line with the latest economic research. Using improved techniques that carefully isolate the effects of minimum wage increases from the remaining noise in economic data, the weight of evidence from the United States points to job loss effects that are statistically indistinguishable from zero. The few very recent studies from Canada that have used these new economic methods agree, finding job loss effects for teenagers smaller by half than those of earlier studies and no effect for workers over 25.

Across North America, recent years have seen more minimum wages increases, some quite substantial. And so far, none of the doom-and-gloom predictions have come true. Seattle and the municipality of SeaTac, two of the first to institute minimum wage increases, continue to thrive even after increases.

Economics may be known as the “dismal science” but on the issue of the minimum wage many economists are ready to admit that the weight of evidence points to a strong case for raising the minimum wage. 600 of our colleagues in the United States,

7 Nobel Prize winners among them, signed a letter urging the United States government to raise the federal minimum wage to \$10.10 an hour from the current \$7.25—in percentage terms an even larger increase than that from \$11.40 to \$15 in Ontario.

There is no consensus against raising the minimum wage among our profession; indeed, the emerging understanding is quite the opposite. We believe that raising Ontario's minimum wage to \$15 an hour is a good idea and one that is economically sound.

Signed by Sheila Block, Jim Stanford, Armine Yalnizyan and fifty other economists
progressive-economics.ca

2020 Vision at the University of Toronto

Workers at the University of Toronto are mobilizing as they head into collective bargaining this summer. With several contracts expiring on June 30th, USW Local 1998 and CUPE Locals 1230, 2484, 3261, and 3902 have developed a common vision for what kind of employer we want U of T to be by 2020.

Together we represent over 20,000 workers. Our work touches every aspect of the University. Our members have an impact on every student, every research project, every event, every building and garden and every dollar raised to support the university.

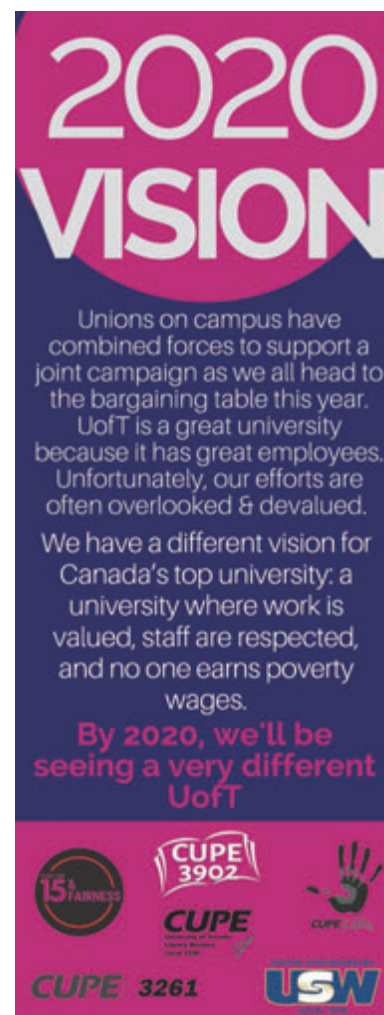
University of Toronto is a great university because we are great employees. Unfortunately, our efforts are often overlooked and devalued – especially when we hit the bargaining table. In the past several years, our pay increases have not kept up with the cost of living. At a University with TWO BILLION DOLLARS in its endowment fund, there is still precarious work and employees making less than \$15 an hour. Decent jobs are being contracted out to the lowest bidder.

We have a different vision for Canada's top university: a university where our work is valued and we are respected. By 2020, we believe that the University of Toronto should be a place where:

1. No worker makes less than \$15 an hour;
2. No worker teaches a half-course for less than \$10,000;

3. Every worker has a reasonable path to permanent employment;
4. Every worker has paid sick days to care for themselves and their dependents;
5. All facilities are kept clean and safe by U of T employees;
6. Healthy, affordable food is prepared and served by U of T employees;
7. These employees have benefits and the ability to retire with dignity;
8. Graduate students have a minimum funding guarantee of \$20,000 per year;
9. Work and study are safe, hazard-free, barrier-free, accessible and affordable for all employees.

Together with the U of T \$15 and Fairness group, we held a successful BBQ on May 24th to launch the campaign. Over five hundred members of the University community attended. As we head into a summer of negotiations, USW and CUPE will be working closely to keep up the campaign momentum and build power at the bargaining table.



York Region Pride Parade and Pride Festival

The York Region Steering Committee participated, for the first time, in the “York Region Pride Parade and Pride Festival”, held in Newmarket on Saturday, June 17, 2017. It was a wonderful opportunity for the union sisters, brothers, friends and families of CUPE 905, OSSTF District 16, ETFO and York Catholic Teachers to show their support for the LGBTQ community.

