UNIFOR'S

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

PROGRAM

2026 - 2029

PROTECT CANADIAN JOBS

PROTECT CANADIAN JOBS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROGRAM

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LETTER FROM THE NATIONAL OFFICERS

We are proud to present our 2026 to 2029 bargaining program, *Protect Canadian Jobs*. This program builds on the commitment made at our founding convention to provide members, local unions, staff and leadership with a practical resource to stay focused, united and determined at the bargaining table. The union's founding philosophy toward collective bargaining is one that is not transactional – but rather, it is a transformational tool for building worker power. While we find ourselves in challenging times, collective bargaining remains one of the most important opportunities we have to confront the pressures facing members in their workplaces, communities and everyday lives.

The world is changing all around us. The development and introduction of artificial intelligence is changing how and where we work at a pace we can barely keep up with. Unjust tariffs, economic uncertainty and ongoing attacks on workers' rights have created a difficult environment for working people across the country. Inflation, economic and political uncertainty continue to make it harder for many to make ends meet. Young workers and workers from equity-deserving groups are particularly vulnerable to the effects of a deteriorating labour market and economy, and too often shoulder a disproportionate share of the burden created by these changing conditions.

Despite these challenges, there is much we can do together. Indeed, we are doing so much, still making progress for workers everywhere we can. The union's everyday political work to improve laws, influence public policy, protect public services, and strengthen Canada's social safety net all have a significant impact on work. Collective bargaining is a powerful way for us to respond to social, economic and political challenges and make a positive change. When we unite around shared concerns, develop creative solutions in preparation for negotiations, and fight for meaningful gains at each bargaining table, we can make a positive difference not only for ourselves, but for society as a whole.

This report sets out a number of recommendations designed to support members and local unions heading into bargaining. It outlines cross-sector proposals designed to help bargaining teams respond to today's challenges. Some establish clear bargaining expectations, while others offer practical ideas for strengthening collective agreements in a changing economy.

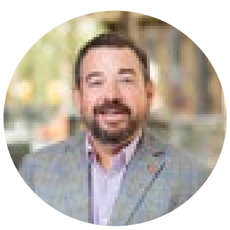
These recommendations were not developed in isolation. Through regional workshops and an online survey, we heard directly from you, the members, about the pressing issues you face in your workplaces and daily lives. You shared your priorities, concerns and vision for a better, fairer and more just society. The information, experiences and stories you shared helped shape the recommendations outlined in this report.

As you read this report, we encourage you to use it as both a guide and a call to action. The challenges before us are significant, but so is our collective strength. By bargaining boldly, organizing together and standing firm in defence of good jobs, fairness and dignity, we can protect Canadian jobs and build a stronger future for all workers.

In solidarity,

Lana Payne, National President

Len Poirier, National Secretary-Treasurer



Daniel Cloutier, Quebec Director

WHO WE ARE

Unifor is Canada's largest private-sector union, proudly representing 320,000 members from coast to coast to coast. The union advocates for working people and defends their rights while fighting for equality, social justice, and positive change in Canada, and beyond.

Founded on August 31, 2013, Unifor was created through the historic merger of the Canadian Auto Workers Union and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada. The merger aimed to leverage the collective strength of two powerful unions during a time of falling union membership, rising inequality, and a sharp increase in precarious work.

Unifor's membership spans nearly every part of the economy, from public-sector workers in education, social services, and health care to private-sector workers in manufacturing, hospitality, transportation, communications, resources, and more. Members are organized into 25 industries that are grouped into five broad sectors:

- Resources: Forestry; Energy; Mining, Metals and Minerals; Fisheries.
- Transportation: Road; Rail; Air; Marine.
- Communications: Media; Telecommunications.
- Manufacturing: Auto Assembly and Parts; Heavy Truck, Bus and Specialty Vehicles; Aerospace; Food and Beverage; Fabricated Metal; Plastic; Chemical; Electrical; Furniture; Shipbuilding; General Manufacturing.
- Services: Health Care; Social Services; Retail, Wholesale and Distribution; Hospitality and Gaming; Vehicle Dealerships and Services; Financial Services; Education; Other Services.

Unifor's structure balances the need for local representation with the need for a unified national voice. It acknowledges and respects regional differences, including Quebec's distinct identity, when developing policies, bargaining agreements and protecting workers' rights across the country. In so doing, Unifor is able to address unique concerns and protect regional differences while functioning as a national voice for all Canadian workers.

UNIFOR'S NATIONAL BARGAINING PROGRAM

When Unifor was founded in 2013, the founding documents set out a vision of a union that would remain strong, prepared, and effective at the bargaining table. As part of that vision, senior leadership and the Research Department were tasked with developing a National Bargaining Program to serve as a practical educational resource for members preparing for negotiations. The first version of the bargaining program was presented at the 2016 convention and was subsequently adopted by the delegates in attendance.

Since its creation, the program has continued to evolve. Every three years, the program is reviewed and updated to ensure that it reflects the changing priorities, needs, and expectations of Unifor's membership. Just as the bargaining landscape shifts from one round to the next, the program is updated to ensure it remains timely, relevant, and useful for those heading into bargaining.

The program is designed to offer practical recommendations that address the pressing issues of the day. It is not designed to address every possible bargaining scenario or replace the democratic role of local committees. Its goal is to help members achieve consistent improvements in each round of negotiations that support wide-ranging, inclusive, and socially progressive aims.

Member input is critical when updating the program. The process begins by connecting with members and gathering information about the issues that matter most. That feedback is then shared with experts across the union, who work collaboratively to develop recommendations and resources designed to support members at the table.

Once the updated program is developed, it undergoes an extensive review and debate at Canadian Council. Delegates have the opportunity to consider the proposed recommendations, provide feedback, and shape the final program. After adoption and approval, the program is shared as a resource for all members and staff. This year marks the fifth review of the program, reflecting our ongoing commitment to deliver a product that reflects the realities of the current bargaining climate and the evolving needs of the membership.

ECONOMIC AND LABOUR MARKET CONTEXT: 2026

Unifor's previous collective bargaining program (Bargaining Workers' Power, 2023-2026) was framed by a promising post-COVID boom, which saw historically low unemployment rates and strong wage growth coincide with growing affordability challenges and aggressive monetary policy tightening by the Bank of Canada. Since that time, the Canadian economy has faced mounting challenges, including deteriorating labour market conditions, slowing economic growth, public sector austerity, and a substantially more hostile geopolitical environment, including a trade war with our closest trading partner.

U.S. President Trump's attacks on Canadian sovereignty in the immediate aftermath of the 2024 presidential election and his musings about launching a trade war on his Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) partners had profound political ramifications in Canada, leading to a federal Liberal Party victory. Despite the Liberal attempts to campaign against the impending trade conflict, the Trump administration imposed a number of punitive tariffs starting in February 2025 under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) and Section 232 of the U.S. Trade Expansion Act.

The uncertainty brought about by Trump's election had an immediate effect on a number of key sectors, with workers in manufacturing experiencing the brunt of layoffs, some in anticipation of tariffs. Although there was a brief respite during the summer of 2025 as some segments of manufacturing rebounded, the decline resumed into late 2025 and early 2026. The continued instability and a constantly shifting trade landscape dampened Canadian exports, particularly in forestry products, auto, steel and aluminum.

The chaos and volatility brought about by the upending of a decades-old trade relationship compounded a labour market slowdown that had already begun prior to Trump's election from the second half of 2023 to 2024. Rising global inflation during the later stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had largely been the result of transnational supply chain dislocations, was attributed by the Bank of Canada to a so-called 'overheated' economy. An aggressive bout of monetary policy tightening marked by some of the fastest interest rate increases in Canadian history had the expected result of inhibiting investment and raising unemployment.

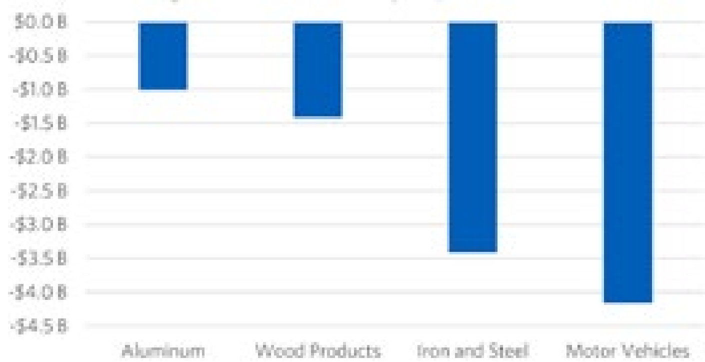
As always, the impacts of the labour market slowdown from 2023 until the present were not evenly distributed. Youth unemployment rose rapidly and reached levels which had not been seen since the late 1990s. Unemployment among some categories of racialized Canadians were nearly double the general rate. Meanwhile, indicators of precarious work that disproportionately affect women and newcomers, including the underemployment rate and temporary job holder rate, climbed to levels observed during the pandemic.

It is this highly economically challenging environment that Unifor members find themselves in currently. Unionized workers across the country must grapple with renewed attacks on the right to strike and collectively bargain in the name of 'economic stability' – while contending with higher unemployment, more threats of layoffs, and an unpredictable trade relationship with the U.S., framed by a CUSMA review that may yield more economic pain in the coming years. A revitalized collective bargaining program will continue to light the way for Unifor members and workers across Canada, showing exactly why unions are needed more than ever as Canada attempts to forge a new economic path.

Tariffs & Trade

Trump's spurious "fentanyl tariffs" imposed on Canada in February 2025 under IEEPA would eventually be struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in February 2026. However, a number of key tariffs remain on Canadian exports, including a 50 per cent tariff on Canadian steel and aluminum, a 25 per cent tariff on Canadian cars/light-duty trucks and key automobile parts that are non-CUSMA compliant, a 25 per cent tariff on non-U.S. non-CUSMA compliant medium- and heavy-duty vehicle content, a 50 per cent tariff on semi-finished copper products, and a number of stacking tariffs on forestry products that reach upwards of 45 per cent.