Events like this one provide labour groups in York Region an opportunity to increase their profile. It also allows participants an opportunity to deepen and broaden their understanding of social justice issues. When labour and community forge a bond we all become better equipped to challenge the injustices and demand that human rights are adhered to for all members of our community. Our goal is to continue to be a strong presence for everyone living in York Region.



"Poverty is Everybody's Business"

Remembering Pam McConnell, Toronto City Councillor

Toronto lost a tireless champion for social justice with the passing on July 7th of City Councillor and Deputy Mayor Pam McConnell. Born in Carlisle, England, she came to Canada and settled in Cabbagetown in Toronto. In 1982 she was elected to the Toronto School Board, spearheading a number of initiatives to assist working class students succeed. She served as Chair of the Board, then in 1994 was elected to Toronto City Council. A passionate advocate for co-op and social housing, she led the way in the Regent Park redevelopment and the creation of the UNITEHERE Local 75 Housing Co-Operative and Training Centre at 60 Richmond Street East.

While Pam seldom sought the headlines, her patient and strategic work was recognized by politicians across the political spectrum. She was a solid ally on labour issues, supporting Fair Wage policies and fighting contracting out of public services. She served as Chair of the



Police Services Board during the difficult transition from the Fantino era. As Deputy Mayor she led Toronto's poverty-reduction strategy. "Poverty is everybody's business," McConnell reminded her fellow Councillors after the strategy was released. McConnell was a fierce advocate of gender equality, chairing the Federation of Canadian Municipalities committee to support women candidates for municipal office.

She was also an accomplished city builder. She oversaw ambitious projects to redevelop the Distillery District, the Corktown Commons, West Donlands and East Bayfront, as well as the newly opened Berczy Park. At the age of 71, after almost 35 years of public service, she succumbed to illness related to a lung infection. She was a fighter to the end, and will truly be missed.



ETFO LEEDS by example

In 2013, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario established an outstanding model for sustainable, efficient construction in the 21st century with its new provincial office in downtown Toronto. It's one of only six buildings in the city that is a certified LEED platinum structure. LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) sets international standards for green buildings worldwide.

As Canada's largest teacher federation, ETFO takes a leadership role in everything it does and its new home, designed by architects Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg (KPMB), is no exception.

It features glass, open spaces with natural light, a green roof system, and a design built around existing trees that also respects the privacy of neighbouring buildings. Rainwater is captured for landscape irrigation and toilet flushing. The majority of heating and cooling comes from geothermal systems located deep underneath the building.

Daylight motion sensors adjust the level of lighting needed to supplement natural light which permeates the building's core through the four-story central atrium. Fully automated exterior solar shades reduce glare and solar heat gain to decrease energy consumption and increase office comfort.



These and other features are designed to allow for a workplace that heats, cools, and provides fresh air at a fraction of the usual costs. One hundred percent fresh air circulation and windows that can be automatically controlled to

minimize condensation all contribute to a healthier environment for ETFO staff, members and visitors.

On your smart phone or tablet, enable your QR reader to view these videos about ETFO's building.



Dig Deep and Plug into Nature - Geothermal Energy at ETFO



Nothing is Greener Than Green - Benefits of a Green Roof



Using Less Water Made Easy - Water efficiency and harvesting

The Right Knowledge in Lighting

Sal Maltese is a union electrician who sits on the Labour Council's Environment Committee. As a Business Representative of IBEW LU 353, Sal has an abiding interest in exploring new opportunities for his members in the area of energy efficiency. He recently graduated with certificates in Accredited Energy Management and Lighting Consultant, and helped advise his union's training centre on tailoring

courses to meet the growing demand for this knowledge.

These courses help members to learn the standards of different task lighting levels and identify the most effective and efficient way to bring energy and cost savings to the workplace, using the best technology available. Graduates can perform an extensive lighting audit and propose the best solutions in saving energy with a good return on



investment. It's all part of helping to reduce CO2 emissions and achieving Canada's commitment to climate action, while creating good union jobs for the future.

2017 Aboriginal and Workers of Colour Conference

Union members from across southern Ontario converged on Labour Council's 2017 Aboriginal and Workers of Colour Conference on June 3rd. The conference, held for the first time at IBEW Local 353's training centre, was organized by the Labour Council's Equity Committee with the theme "Rejecting the Politics of Division".

The forum was chaired by Joy Davis and Mark Brown and opened by Andria Babbington, Labour Council Vice President. Babbington spoke about the recent successes in Ontario on the fight to obtain a \$15 per hour minimum wage and labour law reform. Those reforms include successor rights for workers when employer contracts change hands as well as equal pay for part-time, temporary, casual and agency workers with workers hired full-time by the employer.

The speakers list for the conference was populated with a series of heavy hitters who exposed the attendees to some of the numerous struggles faced by Indigenous, Black and Muslim workers while highlighting why workers do not benefit from the politics of division.

Marc-Edouard Joubert, President of the Montreal Labour Council spoke about systematic racism and race relations in Quebec. He described the unsuccessful attempt of the Parti Québécois to prevent anyone working within the Provincial government from showing any symbols of religious belief. Many understood this policy would be used disproportionately against racialized workers who are visibly of faith. The Toronto and Montreal Labour Councils have a unique relationship starting in 2013, when both Labour Councils formed a strategic alliance and committed to the

sharing of practices and ideas.

Joubert was followed by a dynamic all-woman panel facilitated by OSSTF leader Danica Izzard. The panel members consisted of Crystal Sinclair of Idle No More Toronto, Sandy Hudson of Black Lives Matter Toronto and Gilyr Massa from National Council of Canadian Muslims. The panelist unwrapped some of the struggles facing Indigenous communities, African Canadians communities and the realities faced by Muslim Sisters and Brothers throughout society.

"How can we ask structures that were built this way to change themselves?" said Gilyr Massa. She was responding to a question asked of the panelists on how to challenge what many see as a populist movement embracing a discriminatory agenda focused on Muslims, immigrants, Jews and people of colour. Massa went on to speak on the need for difficult discussions on the impact of white supremacy and the importance of creating spaces for those discussions to take place.

Following the panel the participants had their choice of workshops covering a wide range of topics. The workshops which were presented by representatives of The Canadian Labour Congress, The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, The National Council of Canadian Muslims and others included such titles as Nobody



Chooses to be a Refugee, Mass Incarceration, Resisting Islamophobia and more.

The keynote address was given by Michael Etherington of the Native Canadian Centre. Etherington connected the conference theme, panel discussion and workshops together while weaving through complex topics such as identity politics, context of community, Canada's assimilation policy and the Indigenous communities meaning of Canada 150+.

The rationale behind the conference theme of "Rejecting the Politics of Division" was to challenge the rise of hate, extremism and divisive politics that has risen throughout Ontario and beyond since the recent United States Presidential election. Some of Canada's elected officials have openly called for the vetting of new immigrants for "Canadian Values". What became apparent was that many of the attendees of the conference viewed the rejection of divisive politics as the true "Canadian value".

Mark Brown is Co-Chair of the Labour Council's Equity Committee. @markAABrown

Why June 21?

June 21st is the longest day of year and the start of summer solstice when many generation of Indigenous people have celebrated their culture and heritage.

Celebrations to commemorate National Indigenous Day are held annually on June 21. This day honours the unique heritage, diverse cultures, outstanding achievements and contributions of Canada's First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Canada's Governor General officially proclaimed the first National Aboriginal Day in 1996. June 21 was selected because of its cultural significance as the summer solstice. It is also a time when many Indigenous groups traditionally pay homage to their heritage. National Indigenous Day is celebrated across the country, but is only declared a statutory holiday in the Northwest Territories. The OPSEU Indigenous Circle is leading a campaign to make Indigenous Day a statutory holiday in Ontario.

Making June 21 a statutory holiday respects Indigenous Sovereignty, self-determination and treaty recognition, including The Two Row Wampum, the 1st treaty made in Canada.

What You Can Do

Send and encourage others to send a postcard to Kathleen Wynne, Premier, and David Zimmer, Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. Postcards are available from the OPSEU Indigenous Circle.

Write to your local MP to demand that National Indigenous Day be recognized as a statutory holiday in Ontario. Contact information for your local MP can be found at www.ontla.on.ca/lao/en/members.

BROMLEY ARMSTRONG AWARDS 2017 WINNERS



Tyler Downey



Helen Liu

BILL 148 IS GOOD FOR WORKERS AND IT COULD BE BETTER!

After an intense effort to fix outdated labour law and employment standards in Ontario, Bill 148 has been introduced and an increase to \$15 minimum wage has been announced. These could be important gains – nearly every family has someone whose working life will be improved if Bill 148 passes.

WHY: Too many people are finding it hard to get a decent job today. Many profitable companies have created a business model that relies on precarious work and poverty wages. It's time to restore balance in the workplace, so that people's rights are respected and standards are raised. Everyone deserves a living wage and fairness at work.

WHO: These gains are coming because of the efforts of thousands of workers – in bargaining, on the picket line, at rallies and through engaging MPPs with personal stories of injustice. The labour movement and community allies have been negotiating with the government of Ontario, while employers have been resisting any changes that would improve workers' rights.

WHAT: If Bill 148 is passed, there would be:

- equal pay for part-time, contract and temp workers as full-time employees doing the same job
- three weeks vacation after five years
- ten emergency leave days
- better scheduling rights
- fairer rules for people to join a union
- jobs and standards protected when contracts are re-tendered
- fair return-to-work rights after a labour dispute.
- a commitment to stronger enforcement of Employment Standards.