Figure 1: Decline in Key Exports, 2024-25

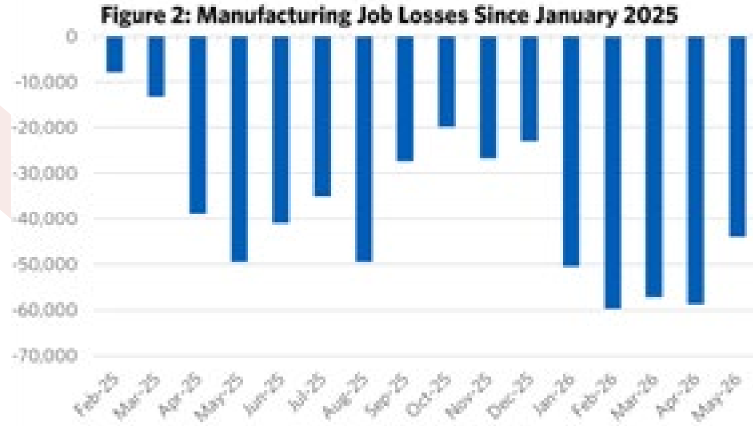


Source: Trade Data Online, Unifor

In addition, the U.S. continues to threaten new tariffs on Canada through the *Trade Expansion Act, Section 232*, with upwards of 100 per cent tariffs on Canadian pharmaceuticals, tariffs on critical minerals, and investigations underway on aircraft, drones, wind turbines, industrial machinery and PPE/medical equipment amongst others. The U.S. has also flagged Canada as a target for Section 301 investigations that target 'unfair' trade practices, including failing to curb the importation of goods made through forced labour.

The combined effect of multiple tariffs on Canadian exports to the U.S. has had a predictable effect of stifling export values, particularly for forestry, steel and aluminum products (see Figure 1). While the initial tranche of tariffs in early 2025 had broad-based ramifications for the entire Canadian economy, many sectors experienced a rebound that has seen overall employment grow on an annualized basis. Manufacturing has proven to be a clear exception, however, with employment falling by 60,000 jobs at its peak and continued negative job growth since January 2025 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Manufacturing Job Losses Since January 2025



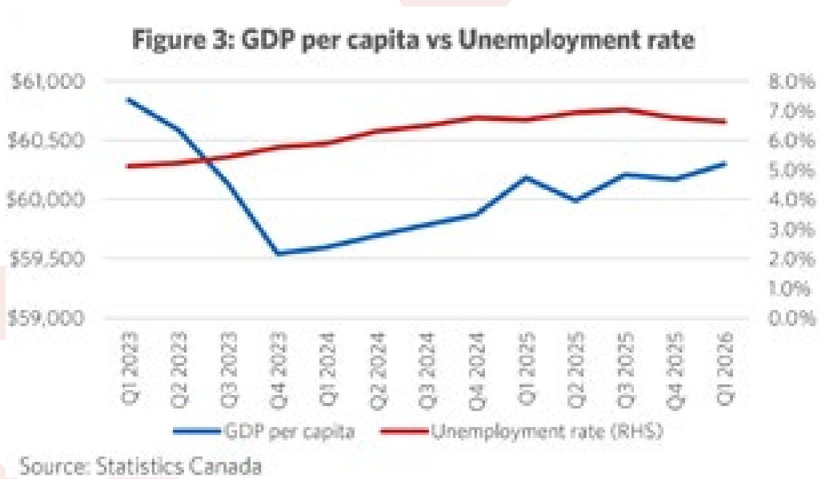
Source: Statistics Canada, Unifor

The one glimmer of reprieve throughout the chaotic and shifting landscape of Trump's tariffs has been the tendency for the U.S. administration to exempt most CUSMA-compliant goods from the IEEPA tariffs (and their replacement under the *Trade Act of 1974, Section 122*) and some Section 232 tariffs. Yet, Canada faces new threats on this front as Trump has signalled opposition to the renewal of CUSMA, openly musing that he would prefer to terminate the agreement altogether. The end of CUSMA would have profound effects on the Canadian economy unless new bilateral deals are signed to preserve tariff-free access to the U.S. market for most Canadian products.

Employment

Employment growth was robust throughout the period of the COVID-19 recovery from 2022 to 2023, with a stunningly rapid turnaround from the peak of the early pandemic when the unemployment rate reached 14.1 per cent, falling to as low as 4.8 per cent during the summer months of 2022. This growth in employment was made possible due to a number of key emergency measures introduced by the federal government that shielded workers from the worst impacts of the pandemic while preserving employment relationships and keeping temporary layoffs from becoming permanent job losses.

Unfortunately, the federal government did not sustain investments in the labour market and failed to implement a plan to build back better from the pandemic. Combined with tightening monetary policy which rapidly raised the overnight lending rate from 0.25 per cent to 5.0 per cent in just 18 months, both employment and economic growth became primarily driven by population increases rather than improvements in labour market conditions and sustained business investments. This was reflected in the steady growth of unemployment and the sharp fall in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita as the number of jobseekers outstripped the economy's capacity to create enough new work and value for a rapidly growing population (see Figure 3).



The ensuing backlash against these policies led to a reversal on immigration policy by the federal government, although slowing population growth was unable to stem a steadily climbing unemployment rate, particularly as tariff pressures took hold in 2025. In the 18-month period from December 2024 to May 2026, the economy added just 186,000 jobs compared to 610,000 from July 2023 to December 2024 – a decline of 70 per cent. Particularly notable has been the simultaneous increase in the unemployment rate and fall in the participation rate, as reflected in a historically low employment rate. In other words, not only are jobseekers failing to find work, but many are also giving up altogether and exiting the labour market.

Wages & Inflation

Average hourly wage growth was strong starting in mid-2022, climbing into the 4 per cent to 5 per cent range for much of the period from 2022 to 2024. However, the ramping up of wages significantly lagged behind the growth of inflation that started in early 2021, showing that workers bid up wages in response to cost of living pressures, rather than having caused inflation as some observers suggested. Unifor's 2023 collective bargaining program was highly successful on this front, with many locals winning significant wage gains over the past few years in order to offset the erosion of real wages from a historically high period of inflation.

Against narratives surrounding the idea of an 'overheated' economy, the Bank of Canada's original position surrounding inflation in 2021 was that it was transitory and linked to the unique dynamics of the pandemic, which had disrupted highly integrated global supply chains and caused a supply-side shock to prices. Pressures to respond grew, however, and the Bank returned to orthodox monetary policy prescriptions in March 2022, as it began to ratchet up interest rates in line with other central banks around the world.

Source: Statistics Canada

Although the headline rate of inflation quickly returned to the Bank of Canada's 1 per cent to 3 per cent target range by the start of 2024, interest rates were held at 5 per cent until the summer months of 2024 as the Bank overcorrected. By then, the labour market downturn had firmly taken hold and the unemployment rate had risen by more than 1.5 percentage points from its lowest level in 2022. Nevertheless, wage growth continued stay strong throughout 2024, revealing the spurious link between so-called wage pressures and inflation (see Figure 4). Workers were able to continue bargaining substantial real wage increases to claw back the loss of purchasing power during the peak inflationary period in 2022, while inflation fell and stayed relatively low.

Recent world events have shown yet again how quickly supply chain blockages can ramp up inflationary pressures as the Strait of Hormuz crisis prompted by Trump's war on Iran led immediately to surging oil prices. Although core inflation has remained relatively stable, the dramatic increase in the cost of gas pushed the headline inflation figure higher in the first half of 2026. Yet again, the Bank of Canada has signalled that it may be willing to pursue tighter national monetary policy to confront a problem that is entirely external in cause, which would further dampen Canada's economic prospects.

Impact on Equity Groups

As the labour market and economy has deteriorated over the past few years, Canadians have seen firsthand the incredibly unequal impacts of such downturns on equity-deserving groups. Continued cost of living pressures in key consumer basket categories – including groceries, utilities and gas – impact working Canadians the hardest. Despite using the weakening economy as an excuse to cite “uncertainty” and “softening markets” at the bargaining table, corporations have seen their operating profits soar, increasing by more than 7 per cent in the final quarter of 2025 compared to wage increases of just 3 per cent for workers.

Youth have been on the front lines of declining labour market conditions, with unemployment levels that have not been seen since the late 1990s, outside of the pandemic. The youth unemployment rate has stubbornly hovered around the 13 to 15 per cent range throughout much of 2025 and 2026, with the rate being substantially higher for visible minority and Indigenous youth (see Figure 5). Currently, close to a million young Canadians between the ages of 15 to 29 are currently not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

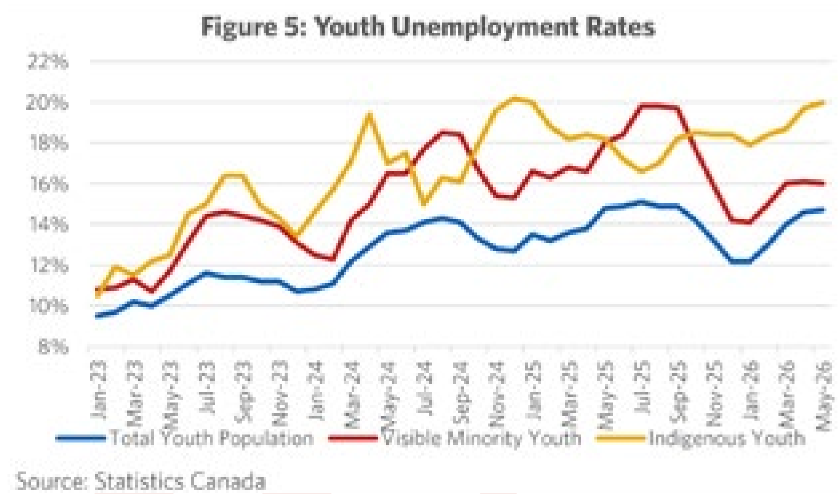


Figure 5: Youth Unemployment Rates

Source: Statistics Canada

Canada has also not been immune to the growing concentration of wealth among a tiny group of elites, with recent reports showing that wealth inequality increased drastically from 1999 to 2023 in most regions of the country. In 2023, the top 1 per cent of Canadians controlled nearly a quarter of all wealth in Canada, with the top 0.01 per cent holding, on average, around a half a billion dollars’ worth of assets.

Meanwhile, Canada’s general poverty rate climbed to 11 per cent in 2024, with approximately 4.5 million Canadians living below the poverty line. Equity-deserving groups are disproportionately impacted by income inequality, with the poverty rate sitting at 15 per cent for persons living with disabilities, 16 per cent for visible minorities and 18 per cent for Indigenous people.

Meeting the Challenge

Despite the economic and political challenges of the day, Unifor has remained steadfast in fighting for its members and all Canadians. The union’s response to U.S. President Trump’s trade war has been swift and aggressive since day one. The union’s “Protect Canadian Jobs” campaign has laid out a clear plan for policy makers and businesses – if anyone wants access to Canada’s market, they must invest here, create jobs here, and build here.