WHEN: There are public hearings on Bill 148 this summer, with adoption scheduled for the fall.

Improvements are needed to key parts of the Bill, but employers are mounting a political backlash. The only guarantee that we can strengthen Bill 148 or stop employers from derailing these gains is to mobilize in our communities.

WHAT'S NEXT?

In the coming weeks, please get involved in any way you can. Talk to co-workers, friends, and family members about why changes are vital to ensure decent jobs for the next generation. Help get out the word. Contact your MPP and ask them to support and improve Bill 148 – send a message by going to makeitfair.ca.

Speak out – for fairness at work!



Pull out poster - display on a noticeboard

Challenging Racism & Discrimination

The Labour Movement has a tireless record over many decades of fighting against racism and discrimination in all its forms. Since the election of Donald Trump and the murders in the Quebec mosque, bigotry is emerging as a more potent force in our society, feeding the politics of division.

Bigotry is not something new – prejudice and discrimination are a real feature of our history, starting with treatment of Indigenous peoples, and continuing throughout the centuries. When we identify the need to fight Islamophobia, it is not because Muslim Canadians are the only victims of hate. But at this point in history they have become a special target. At different times visceral hatred has been aimed at Irish Catholics, Eastern Europeans, Chinese, Jews, Italians, South Asians, Africans and many others. Anti-Black racism pervades our history and present, and fighting it is a core element of our anti-racism strategy.

The Labour Council plan identifies three levels of engagement – heads of unions/key leaders; executive members and staff reps; and union members.

- Commitment by **key leaders** to ensure there is support at the organizational level.
- **Executive board members** and staff need to be fluent in the language of human rights and equity, and recognize that systemic discrimination exists in our society.
- Ensure that a clear message of inclusion and solidarity reaches **every member**.

THE ROOTS OF RACISM

For the Labour Movement to effectively tackle this issue, our leaders need to have a clear understanding of the foundations of racism. Racism became institutionalized to justify the horrors of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and then to affirm the brutal expansion of colonialism. It has been used for centuries to divide and conquer working people. Systemic racism is an institutionalized feature of society, throwing up barriers to racialized workers and families in every community. It's not about a few people with bad attitudes – all of our institutions and cultural norms are touched by its impact. It is impossible for a union representative to uphold their collective agreement without a basic understanding that there is systemic racism in our society.



PRINCIPLED AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO EQUITY

We don't require every union member to attain a deep understanding of the roots of racism – our immediate goal is to challenge ourselves to reject the politics of division. In the Leaders Guide to Equity, we show that there are both principled and practical reasons to equity. We do equity because it's right, but also because it works to make our unions stronger. That's an important discussion to have with every leader, steward and activist in our unions. And it should be part of the ongoing narrative of every local union in greater Toronto.

OVERCOMING DENIAL

Many of us would be more comfortable imagining that racism isn't a factor in our union work. Very few Canadians want to own up to the prejudices we have grown up with, and talking about race can make even the most fair-minded person uneasy. Overcoming denial will be an important task for this work to succeed. The terrible murders of six men at prayer in Quebec reminds us that hateful ideas can lead to real consequences, as does the clear evidence outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Report and the ongoing concern about fairness in the criminal justice system.

STRATEGIC PLAN, MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT, ALLIANCES

In order to be effective, any organization needs to have a well-designed Strategic Plan; the engagement of members to give that plan power; and a commitment to an alliance policy. Labour Council is developing its approach to this issue starting with key policies adopted by our Delegates, reaching out to affiliates and activists to enact those policies, and deepening our long-term partnerships with groups such as the Urban Alliance on Race Relations. We urge every affiliate to undertake the same process. The alliances will vary, depending on membership and geographic location. Building relationships with others is a vital part of breaking down barriers and preconceived ideas about people from other cultures.

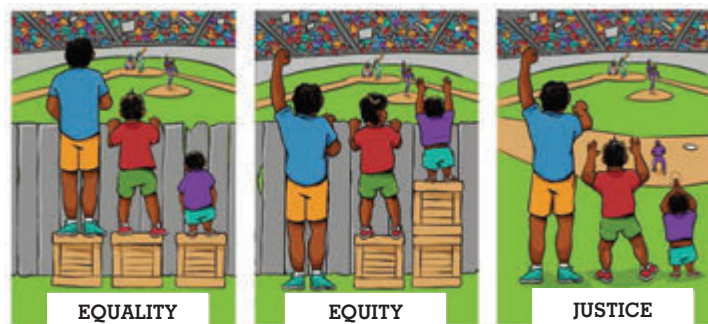
AN EQUITY NARRATIVE

In order to reach over 200,000 union members and their families, there has to be a clear and simple narrative around why we want to be a welcoming, inclusive society. In 1952 the Toronto Labour Day Parade featured the demand for “A Fair Deal for All, regardless of Race, Religion or Ancestry”. In the 1980’s the Ontario Federation of Labour launched a province-wide campaign with the slogan “Racism Hurts Everyone”. Islamophobia is a form of cultural racism, requiring an updated narrative that takes into account the urgency of tackling anti-Muslim attitudes.

TOOLS FOR THE CAMPAIGN

Determining the best narrative will be followed by creating written material, social media strategies, training modules and more. Labour Council will have a speakers’ bureau available for local union meetings and public events. The key aspect of our effectiveness will be the willingness of affiliates to use these tools, to include them in their ongoing communications work and leadership practice.

Research shows that we receive thousands messages per day from a wide variety of sources. That means that our message needs to be repeated many times over for it to



connect with our members or the public. Building on the general narrative, individual messages should be tested with focus groups to ensure maximum impact. The words are crucial, but graphics and design features are also important for people to find our message interesting. Short video clips or transit ads can be used to reach thousands at a time. There needs to be a way to measure how far we are reaching and how well the message is being received. This evaluation will be built into the campaign plan.

UNITY IS POWER

The words to Labour’s anthem “Solidarity Forever” remind us why we need to do this work. In greater Toronto half of us were born outside of Canada, and half of us are people of colour. There is no way our unions can be powerful if we are divided. It won’t be an easy task to raise the difficult issues and systematically challenge discrimination. Racism and Islamophobia are not the only forms of bigotry we must address. But we know that the year 2017 requires that our movement build on its best traditions of solidarity, and reach out to all our communities to win the battle against hatred and division.

Building Inclusive Workplaces & Communities

The labour movement is embracing its role in confronting racism, Islamophobia and other forms of discrimination. One example of this is the work of The Society of Energy Professionals (SEP) and its Charter of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities. Building on the leadership of the National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM) and the Toronto & York Region Labour Council, the union developed the Charter of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities and launched an awareness campaign for its members. While the Charter has received broad support among its members, there are lessons other unions can learn from their experience.



The starting point for this work was a document drafted by the NCCM in 2016 and signed by dozens of organizations. The Labour Council not only endorsed it, but asked affiliated unions to also adopt that charter. SEP followed suit and their executive board requested that the union's staff also develop a campaign to build awareness among the membership.

To reach the membership effectively, SEP amended the original NCCM charter to reflect a workplace context as well as the broader goals. For SEP members, it is paramount that union activity has a relationship to what happens in their workplaces. By connecting the value of inclusivity to a healthy and safe workplace the association was clear.

The union created a visually appealing poster and desk tent with the text. A key to these print products was that SEP President Scott Travers's signature was placed prominently at the bottom of the piece. This demonstrated the union leadership's support for the campaign, adding an additional

form of legitimacy. Along with the printed pieces, staff created a Frequently Asked Questions document to help union leaders and activists address challenging questions.

Union staff made presentations to various groups of provincial and local leadership as the campaign materials were distributed so they could be cascaded to front line members. While there was strong support from most, by far the most common concern raised was naming just one form of discrimination — Islamophobia. In most cases, contextualizing the need to name Islamophobia in light of the January 2017 Quebec mosque shooting, the dramatic rise in anti-Muslim hate crimes and recent anti-Muslim protests in Toronto was enough to gain the support of skeptics.

SEP believes it still has a long way to go to institutionalize anti-racist principles and practices within all of the union's work. But the Charter of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities has been a successful step toward that goal.

Society.ca

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Email kkulendiren@labourcouncil.ca

Trade, Investment & Jobs

The Canadian labour movement supports international agreements that promote economic equality, encourage the creation of good jobs, support the interests of working people, and ensure environmental sustainability.

Today, not a single trade agreement being considered or negotiated by the federal government meets those criteria. Because they are negotiated in secret, with no input from community stakeholders, Canada's recent trade agreements are more about protecting corporate interests and creating economies that work for profits more than they are about improving people's lives. The Canadian Labour Congress works with a coalition of national and international allies to expose the details of trade deals, and to encourage deals that put the interests of working people first.

Labour has not given up opposing the CETA deal with Europe. From Belgium to Norway and Ireland there is a growing concern about CETA's dispute-resolution system.



The deal gives too much power to foreign companies, which can sue governments if they change policies that they claim hurt company operations or profits. This limits the ability of elected governments to protect the environment, worker rights and health care. NAFTA, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Korea deal all have the same feature. Now

big business is on the offensive to sell a trade deal with China, ignoring the troubling human and labour rights record of that country. Workers' rights are seen as an impediment in the new global trade regime favoured by the corporate elites in the world. Prime Minister Trudeau should quit promoting this agenda and insist on fair trade instead.