Unifor National President Lana Payne has been the most prominent progressive voice on trade, labour and the economy in Canada. Her extensive coverage in the media has highlighted the union's positioning on a Canada first policy that attracts investment, promotes good union jobs, and relies on worker-centred industrial strategies. Lana has also been a clear voice in the Prime Minister's ear as a member of the federal Advisory Committee on Canada-U.S. Economic Relations.

The union's efforts have had a real impact. There has been a broad shift in economic development strategy and thinking in Canada, with governments acknowledging the importance of Canadian procurement, leveraging the country's strengths, and choosing to invest directly in strategic, targeted sectors of the economy. Governments and the broader public understand that the trade war is hurting people on both sides of the border and that a re-negotiated Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) must uphold Canadian sovereignty, protect strategic sectors from arbitrary U.S. tariff escalation, advance fair trade, strengthen labour and human rights provisions, and protect Canadian jobs.

At the same time, the union continues to advance the agenda for workers through on-the-ground workplace organizing and solidarity. The union has achieved historic organizing wins at Amazon and Walmart in the face of aggressive anti-union tactics by these corporate giants. Workers in various sectors across the country have recently joined the union, which reflects Unifor's strength and the need to improve the conditions in these workplaces. At the bargaining table, the union continues to stand firm and drive an agenda that resists concessions, makes life more affordable for members, and secures investments to protect jobs.

When the federal government decided to rush its consultation on the Canada Labour Code, the union condemned the process and highlighted that the consultation revealed a deep misunderstanding of how labour relations actually work in this country. The union's response emphasized that the process was undermining the right to strike for federally regulated workers, and that it is only through effective collective bargaining and the right to strike that unions have achieved gains for generations of workers. The federal government subsequently launched a second round of consultations that targeted specific issues rather than applied in an overly broad manner.

Rather than be paralyzed by the political and economic challenges facing members and Canadians, Unifor has rolled up its sleeves and met those challenges head on. Through action by Unifor and its members, progress has been made in the fight against U.S. trade aggression, regressive government policies, and tough employers. There is, however, more work to be done. And we are ready for the challenge.

Conclusion

In a time of tremendous economic uncertainty and geopolitical upheaval, a cohesive and ambitious national collective bargaining program can combat the negative trends and protect good jobs in Canada. In recent years, Unifor has won key victories at bargaining tables and on picket lines across the country, but the struggle to defend hard-won rights continues. Drafted with the help of local leadership and rank-and-file members, Unifor's 2026 collective bargaining program confronts the challenges of a murky economic outlook head-on, identifying bargaining priorities that will shore up recent bargaining gains while continuing to press forward on critical issues that matter to workers across Canada.

REPORT BACK ON THE 2023 TO 2026 NATIONAL BARGAINING PROGRAM, *BUILDING WORKERS' POWER*

Every year, hundreds of collective agreements are negotiated, and the issues addressed at the bargaining table are as varied as Unifor itself. The national bargaining programs broadly reflect the priorities of every workplace and the general membership. They provide the opportunity to highlight some key achievements in one area of the union to the rest of the union, in hopes that it can be replicated in other workplaces.

At the 2023 Canadian Council, thousands of delegates approved the 2023 to 2026 *Bargaining Workers' Power* Program. The program included recommendations intended to leverage a post-pandemic period marked by low unemployment, high vacancy rates, rising private sector investment and record corporate profits – all factors that significantly strengthened workers' negotiating power. This chapter outlines some of the achievements made in each of the program's priority areas.

Wages and Income Security:

To address the affordability crisis amid decades-high inflation, nearly every settlement included provisions to address this priority area. Notable highlights include:

- More than 50 settlements reported the reactivation or introduction of cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) clauses.
- More than 35 settlements reduced or removed the grow-in period, enabling hundreds of workers to reach the top job rate and maximize their earning potential sooner.
- There was a resurgence of minimum wage-plus clauses. These clauses tie future increases in the collective agreement to any future increases in the provincial or federal minimum wage. For example, members working at the Canadian Tire in Gatineau have a start rate that is guaranteed to be $0.25 above the minimum wage at all times. Should the minimum wage increase, it will raise the first step and that same increase will be applied to the other steps in the wage grid.
- There was also a resurgence of supplementary unemployment benefit (SUB) top-up programs. For example, members at Covia Canada negotiated a supplemental unemployment benefit program that will provide up to 20 weeks of salary top-up if subject to a layoff.
- Many settlements reported historic wage increases (GM, Ford, Stellantis, Winnipeg Free Press, Masterfeeds, East Link, Camion Beaudoin, Viterra).

Workplace Equity, Inclusion and Human Rights:

Employment equity, inclusion, and human rights are central pillars of every bargaining program. This includes improving job quality, addressing discrimination in hiring and workplace practices, and increasing job security and accessibility for workers from equity-deserving groups. During the *Bargaining Workers' Power* program, a number of notable gains were achieved:

- More than 30 settlements reported new or enhanced provisions for Women's and Racial Justice Advocates. We now have 777 Women's Advocates and just over 200 Racial Justice Advocates in place.
- We successfully negotiated new 2SLGBTQIA+, mental health, EFAP, disAbility, and indigenous advocate positions into several agreements.
- New, innovative language aimed at helping migrant workers achieve Canadian citizenship was bargained. For example, Local 6005 members at the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre negotiated paid time off to process a Canadian citizenship application, while Local 195 members at the Doubletree Hotel and Suites in Windsor negotiated paid leave to attend court and be sworn in as a Canadian citizen.
- Members at Chantiers Chibougamau Landrienne Sawmill bargained a new Temporary Foreign Worker Program aimed at supporting migrant workers to maintain their work permits and achieve permanent residency. As part of the program, the employer agreed to provide translated copies of the collective agreement and support workers in learning French.
- Many settlements incorporated commitments to Truth and Reconciliation. Over 25 settlements now recognize Truth and Reconciliation Day as a statutory holiday, and several others have embedded a land acknowledgement in the collective agreement (Local 229 members working at George Jeffrey Children's Centre and Harbourview Child Care Centre located on Treaty Territory of the Fort William Nation).
- Negotiating safe access to washrooms for all was identified as a priority in the program. Recognizing that everyone needs a safe place to use the washroom and change for work, members at Waste Management London negotiated a designated washroom for people who identify as women.

Health and Safety:

The Bargaining Workers' Power program led to many new and improved health and safety measures designed to better protect workers, reduce risks, and promote safer workplaces. For example:

- Hospital workers in Ontario negotiated language on pandemic preparedness, infectious disease protection, and access to paid leave when required to quarantine.
- New ways to leverage technology to protect workers were reported. For example, members working at the Hilton Garden Inn Toronto/Mississauga negotiated a new provision requiring the hotel to provide personal alarms to housekeeping staff who work alone.

Benefits, Leave Provisions, Pension and Retirement Security:

Benefits were a major concern for members, ranking just below wages as a top priority. During bargaining, many committees achieved significant improvements in this area:

- Dozens of settlements included new language on dedicated mental health leaves, the option to use sick time for mental health reasons, or improved coverage for mental health services. For example, members at Ornge Air Ambulance increased their mental health coverage from $500 to $5,000 per year.
- More than 100 settlements contained improvements to extended health care or dental plans, with many citing better coverage, lower co-payments, or both.
- Expanding the scope of eligibility for benefit plans to include part-time and casual workers, as well as those who continue working past the age of 65, was reported in settlements across all sectors.

- More than 60 settlements reported substantial improvements to vacation leave, including greater access to vacation time and reduced service requirements to reach a vacation milestone.
- To help alleviate some of the financial burden associated with gender transition, members at McMaster University (Unit 1) negotiated a $15,000 lifetime maximum benefit for gender affirmation support.
- Pension plan improvements were negotiated in both the public and private sectors (Detroit 3 automakers, Air Canada, Greenshield, MDA, Metro, PepsiCo, Unifin, University of Windsor, and Windsor Tunnel Corporation, to name a few).

Workforce Attraction and Retention Strategies:

The Bargaining Workers' Power program led to new, innovative ways to attract new employees and retain current ones. Notable highlights include:

- An uptake in settlements that included language that allowed members to work remotely (SaskTel, YES Employment Services).
- Recognizing that innovative scheduling practices may improve retention, numerous bargaining teams were able to gain new language that gives members more control over when they work. For example, Local 112 members working at the W Hotel in Toronto negotiated language that gives workers nearing retirement age the option to transition to a four-day workweek.
- There was a resurgence of monetary incentives and programs designed to recognize and reward long-service employees.

Union Building, Job Security and Precarious Work:

Bargaining teams took the opportunity to improve job security and address precarious work and negotiate union-building provisions. Progress was made in these priority areas:

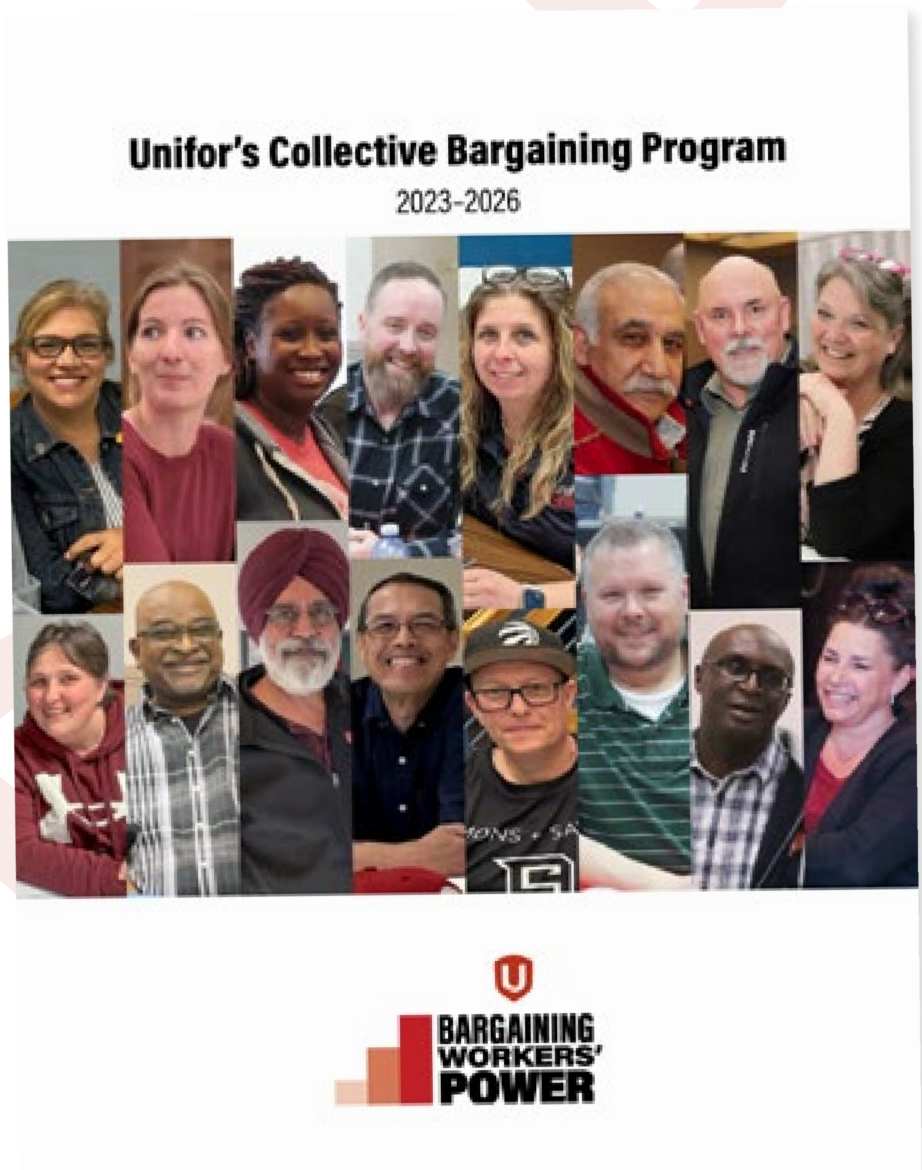
- Many settlements reported an increase in, or introduction of, Paid Education Leave contributions.
- There was a resurgence of settlements that included more time for chairpersons and committee members to conduct union business.
- Some bargaining teams were able to expand the scope of their collective agreement. For example, Local 636 members working at Armtec Tilsonburg negotiated a broader clause to include skilled-trades workers in the bargaining unit, while members at Domtar Gatineau were able to bring shipping back in-house during negotiations.
- New innovative language designed to limit temporary agency use was reported. For example, AgeCare Royal Oak Long Term Care must reach out to members to see if they want to take on additional hours before calling in agency staff.
- Notable gains were made that address an employer's ability to contract out work. During negotiations for their 2023 to 2027 agreement, MWF members at Marine Fabricators secured a clause that requires the employer to pay a penalty when subcontractors are working in the shipyard.

New Technology and the Future of Work:

Technology is evolving quickly and reshaping the work environment. While stopping the introduction of advanced technology is not always a reasonable objective, the way new technology is used in the workplace must be addressed in negotiations. Here are some examples of language that sets boundaries on the use of technology in the workplace:

- For the first time, settlements have included language aimed at mitigating the impact of artificial intelligence (Bell, Brinks, Corus Entertainment, the United Way Winnipeg, and the Windsor Star).
- Limitations on the use of surveillance were also reported in a number of settlements. For example, Local 4268 members working for Penske Logistics Canada Limited negotiated language that prevents the employer from using security cameras for targeted surveillance or for the real-time monitoring of employees.

These are not exhaustive lists. Examples have been selected for illustrative purposes only.



JOB SECURITY

Unprecedented U.S. trade aggression and economic coercion targeting Canada has raised the stakes for workers and job security. The challenge is two-fold.

For starters, workers in trade-dependent industries directly targeted by various ‘national security’ or other tariffs by the U.S. Administration, face production slowdowns, program relocation, alongside persistent threats of shift reductions or plant closures. Canada’s manufacturing sector has already contracted by tens of thousands of jobs, since Trump came to office (not surprisingly, the U.S. manufacturing sector has also experienced job losses). Job security discussions are prevalent at many bargaining tables and will remain for the foreseeable future.

There are also downstream effects to this U.S.-instigated trade war, that expand its blast radius. Canada’s overall economic performance is heavily tied to two-way trade with the U.S., in both goods and services. A drag on industrial production slows local economies, and lowers tax revenue, needed to pay for critical services like health and education. This is happening while workers grapple with a stubbornly high cost of living, slowing population (i.e. demand) growth, and new threats of job displacement and outsourcing through artificial intelligence and other workplace automation systems, including across the public sector. Efforts to ‘diversify’ trade away from the U.S. sound attractive, but that too comes with its own set of concerns including closer dealings and greater exposure to unfair trading nations, like China.

In 2026, Canada’s economy entered a recession. This intensified job insecurity for workers including Unifor members, as employers aggressively sought cost savings at their employees’ expense.

Addressing this is no easy task. Meaningful action is needed by governments, as well as employers and unions at the bargaining table.

Efforts by government to accelerate the building of ‘major projects’ and establishing purchasing policies that favour Canadian goods, is certainly welcome, although its effects are limited.

Ongoing diplomatic work is needed to remove unfair U.S. tariffs and recalibrate North American trade relations. Governments must also continue to hold employers accountable for bad decisions including by relocating work south of the border.

Bargaining Priorities for Job Security

Unifor can bargain strategically to stabilize jobs for members and create certainty in an uncertain world.

Unifor will:

- **Bargain work ownership provisions**. The union will look to secure contract language that prohibits outsourcing or third-party contracting when members are on layoff, building on best practices.
- **Bargain appropriate notice periods for workplace restructuring that affects bargaining unit jobs**. Receiving notice of a future workforce restructuring event, be it a job layoff, shift reduction or – in worst circumstances – a closure, gives union representatives time to consider alternatives to job loss and propose alternatives. Unifor encourages at least 1-year notice period for any workplace closure, and at least 6-months for a major workforce reduction or partial closure.
- **No job reductions during periods of transition or restructuring**. The union will seek language that explicitly limits the ability of employers to eliminate jobs during periods of transition, retooling and restructuring. This will include proposals to increase costs on employers who choose to outsource work that can be done in-house by bargaining unit members.
- **Negotiate to raise termination or severance pay obligations**. Raising the "cost" employers must bear when cutting jobs, by including (or enhancing) termination and severance pay obligations, provides additional financial support to workers in times of hardship. High termination costs may also serve as a deterrent for employers to take such action.
- **Bargain to extend recall rights for workers**. In times of economic uncertainty, members who are facing job loss can benefit from maintaining a link to their workplace. Negotiating recall rights for laid off members (or extending existing recall periods) gives members added stability in uncertain times.
- **Encourage the creation of full-time, permanent jobs**. Unifor will seek to negotiate clear and unambiguous restrictions on the use of part-time or temporary workers, as well as automatic full-time job postings (with full benefits and entitlements) whenever workers are misused to perform full-time bargaining unit work.
- **Ensure regular assessment and updated classification skills and job duties**. The union will seek to ensure a clear identification of classification skills in bargaining surveys to ensure any classification definitions are updated to properly outline the skill-level needed to perform the task. Such assessments must ensure that existing scopes of practice for skilled trades remain intact.
- **Regularly review the bargaining unit scope clause, to maximize coverage**. The union will consider amendments to contract scope clauses to ensure that as job classifications evolve, or new ones are introduced into the workplace, that the collective agreement covers all relevant workers. Scope clauses can also be expanded to include temporary, contract, on-call, and temporary migrant workers.
- **Bargain work sharing arrangements, where possible, to avoid layoffs in workplaces.** In the event of economic downturns or slowdowns, the union shall consider an application for a Work-Sharing agreement, through the federal government, as an alternative to layoffs and to lessen the financial impact on members in the workplace.
- **Bargain strong workplace adjustment or closure agreements**. When major job loss events occur in Unifor workplaces, and cannot be avoided, union staff and negotiating committees are strongly encouraged to negotiate comprehensive adjustment or closure agreements, following guidance from the National Union. Such agreement should include an employer commitment to participate in a Labour Adjustment Committee.

WAGES AND INCOME SECURITY

Food, housing, and the cost of basic necessities continue to rise at rates that exceed wage increases. Many participants noted they would like to own a home one day. While home sales have decreased across the country, costs remain persistently high, keeping home ownership out of reach, particularly for young workers.

This issue is made worse by economic and employment uncertainties in nearly every industrial sector. Members in sectors reliant on trade, such as the automotive industry, manufacturing and forestry, are feeling particularly vulnerable. Ongoing trade uncertainties under President Trump's leadership of the U.S. are having a profound effect on negotiations, making it difficult to secure the wage increases workers desperately need.

During uncertain times, workers also need income-security measures to shield themselves from the financial hardship that accompanies a layoff. However, securing these protections has become more challenging at the bargaining table as employers look to control costs.

When someone is laid off, the immediate concern is often the loss of a regular paycheque. However, losing health and dental benefits can be equally damaging for those who depend on them. Purchasing individual health insurance is costly and is out of reach for most, particularly during periods of unemployment.

Across regional sessions and surveys, opinions were divided on whether to prioritize wage increases over job security. In fact, income security surpassed wage increases in terms of priority in some regional sessions and in the online survey.

In recent years, the union has successfully reduced two-tier wage structures and lengthy grow-in periods, but there is still more work to be done. Employers keep showing up at the bargaining table trying to push for the inclusion of these cost-saving measures in more contracts. Workshop participants noted how difficult it can be to fend off these proposals or especially, to negotiate them out of existing collective agreements.

In regional sessions and surveys, members told us that employers are struggling to fill and retain staff in certain positions. For example, demand for workers in certain health care classifications or the skilled trades remains high, leading to recruitment and retention challenges. Participants described the difficulties of constantly having to train new recruits and pick up the slack as someone learns the ropes or while the position is vacant.

Bargaining Priorities for Wage and Income Security

When bargaining, it's important to prioritize provisions that protect workers' incomes. It is crucial to keep advocating for income security measures during these uncertain times, so everyone can feel more at ease knowing they'll have financial support if they face job loss, a slowdown in production, or take a leave of absence.

Wage increases must also continue to be prioritized. Life is becoming more expensive with each passing year, and it is important to ensure wages are fair and keep pace with the cost of living. Employer proposals to extend unreasonably long grow-in periods for new workers or allow for the introduction of two-tier wage grids must be opposed.

Unifor will:

- **Continue to push for wage increases and cost-of-living adjustments for all members.** Job security is important, particularly during times of economic and employment uncertainty, but employers should not be allowed to exploit the fear of losing jobs to pressure the union into accepting less. The union will also strive to bargain provisions that guard wages against inflationary pressures. This may include introducing new cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) clauses, reactivating and strengthening existing clauses, or bargaining other special payments intended to help offset the rising cost of goods and services.
- **Oppose any employer demands that include pay concessions or introducing two-tier wage grids.** The union will always seek alternatives to pay concessions or wage tiers when an employer is faced with severe cost pressures. Where two-tier wage grids exist, the union commits to consolidating them to eliminate pay disparities among workers. And where exceptionally long wage grids are present, the union will prioritize shortening them, so members reach the job rate sooner.
- **Bargain wage adjustments for positions that are difficult to fill or are susceptible to turnover.** To reduce the heavy turnover of workers or fill vacant positions, the union will negotiate market-based increases that entice people to take on the work and stay in the job.
- **Skilled trade wage differentials**. The union will continue to negotiate wage premiums and other pay differentials for certified skilled trades, in recognition of specialized skills.
- **Negotiate pay equity into collective agreements and hold employers accountable to their legal obligations.** We must continue to negotiate pay equity into our agreements to reduce the gender wage gap and other gender-based pay disparities. Where pay equity legislation exists, we must ensure employers are meeting their legal obligations. This includes forming the necessary workplace committees, developing concrete plans, processes and timelines towards pay equity implementation, and regular monitoring and evaluation.
- **Prioritize income security measures like salary maintenance or supplemental unemployment benefit programs.** The union will push to include income top-up provisions in agreements to help members cope with the financial loss associated with production slowdowns or leaves of absence. The union will also pursue supplemental unemployment programs that provide income security during a layoff. Where these programs already exist, the union will push to increase the top-up payment.
- **Negotiate severance and separation payouts for workers subject to layoff that exceed provincial or federal standards.** When members are laid off due to downsizing or closure, the union will look to negotiate measures that will provide guaranteed payouts to members to help them stay afloat while they look for a new job.

- **Bargain benefit continuation language for workers who are laid off.** Health benefits – including paramedical services, drug and dental coverage – are essential to maintaining health and rehabilitating from injury or illness. The union will seek to ensure that members retain coverage after a layoff, enabling them to maintain their well-being until they secure a new job with access to benefits.

PRECARIOUS WORK

Precarious work refers to non-standard, insecure employment defined by low wages, few if any benefits, unpredictable schedules, and a lack of workplace protections. The increase in precarious work is largely driven by the sharp rise in the gig economy and of digital platforms, and by employment and labour laws that have failed to keep up with the changing economy and evolving labour force.

Unionized work still generally features higher than average wages, good benefits, job security, stable hours, retirement security, and robust health and safety protections.

However, it is clear from member feedback that in many Unifor workplaces, employers are implementing new technologies and introducing new proposals at the bargaining table that would undermine the job standards that members have worked hard over decades to build. At the same time, as precarious work becomes more common in the broader labour market, unionized workers face a constant downward pressure on job quality.

As overall unionization rates drop, it is critical to protect the gains made in collective agreements and fight for better employment laws that promote secure, standard, full-time work with decent wages and better workplace protections. Just as importantly, non-union organizing must be prioritized, including through collective bargaining. The best way to combat the relentless downward pressure created by precarious work is to bring more workers into the labour movement.

The increase in precarity through digital platforms' relentless misclassification of workers creates an incentive for employers to casualize labour. The result can be a fractured workforce and reduced union coverage, especially if collective agreement "scope clauses" fail to cover part-time and casual employees or other non-standard groups of workers. Expanding collective agreements to cover casual and misclassified workers and making workplaces "wall-to-wall" union, will stop the downward pressure on wages and build collective power during negotiations.

It is worth noting that those trapped in precarious work are disproportionately marginalized workers, including new Canadians, women, Black, Indigenous, and workers of colour, people with disabilities, and people from the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. So, the fight against precarious work means improving outcomes for those who are disadvantaged the most.

Bargaining Priorities for Precarious Work

In order to push back against precarious work, the union must protect the gains made at the bargaining table, strengthen scope language, and look for ways to bring non-union contractors, temp workers and others – people who work side-by-side with members every day – into existing collective agreements. At the same time, the union must find creative ways to use collective bargaining to grow with employers by expanding the scope of collective agreements to include new facilities and expansions.

To effectively combat the relentless pressure toward precarious, casualized or contracted-out work, and reinforce the rights of collective bargaining across new classifications of workers, the union must focus on the following bargaining priorities.

Unifor will:

- **Negotiate broad and inclusive scope clauses.** The union will seek to amend scope clauses to include temporary, contract, on-call, and temporary migrant workers.
- **Seek opportunities to expand scope language to include expansions and new facilities.** The union will use its deep knowledge of workplaces and employers to identify opportunities to grow as employers grow, by leveraging the bargaining process to win expanded scope clauses and growth agreements.
- **Encourage the creation of full-time, permanent jobs.** The union will seek to negotiate clear and unambiguous restrictions on the use of part-time or temporary workers, as well as automatic full-time job postings (with full benefits and entitlements) whenever workers are misused to perform full-time bargaining unit work.
- **Negotiate equal pay for equal work provisions.** The union will seek to negotiate contract language, wherever possible, that ensures workers who are engaged in similar work at full-time, permanent jobs and with the same skills, responsibilities, and working conditions, are paid the same wage, regardless of employment status (such as part-time, temporary, seasonal or contract).

TECHNOLOGY AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

It is not just the change itself but the speed of change that has made the introduction of artificial intelligence (AI) into workplaces particularly stressful for workers. The rapid push for the deployment of AI across all aspects of our lives and to adopt or integrate AI-related automation has upended job expectations and the work environment.

The rapid implementation of AI-driven automation has created novel harms for members. As such, beyond the broader discussion in society of the role AI can and should play, the union must also respond to address and negotiate protections in collective agreements.

The analysis of automation starts by identifying if new technology is being deployed as a tool used to augment work or as an industrial machine to replace workers. Changes to tools may require specialized training or upskilling that may trigger collective agreement provisions related to technological change.

The introduction of AI-enhanced industrial machines that are designed to replace workers through automation creates unique challenges. These machines are expensive and require significant productivity increases to pay for them. Access to new work and training without negatively impacting compensation are essential when automation occurs.

Augmentation tools and machines for automation are seen as distinct, but in reality, it is a spectrum. Augmentation is possible through capturing the knowledge of the worker through surveillance. For AI, the tool for augmentation is the same tool used to learn the specific tasks that are being automated. The AI tool that augments someone's work is capturing their knowledge and attempts to "learn" how to do their job.

The introduction of new automated tools or technology at a fast pace means constantly learning new interfaces or changed processes. Assumptions about broad inherent skills with using new technology can negatively target certain workers who are less familiar with technology. Training must be part of the process for any new technology.

Employers are also increasing their use of AI-assisted systems to support human resources functions. AI-enabled cameras, sensors, and computer systems make broad and intrusive surveillance of members cheaper for the employer. The abuse of these systems for the purpose of discipline is a major threat to members.

Bargaining Priorities for Technology and Artificial Intelligence

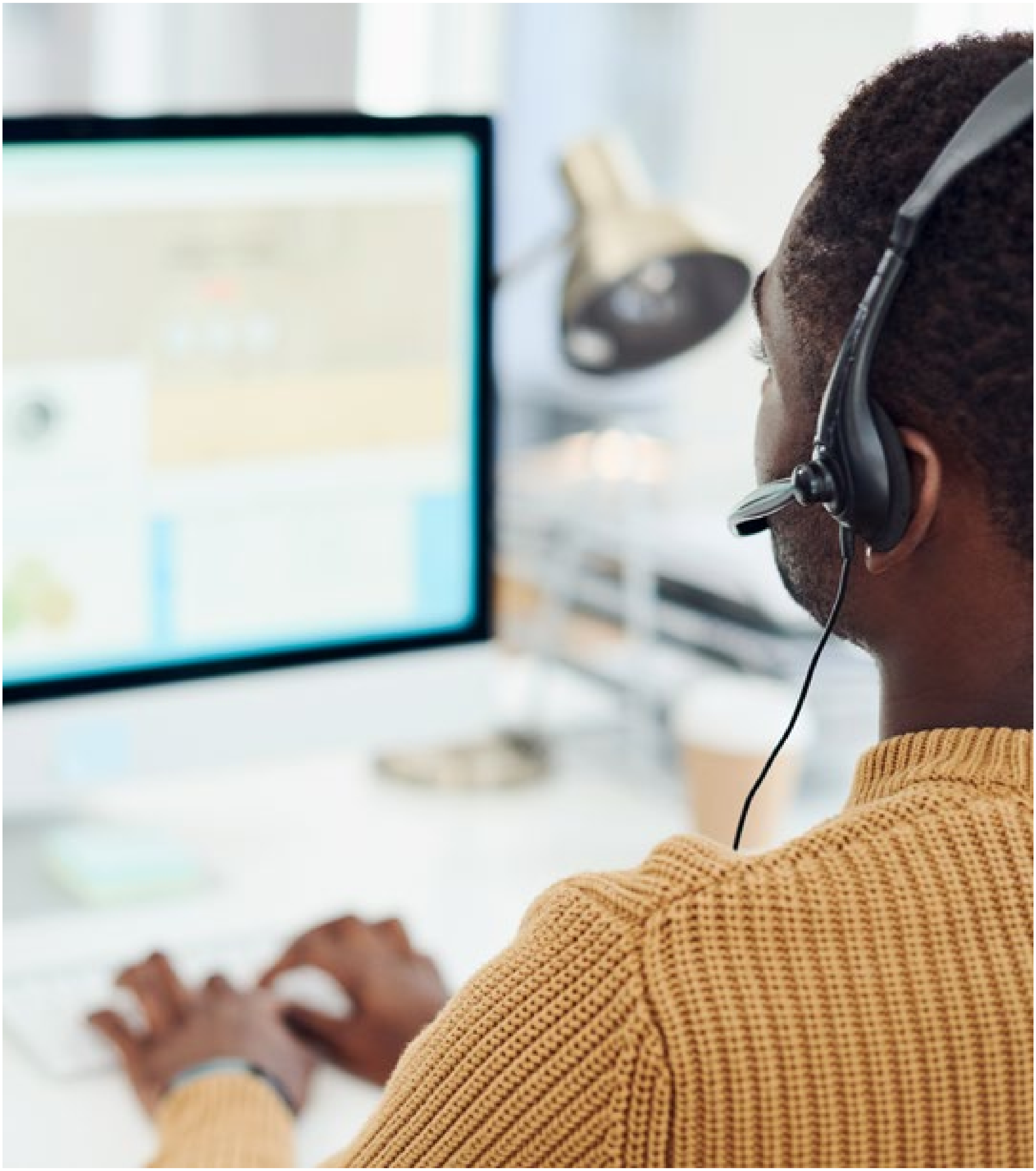
Unifor members have outlined many unique issues and novel harms from the implementation of artificial intelligence systems in their workplaces. The rapid introduction of technology has created concerns about job security and permanency. While the speed of technological change creates fear of job loss through automation, specific changes to the work environment also increase stress.