Zoo Workers CUPE 1600 Back with a Roar!

A month-long strike at Canada's largest zoo ended after members of Local 1600 of the Canadian Union of Public Employees ratified a four-year collective agreement. Members of CUPE 1600 went on strike on May 11 to defend contract language that assures quality care for the 5,000 animals that call the Zoo home; while enabling the Zoo to continue fulfilling its role as a world-leading research, education and conservation efforts that make it a 21st-century zoological facility. CUPE 1600 represents more than 400 zookeepers, horticulturalists, trades people, administrative and public relations staff, concession and ride operators at Canada's largest zoo. Thanks to all affiliates who helped bolster the line or the strikers rallies! ourtorontozoo.com



Solidarity without borders -

A conversation with Bill Fletcher Jr.

“There is no way that a woman who had been divorced three times would have gotten the nomination of a major political party let alone have been elected the President of United States” says Bill Fletcher Jr, addressing a packed delegates meeting of the Toronto & York Region Labour Council. He was dissecting the results of the American presidential election, calling attention to the obvious gender discrimination that played a significant role in the outcome.

Bill is an activist extraordinaire. Cutting his teeth on the civil rights movement during his teens, he formed a black student organization in his high school that was politically aligned with the Black Panthers. He went on to co-found the Centre for Labour Renewal, worked with United Auto Workers and SEIU, helped lead the National Postal Mail Handlers Union, and was Director of Education for the AFL-CIO.

He notes that Trump won because of low voter turnout along with voter suppression, the tactic of eliminating voters of colour and younger people employed by Republican legislators. At the same time the Republican base did not splinter as expected, unifying behind Trump because of his alliance with social conservative running mate Mike Pence. Trump ran a classic right wing campaign – speaking to the anxiety being felt by both the conservative base and frustrated workers, and directing their anger towards racialized immigration. Bill feels that the U.S. trade union movement has failed to deal adequately with the issues of race and solidarity, alienating key voices and laying the foundation for Trump’s appeal.

“If you listen to trade unions, you would think that the problem facing US workers is fundamentally about trade agreements and not about privatization, casualization, automation, the reorganization of work, the



reconstruction of global capitalism” says Bill, unpacking his thoughts further. “Then along comes Trump who says trade agreements are bad. And union members say YES! This is what we want too.” He says that this dynamic left the trade union movement perplexed on how to respond.

But even before that, as the manufacturing sector was being decimated, public sector and education unions failed to rally to defend blue-collar jobs. When Republicans like Wisconsin’s Scott Walker went on the offensive against public workers, they were left with few allies within impoverished communities.

Asking him if class trumps race or vice versa, makes Bill smile. He is clear “people of colour see the world differently because they face obstacles defined by their race. They need to be heard.” Bill identifies race as a huge factor in defining capitalism and that to build a class movement without race is impossible since indentured servitude is what sustains the system.

When asked what one thing can labour leadership change immediately to ensure equity of voice in representation, Bill pauses a moment. He then speaks of being tired of hearing “we need younger people, more women, more workers of

colour and we are not sure why they are not coming forward.”

“Come over here – you are smart, underutilized, let me create space for you. This is what we need to do not just say.” says Bill, asking that veteran union leaders need to step aside to create space for others. Otherwise, he warns “they will disappear from activism to the siren call of management.” He warns that management is much better at picking off emerging union leaders. Young, racialized and new union members hearing “that’s not how we do it here” or “you need more experience” will leave the table. Bill also strongly believes in constructive political education and mentorship and warns of symbolic positions that are no more than window dressing.

Bill sees himself as a life-long activist. And he asks union workers to believe in the class struggle, to see it with a gender and race analysis, unafraid to have discomforting conversations. He asks us to push beyond the workplace, to seize power and to share each other’s burdens. We are being asked to live and walk true solidarity without borders.

Interview by Kiruthiha Kulendiren
@kirukulendiren – Toronto & York Region
Labour Council

Diverse Workers Organizing

Earlier this year the Labour Council initiated a Diverse Workers Organizing Project to reach out to key newcomer communities with a “union yes” message. Four unions stepped up to support the effort which started with a web-based podcast program in Mandarin that explained various aspects of workers’ rights. Directed by Simon Sung, former Unifor 87m unit chair of the Ming Pao newspaper, the podcasts featured interviews with workers and offered solutions to common problems faced in the workplace.