Members have pointed out that there is no need to completely reinvent bargaining to deal with AI – it requires a review of collective agreement provisions that may not have been regularly used such as those related to technological change, training, committees, discipline, and worker privacy. From augmentation to automation of work processes, new work tools, or rapidly evolving management systems, the union must continue to shift and innovate in response to new technology.

Unifor will:

- **Ensure employers disclose any internal documents, business plans or reports related to the use of AI in the workplace**. The union should obtain such information through bargaining-related production requests, Labour-Management Meetings, and Health and Safety Committees.
- **Bargain policies acknowledging the growing role of automation, including machine learning, algorithms, and AI**. This includes establishing augmentation as a principle to measure the appropriateness of automation in the workplace. Automation should augment worker activities while growing productivity through safely increasing the efficiency of work.
- **Ensure new technology is implemented only after extensive testing.** To ensure that new technology results in an increase in safety in the workplace, automation should be trialled in the workplace in full consultation with the union through local committees and ensure that all workers involved receive appropriate training.
- **Support renewed worker training and education.** This should be done to advance safety and prevent job displacement or deskilling. The union should be involved in the development of training for new technology in the workplace.
- **Limit worker surveillance and data abuse.** The union will negotiate safeguards to protect privacy and prevent discrimination in the implementation of new technology. This includes language requiring the employer to disclose and provide a rationale for surveillance measures, along with privacy and data protection provisions.
- **Negotiate expanded definitions of AI and identify AI explicitly as Technological Change.** The union will seek to establish language for specific technology-related issues, including AI. Where automation using AI creates novel harms, new language should link those harms to the appropriate protections in the collective agreement.
- **Require advance notice of the introduction of new technology.** The union will negotiate provisions that will provide implementation timelines and clarity on intended goals of the new technology. Workers need to know when and how their work environment is changing, and whether new technology is actually being used for its intended goals.
- **Clarify that speed-up language applies to written content, augmented output, and automation upstream of production.** The union will seek to ensure that increasing the speed of certain parts of the production system does not result in increased intensity of work for everyone else in the workplace.

- **Ensure humans remain in the loop for any discipline and seek to ban fully automated terminations.** The union will negotiate the right to review any automated management decisions and the right to access data and logic used to make those decisions.
- **Improve health and safety committee supports.** The union will broaden supports to include AI-impacted issues such as tool dependency, ergonomics, and mental health.



HEALTH, SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT

Ensuring the health and safety of workers remains critically important for the union. With the stroke of a pen, governments can change laws that favour employers and water down health and safety protections, leaving workers more vulnerable in the workplace.

The extreme advancement of technology, especially artificial intelligence, has changed the workplace equilibrium, tilting it towards a faceless management technology where workers feel they are constantly under surveillance and judgment. Members are confronted with workplaces that pose real risks to their physical health and safety through potentially hazardous job tasks and responsibilities. Members are also facing increasing risks to their mental health and well-being, as employers continue to demand more from workers in the name of "productivity."

Meanwhile, public health emergencies and climate related hazards continue to threaten broader society and pose new dangers to certain workplaces. Economic uncertainty caused by trade wars and tariffs has heightened concerns about job security, discouraging some workers from speaking up when they face health and safety risks in the workplace.

Negotiating stronger health and safety language remains as relevant as ever given the evolving challenges that members are facing.

Bargaining priorities must strengthen worker power by addressing emerging challenges. Members identified health and safety as a key priority, emphasizing the need for paid time, training, resources, and protections for health and safety representatives. Workers must also be educated on their right to refuse unsafe work and how to exercise that right. Technological change, automation, and AI require collective agreement language that ensures worker involvement in assessing impacts on jobs, workloads, and safety. Mental health and psychosocial hazards must be addressed with the same seriousness as physical risks.

Bargaining Priorities for Health, Safety and Environment

These priorities reinforce worker power by expanding workers' voice, increasing employer accountability, and ensuring that both physical and psychological health and safety hazards are addressed through collective bargaining.

Unifor will:

- **Bargain adequate time for health, safety and environment representatives.** Union representatives need time to fulfill their roles and represent their members, including minimum requirements for inspections, preparing for and attending meetings, documenting meetings, investigating fatalities or serious injuries or near misses, attending environmental events, training, and being consulted and present during hygiene testing.
- **Ensure clear and transparent sharing of information.** The union will obtain information with regard to worker safety contained in hygiene reports, biological monitoring surveys, accident investigations, government visits, consults, investigations and prosecutions in health and safety and environmental matters. Such information should be shared with local and national union leadership.
- **Bargain clear terms of reference documents for local health and safety committees.** This should be done for committees to understand their role and interaction with management and the workers they represent, in order for all workplace parties to clearly understand the rules of engagement for the committee.
- **Bargain clear language respecting the use of AI.** Such language would apply to all aspects of worker safety in the workplace and for workers to understand how their actions are being measured.
- **Negotiate psychological health and safety standards.** The union will seek to negotiate the adoption of psychological health and safety standards that require employers to identify, assess, and eliminate psychosocial hazards, while implementing preventative measures to protect workers' mental health and well-being.
- **Oppose Behaviour-Based Safety programs.** The union will seek to prohibit Behaviour-Based Safety (BBS) programs and other employer initiatives that shift responsibility for workplace hazards onto workers through resilience or coping strategies rather than addressing root causes.
- **Expand worker advocacy and representation.** The union will bargain for workplace-based Workers' Compensation Representatives and Mental Health Advocates, with employer-funded training to support members and address the unique challenges faced by equity-deserving groups.
- **Address workload and production pressures.** The union will negotiate oversight, transparency, and training related to workload management, production standards, and workplace speed-up measures to reduce health and safety risks and prevent unfair discipline.
- **Strengthen protections for working alone.** The union will seek to establish clear restrictions on working alone and require joint hazard assessments, preventative controls, and safe work procedures wherever working alone cannot be avoided.
- **Improve pandemic preparedness.** The union will seek to negotiate workplace health and safety protocols that establish clear employer responsibilities and protections during public health emergencies.
- **Address climate-related risks.** The union will seek to bargain mandatory climate and weather-related hazard assessments as part of Joint Health and Safety Committee responsibilities and where possible, negotiate Joint Environment Committee Representatives within the workplace.

- **Increase health and safety training.** The union will seek to negotiate a minimum of 40 hours of paid health, safety, and environment (HSE) training for union health and safety representatives and Joint Health and Safety Committee members.
- **Limit mandatory overtime.** The union will seek to establish restrictions on mandatory overtime and strengthen workers' control over their working time to promote work-life balance, reduce fatigue, and support job creation.

UNION BUILDING AND REPRESENTATION

The shifting political and economic landscape – especially the adverse impact of the ongoing tariff war – has real consequences for the Canadian economy and for the sectors where our members work, organize, and bargain. These pressures make one thing clear: a strong, united union is the most powerful tool to navigate instability and defend members' rights. The everyday work of elected representatives, stewards, and committee members remains the backbone of the union, and ensuring that they have the support, time, and resources they need is essential.

Gains at the bargaining table are possible when members are informed, engaged, and ready to act. This makes education a core strategy for building union power. From foundational training to hands on coaching and the sharing of tactical and strategic experience, developing member competency strengthens solidarity and ensures workers are equipped to bargain strong agreements.

Communication is the cornerstone of the labour movement, and it depends on building and sustaining strong relationships with members. This begins with a visible presence in the workplace – stewards engaging directly with members on a regular basis. This work requires not only commitment but also adequate time and resources. As workplace and membership issues become increasingly complex, union leave provisions must expand to give representatives the time and support they need to carry out these responsibilities while maintaining a sustainable work-life-union balance.

Engaging and communicating with members also means embracing new communication tools and technologies. Despite the many platforms and means to connect, reaching members and sustaining their engagement remains challenging. It requires leveraging the diversity of the membership, rethinking new employee orientation, and ensuring all voices are welcomed and represented in union spaces. These elements are critical to maintaining influence and power at the bargaining table.

Successful bargaining requires thorough preparation. Accurately assessing the bargaining context is essential and can be strengthened through improved information sharing among locals in the same sector, as well as exploring new strategic bargaining forums, especially in sectors where employers are practicing pattern bargaining. Financial considerations also matter. Economic uncertainty can weaken members' resolve but addressing these concerns early, through measures such as strike fund planning, builds confidence and sends a clear signal to the employer.

Bargaining Priorities for Union Building and Representation

Members who participated in bargaining program workshops across the country emphasized that much of what was important for union in building in 2023 remains a priority, as the union navigates uncertain and challenging times. Members were clear about the importance of collective agreement language that expands opportunities to carry out effective union work – an issue that remains front and centre. Participants identified wide-ranging education and training, a strong and visible union presence in the workplace, modernized communications and technological supports, greater recognition of membership diversity, improved internal coordination, and diligent early-stage preparation as essential drivers of bargaining success.

Unifor will:

- **Bargain for increased workplace representation**. The work of elected officers, stewards, and committeepersons is the foundation of all collective gains. More representatives are needed to address the growing range of workplace issues – from health and safety to equity, women's issues, skilled trades, improved wages and benefits, and other bargaining related matters.
- **Negotiate expanded paid union leave for representatives**, **including during scheduled work hours**. The union will negotiate more time and resources for workplace representatives in order to be effective while maintaining a healthy work-union-life balance.
- **Secure employer funded Paid Education Leave (PEL).** Where PEL already exists, the union will seek to negotiate increased employer contributions and explore additional measures to make education more accessible. The union will seek to introduce employer contributions or increase them where PEL contributions already exist.
- **Increase women's participation in the skilled trades.** The union will negotiate employer contributions to Unifor's 40 Hour Women's Skilled Trades & Technology Awareness Program. Employer funded access to this program provides valuable information and creates pathways for more women to enter and advance in the trades.
- **Bargain employer contributions to the Social Justice Fund (SJF).** The SJF supports workers and communities through development initiatives, emergency relief, and the fight for socioeconomic justice. The union will seek to introduce employer contributions or increase them where SJF contributions already exist.
- **Negotiate language guaranteeing union led new member orientation**. Employers must provide paid time and access for unions to meet with new employees, introduce workplace representatives, and explain the union's role. This first point of contact is critical for building trust and establishing union relevance from day one.
- **Secure access to updated membership lists**. To support effective communication and representation, the union will negotiate provisions requiring employers to provide accurate and regularly updated member information throughout the life of the collective agreement.
- **Strengthen internal bargaining coordination and explore strategic bargaining structures.** Through Industry Councils or other structures, the union will strive to share strategic information among locals within the same sector or employer, in order to enhance decision making and improve bargaining outcomes.
- **Negotiate succession planning, and inter-generational training**. The union will seek to negotiate contract provisions that facilitate intra-classification, inter-generational training for new workers.

HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

The individual lived experiences of union members reflect the systemic inequality that is persistent in our workplaces and broader society. Women remain over-represented in care work and in the lowest paid sectors of the economy. Young workers continue to deal with higher rates of joblessness. Workers with disabilities continue to face significant barriers to labour market participation and are often underemployed in roles that don't align with their skills and potential. Poverty rates remain almost double for racialized people compared to non-racialized Canadians, and more than double for Indigenous people. Discrimination continues to lead to unequitable labour market outcomes for workers in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

These are not new disparities, but the current economic environment is making them worse. Those with intersecting identities face even more significant barriers when seeking and retaining employment. Hard-fought gains are often too limited and substantive equality and workplace justice feel further away as equity-deserving members experience worsening conditions and mistreatment at work.

Meanwhile, Canadian politicians have scapegoated immigrants as the cause of the affordability crisis in the country. They have framed immigration as a problem to be solved by perpetuating harmful stereotypes and fostering anti-immigrant sentiment. Federal immigration policy changes have left many workers in a deeply precarious position. Pathways to permanent residency have closed to many temporary workers, and at the same time, temporary work visas are not being renewed at expiry. This has created a vulnerable workforce that employers can exploit. At the same time, Alberta's referendum questions directly target immigrants in an effort to stoke the flames and further divide people.

Negotiations at the bargaining table with respect to human rights, equity and inclusion also influence the union's advocacy outside of the workplace. The union will continue to voice demands to address serious issues like reproductive, racial and disability justice, intimate partner violence, Truth and Reconciliation, and the safety of members of the 2SLGBTQIA+community. Unifor remains active in the public sphere on behalf of all workers, not just those who have secured the benefit of unionisation.

Bargaining Priorities for Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion

The pressures and attacks on vulnerable workers require the union to respond appropriately at the bargaining table. Human rights, equity and inclusion must be a central pillar of the bargaining program, not an afterthought. The challenges aren't the same for everyone, and the union's bargaining strategies need to reflect that. When the union negotiates for equity provisions, it is not simply checking a box – it means addressing real, measurable harm.

To support discrimination-free and inclusive workplaces where all workers – including women, Black, Indigenous and workers of colour, 2SLGBTQIA+ workers, workers with disabilities, and young workers, among others – can thrive, the union will build upon previous successes and focus on bargaining priorities that reflect the diversity of the membership.

Unifor will:

- **Negotiate workplace advocacy programs.** The union must commit to expand Women's Advocate and Racial Justice Advocate programs and bargain not just the position, but adequate time to receive union-led, employer-paid training, and perform the roles. The union should consider bargaining language to support other equity advocate roles (including 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, Mental Health, Disability, EFAP).
- **Negotiate employment equity language into collective agreements.** Employment equity provisions must address targeted hiring, retention, and advancement of underrepresented groups, including women in male-dominated workplaces and trades.
- **Negotiate provisions to support members who are migrant workers or have temporary work permits.** The union must address the unique needs of temporary migrant members, including supporting their continued employment in the workplace and efforts to attain permanent residency in Canada.
- **Bargain targeted leave provisions to broaden workplace inclusivity and equity needs and access to resources.** The union must consider comprehensive leave provisions to adequately support the range of equity needs and reflect the realities of more union members, including such leaves as those for: Indigenous practices, cultural holidays, francization leaves in Quebec, longer leaves for those with immediate family living abroad, gender affirming procedures, domestic violence leave, menstrual leave, and other reproductive health leaves.
- **Negotiate better access to francization programs and resources in the workplace, with paid leaves to complete coursework.** In Québec, being able to work in French is a right and the union must play a significant role to ensure training programs in the workplace are accessible, properly resourced and adapted to our members needs.
- **Negotiate safe washrooms and supportive spaces.** This includes the creation of safe washrooms and supportive spaces for 2SLGBTQIA+ members who are experiencing a marked increase in harassment and abuse. This also includes the creation of prayer spaces/inclusive religious spaces and nursing spaces.
- **Integrate Unifor's long-standing commitments toward Truth and Reconciliation through bargaining and workplace practices.** The union will support Truth and Reconciliation in workplaces through land acknowledgements, opportunities for training, and by encouraging Indigenous voices in our workplaces, in the union and in activist spaces.

- **Bargain language that supports workers with disabilities.** The union will seek to negotiate language that includes clear processes on the duty to accommodate that lays out the responsibilities of the employer, training for accommodated members if needed, and measures to protect the privacy of members seeking accommodation.
- **Bargain anti-oppression training.** The union will seek to negotiate anti-racist and anti-oppression training for members and for management to support equity-deserving members, and to create opportunities for learning as our workplaces and jobs become populated by people of diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.
- **Ensure the use of gender-neutral language, wherever appropriate.** Collective agreement language must be inclusive and establishing gender neutral language is a way of communicating that strives to treat everyone with respect and dignity.

BENEFITS

Participating in a comprehensive union-bargained group benefit plan is a core part of being a union member. Many members, as well as their partners and dependents, rely extensively on these plans for life's needs, whether it be filling a drug prescription or purchasing eyeglasses for their children. To say there is pride in participating in a group benefits plan as a worker is an understatement.

However, across the union, group benefit plans are under pressure. They are under attack from employers that are keen to restructure plans so that members take on a greater share in their funding. It is now a common occurrence in bargaining to see employers proposing changes to benefit premiums and to shift the funding burden onto workers.

Members are also under pressure from employers who see benefits plans as a 'nice to have' that must be cut and not improved. This means that members are being asked to pay more out of pocket for services that should otherwise be covered.

These benefit plans are also under pressure from employers who seek to restrict participation in benefit plans. There is typically strong resistance from employers who do not want to extend health benefit coverage for part-time and temporary workers.

Bargaining Priorities for Benefits

Despite these headwinds, maintaining and improving group benefit plans is a top priority for members. Members typically rank benefit improvements as a primary focus in negotiations alongside wages. There is a realization that the union must be vigilant in both expanding these workplace plans as well as pushing governments to enhance public programs.

To both protect and expand union-bargained group benefit plans, the union will focus on the following bargaining priorities.

Unifor will:

- **Bargain workplace group benefit plans.** The union must prioritize the negotiation of workplace group benefits plans, where none exist currently.
- **Negotiate higher employer contribution rates for benefits.** As premiums increase, especially as increasing public health care costs are downloaded onto private benefit plans, the union will resist cost shifting from employers. The union will push for higher employer contribution rates in contracts where benefits are co-funded to cut down on the out-of-pocket costs for members. This can include provisions for automatic indexing of employer contributions to match rising premium rates. The union will bargain paramedical and dental coverage increases in relation to the cost of the services performed.
- **Bargain improved access to existing health benefits.** Bargaining language that enables more part-time, casual, temporary and seasonal workers to participate in health plans is essential and should be explored in every round of contract negotiations. A specific focus in bargaining must also be applied to active workers who are older than 65 and ineligible for benefits.
- **Ensure all collective agreements have gender affirmation provisions enshrined in the benefit plan.** This includes drugs, surgical coverage and mental health support at all stages.
- **Bargain enhanced leave provisions that enable members to use sick time for mental health.** This includes ensuring that adequate paid time off from work to rest and recover from periods of burnout remain a top priority at every bargaining table. The union will continue to push for more vacation time, paid time off for personal reasons, and the extension of sick leave to part-time and casual members.
- **Bargain provisions applicable to the needs of young workers and young families.** This can include provisions for paid leaves for pregnancy loss, parental, caregiver and sick leave benefits, and coverage for child care expenses. This could also include income top-ups and Supplemental Unemployment Benefits during periods of layoffs, as well as guaranteed work hour provisions.
- **Negotiate paid leave entitlements for all workers.** This includes paid personal days, paid emergency days, sick leave, programs, deferred salary leave, sabbatical and education leave, extended bereavement leaves, parental leaves, domestic violence leave, and others.
- **Bargain group benefit extensions for workers facing workplace closures.** Members need as much support as possible in the event of a workplace closure. The union will seek to extend benefits when a worker receives an enhanced severance package as well as during extended layoff periods, and during public health emergencies.
- **Protect health care benefits for retired workers.** The union will ensure, wherever possible, that retired workers retain access to a level of necessary health and medical benefits that supplement publicly funded programs.

PENSIONS AND RETIREMENT SECURITY

Pension plans help protect workers from living in poverty once their working life comes to an end, and the union has a strong track record of bargaining pension plans. The union has negotiated participation into public and private sector plans, which would include defined benefit (DB), target benefit (TB), defined contribution (DC) plans, as well as other plan types. However, the current economic context has presented new challenges, as well as new opportunities, and it is important that the union have a thoughtful response to both.

Together with strong public pensions like the Canada and Quebec Pension Plans, the union must ensure that members retire with secure and adequate lifetime income. In today's pension climate, a key challenge is that there are many members who are not covered by a plan – this would largely include those employed by smaller employers, as well as part-time and casual members. In other words, those who are not employed full-time are often carved out of both pension and health benefit plans by employers.

Securing additional employer contributions to existing pension plans remains a challenge at a time when many employers are facing uncertainty in their sectors. Many members who participated in bargaining program workshops expressed that employers are experiencing headwinds as a result of the U.S. trade war, which impacts the union's ability to increase employer pension contributions.

Against this backdrop, it is also important to note that many DB pension plans are in surplus, meaning there is more money in plans than what is required to pay benefits. As a result, it is important for the union to push for defined benefit improvements at the bargaining table.

Bargaining Priorities for Pensions and Retirement Security

Members have expressed the need to be well-informed and to build on successful strategies to secure pension improvements. This is especially the case for those who do not have access to a workplace pension plan. The union will focus on the following bargaining priorities in order to achieve retirement security for all members.