Once the Ontario government introduced Bill 148, the Chinese Workers Network hosted a press conference to express support for Bill 148 and ask for improvements. At the event on June 23rd media were also given a preview of the new podcast show’s second phase, which kicked off by highlighting the leadership of retired hotel worker Helen Liu. It got impressive media coverage: OMNI, Ming Pao Daily News, Sing Tao Daily News, www.51.ca, www.lovingssister.com,

www.1canada1.com, and www.youknownews.com. Over the summer and fall, the program will be covering a wide range of topics and showing how unions make a positive difference in people’s lives.

The campaign will also be going to Chinese Night Markets in Markham and Toronto, where thousands attend every year. If you know anyone who speaks Mandarin, let them know about this exciting work. They can tune in at chineselabour.ca/radio



Filipino Workers Reach Out

Labour Council’s Filipino Workers Network will be reaching out to thousands of their community members over the summer with a message that strong unions are essential for justice at work and in society. Building on the momentum to change labour and employment laws, the FWN will be speaking about Bill 148 and workers’ rights at major events like Mabuhay and Taste of Manilla, as well as smaller community events across greater Toronto. There are around 200,000 people of Filipino origin in the GTA, and a rich history of working class activity in the community. If you know someone who might be interested, tell them to check out filipinoworkers.org or contact Paulina at campaigns@labourcouncil.ca

Encourage & Enable Acceptance

ETT addresses Islamophobia in the classroom



As part of our continuing commitment towards more just, inclusive, and respectful communities in our schools and society-at-large, ETT has produced a short video focused on Islamophobia in the classroom.

Visit ett.ca to view the video.

Tamil Workers Network Campaigns for Fairness @ Work

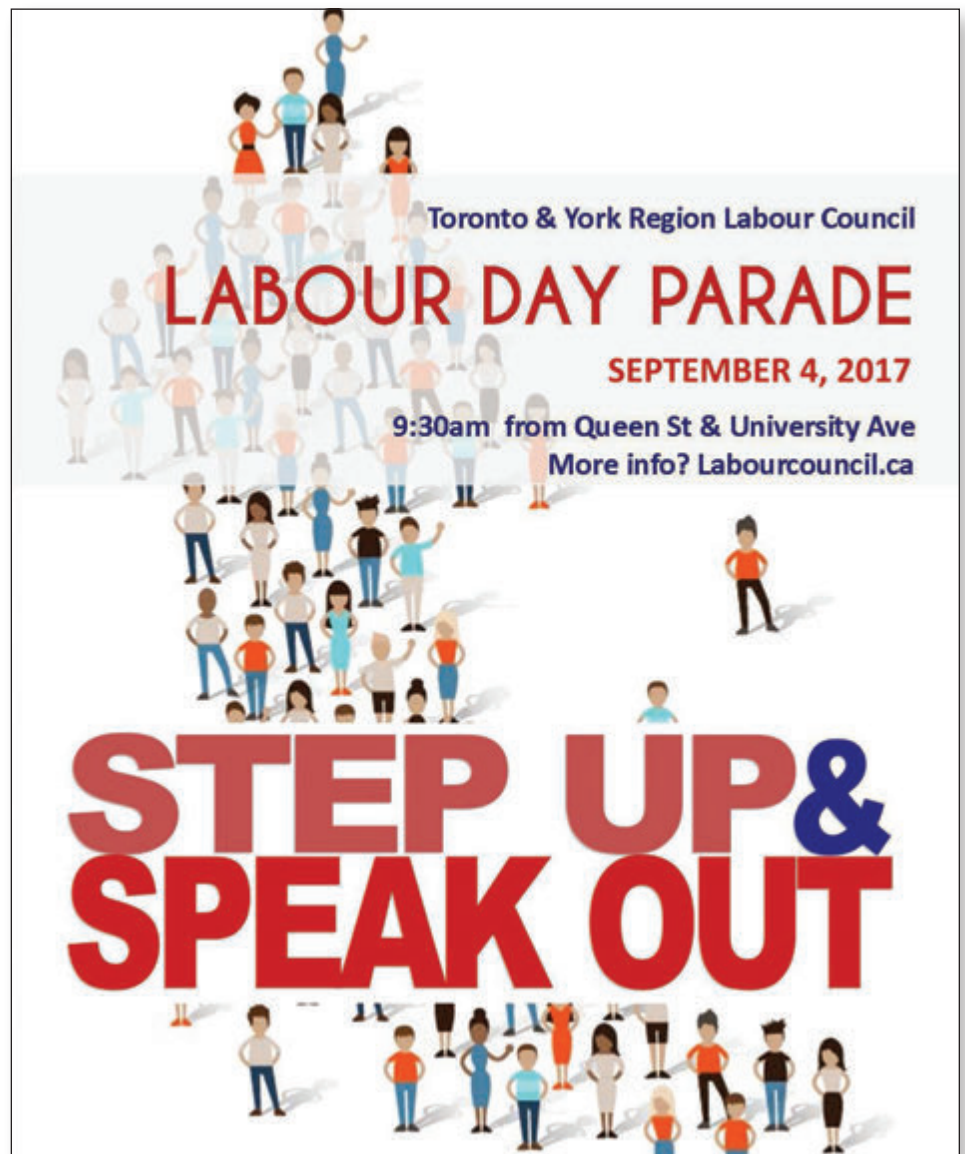
Many are aware of the struggles of working in a precarious labour market. As workers of colour, the struggle means encountering a persistent colour code that blocks access to decent jobs.