Unifor will:

- **Bargain new workplace pension plans, and defend and enhance existing plans, wherever possible.** Members who are precariously employed and those in low-wage sectors are less likely to have access to workplace pension plans. The union will seek to introduce new plans and where possible, bolster existing pension plans.
- **Negotiate more accessible pension plan qualifying rules.** Members, including those working in low-wage sectors, may have a registered pension plan available to them but cannot qualify for entry into the plan. This creates very particular challenges for equity-deserving groups, like women and workers of colour, who are disproportionately represented in part-time, precarious jobs. The union must seek to improve pension plan access in all circumstances.
- **Embrace innovative pension models that yield greater benefit to members.** The union will explore participation in multi-employer and union-sponsored target pension plans wherever feasible. Such plans can yield predictable lifetime income that is far superior to existing DC plans.
- **Negotiate the removal of caps on credited service and increasing employer contributions**. In single employer DB pension plans, the union will seek to enhance retirement income through the pension plan.
- **Continue to negotiate living standard improvements for retired workers.** The union has, in various instances, undertaken to negotiate enhanced benefits for retirees and their surviving dependents. This is an act of inter-generational solidarity and must continue, where possible.
- **Expand access to retirement and financial planning workshops.** The union can negotiate access to employer-sponsored training for members nearing retirement or other financial literacy tools, to assist in their personal planning and enable them to make informed decisions about life after work.

SUMMARY OF UNIFOR'S COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROGRAM POSITIONS

Job Security

Unifor will:

- Bargain work ownership provisions.
- Bargain appropriate notice periods for workplace restructuring that affects bargaining unit jobs.
- No job reductions during periods of transition or restructuring.
- Negotiate to raise termination or severance pay obligations.
- Bargain to extend recall rights for workers.
- Encourage the creation of full-time, permanent jobs.
- Ensure regular assessment and updated classification skills and job duties.
- Regularly review the bargaining unit scope clause, to maximize coverage.
- Bargain work sharing arrangements, where possible, to avoid layoffs in workplaces.
- Bargain strong workplace adjustment or closure agreements.

Wages and Income Security

Unifor will:

- Continue to push for wage increases and cost-of-living adjustments for all members.
- Oppose any employer demands that include pay concessions or introducing two-tier wage grids.
- Bargain wage adjustments for positions that are difficult to fill or are susceptible to turnover.
- Negotiate pay equity into collective agreements and hold employers accountable to their legal obligations.
- Skilled trade wage differentials.
- Prioritize income security measures like salary maintenance or supplemental unemployment benefit programs.
- Negotiate severance and separation payouts for workers subject to layoff that exceed provincial or federal standards.
- Bargain benefit continuation language for workers who are laid off.

Precarious Work

Unifor will:

- Negotiate broad and inclusive scope clauses.
- Seek opportunities to expand scope language to include expansions and new facilities.
- Encourage the creation of full-time, permanent jobs.
- Negotiate equal pay for equal work provisions.

Technology and Artificial Intelligence

Unifor will:

- Ensure employers disclose any internal documents, business plans or reports related to the use of AI in the workplace.
- Bargain policies acknowledging the growing role of automation, including machine learning, algorithms, and AI.
- Ensure new technology is implemented only after extensive testing.
- Support renewed worker training and education.
- Limit worker surveillance and data abuse.
- Negotiate expanded definitions of AI and identify AI explicitly as Technological Change.
- Require advance notice of the introduction of new technology.
- Clarify that speed-up language applies to written content, augmented output, and automation upstream of production.
- Ensure humans remain in the loop for any discipline and seek to ban fully automated terminations.
- Improve health and safety committee supports.

Health, Safety and Environment

Unifor will:

- Bargain adequate time for health, safety and environment reps.
- Ensure clear and transparent sharing of information.
- Bargain clear terms of reference documents for local health and safety committees.
- Bargain clear language respecting the use of AI. Negotiate Psychological Health and Safety Standards.
- Oppose Behaviour-Based Safety programs.
- Expand worker advocacy and representation.
- Address workload and production pressures.
- Strengthen protections for working alone.
- Improve pandemic preparedness.
- Address climate-related risks.

- Increase health and safety training.
- Limit mandatory overtime.

Union Building and Representation

Unifor will:

- Bargain for increased workplace representation.
- Negotiate expanded paid union leave for representatives, including during scheduled work hours.
- Secure employer funded Paid Education Leave (PEL).
- Increase women's participation in the skilled trades.
- Bargain employer contributions to the Social Justice Fund (SJF).
- Negotiate language guaranteeing union led new member orientation.
- Secure access to updated membership lists.
- Strengthen internal bargaining coordination and explore strategic bargaining structures.
- Negotiate succession planning, and inter-generational training.

Human Rights, Equity and Inclusion

Unifor will:

- Negotiate workplace advocacy programs.
- Negotiate employment equity language into collective agreements.
- Negotiate provisions to support members who are migrant workers or have temporary work permits.
- Bargain targeted leave provisions to broaden workplace inclusivity and equity needs and access to resources.
- Negotiate better access to francization programs and resources in the workplace, with paid leaves to complete coursework.
- Negotiate safe washrooms and supportive spaces.
- Integrate Unifor's long-standing commitments toward Truth and Reconciliation through bargaining and workplace practices.
- Bargain language that supports workers with disabilities.
- Bargain anti-oppression training.
- Ensure the use of gender-neutral language, wherever appropriate.

Benefits

Unifor will:

- Bargain workplace group benefit plans.
- Negotiate higher employer contribution rates for benefits.
- Bargain improved access to existing health benefits.
- Ensure all collective agreements have gender affirmation provisions enshrined in the benefit plan.
- Bargain enhanced leave provisions that enable members to use sick time for mental health.
- Bargain provisions applicable to the needs of young workers and young families.
- Negotiate paid leave entitlements for all workers.
- Bargain group benefit extensions for workers facing workplace closures.
- Protect health care benefits for retired workers.

Pensions and Retirement Security

Unifor will:

- Bargain new workplace pension plans, and defend and enhance existing plans, wherever possible.
- Negotiate more accessible pension plan qualifying rules.
- Embrace innovative pension models that yield greater benefit to members.
- Negotiate the removal of caps on credited service and increasing employer contributions.
- Continue to negotiate living standard improvements for retired workers.
- Expand access to retirement and financial planning workshops.

BARGAINING CHECKLIST

Phase One: Preparing for Bargaining

☐ Organize a Bargaining Committee planning meeting

Some important issues to sort out early include agreement on a preliminary bargaining strategy, setting dates for future meetings and a plan for membership engagement.

☐ Conduct a survey of membership priorities in bargaining

It is important to begin gauging the priorities of your members early in the bargaining process. These priorities could include wages, benefits, pensions, health and safety, hours of work, and other issues of importance identified by members.

☐ Obtain relevant industry information including bargaining trends, state of the industry, etc.

Entering into bargaining with accurate information about an employer's financial position and a solid understanding of the latest trends and developments across the sector can strengthen a Bargaining Committee's position.

☐ Hold a special membership meeting to discuss and determine bargaining proposals identified through membership surveys.

Consider holding two membership meetings. The first meeting would focus on presenting and discussing the findings of the membership bargaining surveys and other consultations with members.

The second meeting is dedicated to determining bargaining priorities and setting membership expectations leading into the bargaining process.

☐ Create and maintain a logbook

It is recommended that a logbook be maintained over the duration of the collective agreement to note any issues as they arise. It's important to document any bargaining proposals that come forward in this phase of the bargaining process.

As part of the preparation phase, bargaining committees would review the logbook to help develop contract proposals in the next round of collective bargaining.

☐ Request information from your employer

This could include details about the membership, benefit plan utilization, pensions, company information such as management plans that might impact the employment conditions of your members.

Employers are obliged to disclose accurate information about their company's financial position when requested during negotiations.

☐ Complete a grievance review

A review will help identify patterns that might point to particular provisions in the current agreement that need to be addressed in upcoming negotiations.

This is especially important with issues arising over the interpretation of the collective agreement. A grievance review can identify problematic contract language that should be strengthened, and any other gaps in the current agreement that should be addressed in negotiations.

☐ Develop a communication and membership engagement plan to keep members informed throughout each phase of bargaining

Consider communication methods, frequency of communication, and the type of information being relayed to members during bargaining to ensure they are receiving the most accurate and current information from the Bargaining Committee.

It is important that the union creates membership mailing lists, with personal emails (for instance), and not rely on internal – employer-controlled – communication channels.

The union may also establish a membership 'Mobilization' committee, or another way of actively engaging members and workplace leadership in actions, activities, or other initiatives to build support for the Bargaining Committee.

The Bargaining Committee should develop a communication plan for dealing with media requests for comment or interview.

Phase Two: The Bargaining Process

☐ File a Notice to Bargain with the employer

Notice to Bargain requirements, including timelines, are usually outlined in the collective agreement.

☐ Arrange an opening meeting with your employer to exchange proposals and to determine a meeting schedule and other details.

☐ Apply to the Minister of Labour to appoint a Conciliator to your negotiations.

Note that timelines for the application and appointment of a Conciliator will differ across jurisdictions. Please be sure to consult the relevant legislation or contact the Unifor National office for support.

☐ Ensure compliance with all steps of the conciliation process.

☐ Conduct a strike mandate vote.

Holding membership meetings to secure a strike mandate is both a strategic part of the bargaining process as well as a requirement before strike action is taken. These meetings serve as additional opportunities to inform members on the status of talks and major bargaining issues. Timelines on when strike votes can be held also differ across jurisdictions. Be sure to consult relevant legislation or contact the National office for support.

- ☐ Begin strike preparations in advance of the strike deadline, in the event an agreement is not reached.

  Contact the Unifor National Strike Department.

  Contact the Unifor National Communications Department.

  Assign workplace leaders as picket captains.

  Ensure membership contact lists are updated to enable direct communication.

  Make the necessary arrangements to ensure group health benefits (if applicable) are maintained over the course of a strike or lockout.

  Obtain Strike Authorization from the National President.

- ☐ Maintain Bargaining Meeting Minutes.

  These notes will be an important tool when reviewing the draft copy of the new collective agreement to ensure all changes have been accurately captured and can be useful in any future grievance and arbitration hearings when the intent of the parties cannot be determined by contract language alone.

- ☐ Ensure all agreed upon amendments which form a tentative settlement have been signed by both parties.

Phase Three: Ratification

- ☐ Communicate to your members that a tentative agreement has been reached.

  Communicate to your membership immediately once you have reached a tentative agreement and arrange a ratification meeting as soon as possible.

  Once this has been organized, immediately begin communicating to the membership details about the ratification process including date, time, location, and who is eligible to attend and vote.

- ☐ Create a highlight package for distribution to members at the ratification meeting that includes all changes to the existing collective agreement.

  Ensure that the necessary time is taken to prepare and assemble the necessary documents, prior to the ratification meeting.

  Make every effort to clearly communicate important changes to the agreement, and take the time needed to explain the changes to members. This may require that additional documents are prepared, including a bargaining brochure, PowerPoint presentation (or other visuals). Contact the National office for additional support.

- ☐ Determine who will chair the ratification meeting, establish a clear agenda for the meeting, rules of order and the voting procedure.

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