Just as it is in many vulnerable populations, Tamil workers struggle with poverty, structures of injustice and precarious work.

The network of Tamil Canadian workers organize to bring together a community that mobilizes Tamil workers; build awareness of the struggle Tamil workers face, improve labour law and work for social and economic justice. We believe that the changes in Bill 148, (with improvements) can raise the floor for many Tamil workers living in poverty. The greatest impacts for Tamil workers would come in the form of rise in the minimum wage, equal pay for equal work, fairer scheduling, paid sick leave, easier access to union protection and greater coverage by the Employment Standards Act.

At this time, we also identify those who are left behind - workers who suffer a permanent disability from a work injury and cannot return to work. When the minimum wage goes up, their workers' compensation reduces due to 'deeming'. Under deeming, compensation is measured with assumption that the injured worker could work in a minimum wage job. Fairness to injured workers would mean ending deeming, where the rise in minimum wage will not penalise another vulnerable group.

Our network collectively believes that no worker should be left behind, no worker should receive a wage that is insufficient to live on; be subject to discrimination or unwarranted danger in the workplace; or be required to work insecure circumstances. The struggle for decent wages and working conditions continues. Tamilworkers.org



By Rachel Gynanyutham, Tamil Workers
Network Steering Committee member

Labour Community Advocate Training

Over the past 30 years, Labour Community Services has offered a 10-week program dedicated to teaching union members about the social issues faced by working people and the resources available in their community. Participants are trained in communication skills, interviewing, and referral techniques so they can assist fellow union members find the appropriate resources. The program also allows participants to explore the ways in which unions and other labour bodies can help build resilient and respectful communities.

The program provides an opportunity for Labour Community Advocates from different unions to discuss their experiences and share ideas. It also provides training on community involvement, including the way community boards work and how to become an effective advocate on social issues.

Some of the topics covered in this program are: Community Services, Principles of Communication, Stress, Interviewing and Referral Skills, Conflict Resolution, Understanding Violence, Time Management, Addiction and Dependency, Mental



Health, Financial and Credit Counselling, Harassment and Bullying, Loss and Grief, Work-Life Balance,

Critical Incidents. To register for the fall training in Toronto or York Region, go to labourcommunityservices.ca/training

Time for Pharmacare

Pharmacare can save us a lot of money.

In 2016, Canadians spent \$30 billion to fill more than 600 million prescriptions. That's more than four times what we spent on prescriptions 20 years ago. Drug prices are skyrocketing for Canadians and more people have to choose between getting the medications they need and paying for their rent or for food.

A publicly funded, universal drug coverage program – also known as pharmacare – would provide all Canadians with access to the

prescription medicines they need. People would be healthier and many would no longer have the economic burden of paying for medications out-of-pocket. Canadian employers would also benefit by not having to include expensive drug plans in employees' benefit packages.

Right now, Canada is the only country with a public health care plan not to include prescription drug coverage. The Canadian Labour Congress and the Council

of Canadians are trying to change that. A recent poll commissioned by the Council of Canadians poll shows 91% of Canadians want the Liberal government to implement a pharmacare plan.

You can find the tools, materials and a short video to share with friends and family about why the federal government should implement a universal pharmacare program now, at canadians.org/pharmacare

Charter of Inclusive Workplaces and Communities

Discrimination in all its forms threatens our country's rich social fabric, including the workplaces of union members and the communities in which we live. Dividing people because of race, religion, ancestry or any other difference that undermines human rights serves only to weaken our unions and our society.

We commit to standing up for the rights and dignity of everyone in order to promote inclusive, just and respectful workplaces and communities.

That is why we affirm that:

- Islamophobia, anti-Black racism and all other forms of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and bigotry have no place in our workplaces or communities.
- Discrimination and acts of hate against union members and others in our communities marginalizes individuals and groups and excludes them from participating fully in our union, workplaces and their communities.
- The dignity of every member is essential to a healthy and vibrant union and workplace.
- As a labour movement, we will work with all levels of government, Indigenous peoples, civil society and communities to develop policies, programs and initiatives to reduce and eliminate racism, hate and bigotry in all its forms.
- By working together, we can nurture inclusive workplaces and strengthen our shared commitment to our union's shared values of equality, respect, justice, and dignity for all.