

A photograph of two women at a convention, overlaid with a red tint. Both women are wearing white t-shirts with the text 'TIME FOR CHANGE' and lanyards with 'UNIFOR' logos. The woman on the left is smiling and wearing glasses. The woman on the right is looking towards the camera. In the background, there are stanchions and other people, suggesting a busy event space.

RAISING STANDARDS, RAISING HOPE

UNIFOR'S COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROGRAM



Convention 2016
Congrès 2016


UNIFOR
for Union

unifor

RAISING STANDARDS, RAISING HOPE

UNIFOR'S COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROGRAM

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SETTING UNIFOR'S COLLECTIVE BARGAINING PROGRAM

Workers have long understood the need to coordinate efforts in order to improve standards at work. From the earliest days of the labour movement, organized workers have aimed to establish common wages and working conditions in order to raise the floor for everyone and to make sure that employers cannot pit workers against one another.

To achieve these goals, unions have pursued many different forms of master, central, pattern and coordinated bargaining—setting common standards among different locations of the same employer, among similar employers in a region, or even across whole sectors of the economy.

To put this into practice, groups of workers come together in various councils and conferences to consider the key issues, measure their strength, and develop bargaining priorities. Typically, workers in these forms of bargaining pledge to hold the pattern and to provide extra support to one another in struggles that may arise. Advancing and publicizing a common bargaining agenda adds to the strength of individual bargaining committees. And, at times, employers too come to see that common standards means that they don't need to continually challenge their workers and chart their own course.

In Unifor, there are countless examples of master bargaining that cover multiple locations of the same employer. And there are some sectors where agreements tightly mirror one another across different employers (such

The bargaining councils and conferences already in place, along with Unifor's new Industry Councils, are best able to assess detailed priorities and establish common bargaining agendas for their sectors.

as auto assembly); some sectors for which key elements of wages and other priority issues are established by pattern (such as forestry, energy, nursing homes, hospitals, car dealerships); some with renewed and evolving efforts to develop stronger coordinated bargaining (such as retail, auto parts, courier services, television stations and school buses), and other specific union conferences, such as the Unifor Skilled Trades Collective Bargaining and New Technology conference, which sets out a targeted bargaining platform for skilled trades members in the union.

In a union as diverse as Unifor, with more than 3,000 bargaining units in over 20 sectors of the economy, setting a single detailed bargaining agenda would not be possible, or desirable.

At different times some parts of the economy are up, while others are down. And workers in different sectors will have different priorities at different times. The bargaining councils and conferences already in place, along with Unifor's new Industry Councils, are best able to assess detailed priorities and establish common bargaining agendas for their sectors. Across many sectors, this work is well underway.

But Unifor is also more than the sum of its parts. This is reflected in our work to advance a common bargaining agenda on those issues that affect all our members, and address the emerging challenges we face at the bargaining table in several sectors. We take the opportunity at Convention to identify the foundational elements of a Unifor bargaining program, develop common goals and priorities, and to advise employers these are policies of the whole of Unifor.

We know that collective bargaining delivers tangible gains for workers. It has the potential to raise the standard of living for everyone—not just union members—both in Canada and around the world. It is an exercise in workplace democracy that is both influential and transformational—turning individual workers into leaders and activists. This program aims to support our union's approach to collective bargaining across the country.

At the same time, we know that to be successful, what we do at the bargaining table must be connected to a strong and vibrant culture of political activism and community engagement—the key ingredients to what makes Unifor such a relevant organization and progressive “social union.”

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activism continues to evolve through the work of our local unions as well as through the union's industry and regional councils.

In the following pages you will read about several key issues that our union faces at nearly all of our bargaining tables including: Low-wage and precarious work; new hire programs and two-tier systems; union programs and representation; equity and human rights; contract term; retirement security and pensions; and health and safety. Attached to each of the issues listed above is an outline of our overarching goals and specific bargaining priorities, which together form the basis of our bargaining program for the next three years.

Naturally, these challenges are rooted in Canada's political and economic climate. In this document you will also find short essays that review the state of Canada's economy, its labour market, and key developments and trends in bargaining since Unifor was founded in 2013.

STATE OF THE CANADIAN ECONOMY: IN BRIEF

The waiting time is over...

Since Unifor's founding convention in 2013, workers in Canada and elsewhere have been told to be patient. The experts said that, with the Great Recession of 2008-09 behind us, a period of growth and shared prosperity was sure to arrive. This has not happened.

Growth has been slow; stunted by bouts of government-led austerity that has led to the steady erosion of public sector wages and a greater reliance on cost-cutting through privatization. Commodity prices, which have been historically high for a decade and helped fuel Canada's economic engine (and bloated our currency) began to slump in 2014—as was bound to happen. Most resource-rich provinces are now grappling with deficits—some responding with severe tax hikes and service cuts that disproportionately hurt working people. Other provinces are still feeling the sting of lost manufacturing and processing work—much of it gone for good. All of this has blown a hole in the hype surrounding Canada's "recovery".

Canada's economic woes can be linked to many factors, but none more apparent than the poor economic management and decision-making of the former federal Conservative government. Fed up, Canadians opted to take a different approach to building our economy—one that treats deficits, infrastructure investments, program spending, and even collective bargaining as potential economic boosters, not boogeymen.

In many respects, Canadian workers still have much work to do in order to undue the economic neglect of the past decade. There is some reason to hope that this work has already started. But we can't be naïve to think a change in government, by itself, means a change in

outcomes. Too many Canadians haven't recovered from the last recession. Among those, many feel they never will.

Canadian workers have patiently waited... but the waiting time is over. It's time to raise the stakes. It's time to make some gains.

Canada's commodity bust

Between 2002 and 2014, base commodity prices of all kinds—energy, minerals, metals as well as forestry and agricultural products—soared. Crude oil, for example, more than quadrupled in price to \$110 per barrel in 2014. Rapid economic growth in emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil helped fuel the demand for Canada's raw materials (see Figure 1).

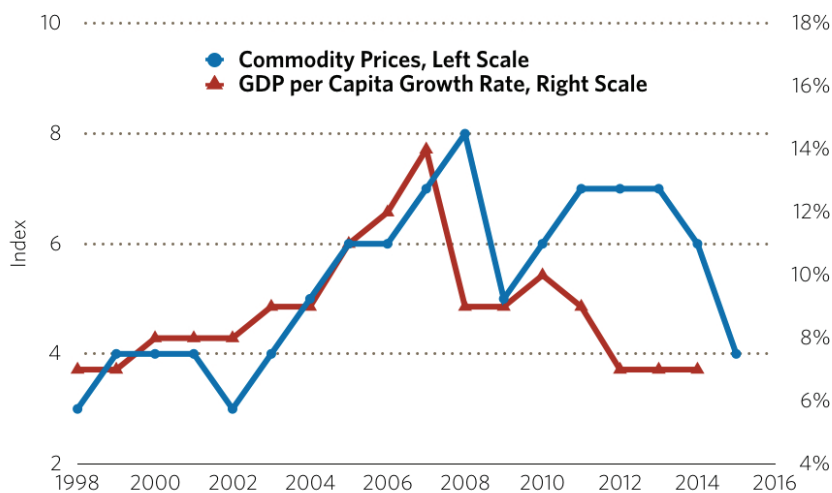
Since the summer of 2014, commodity prices have come crashing down, driven by decreases in energy prices, which have fallen by two-thirds. The commodity boom ended for a variety of reasons, including slower economic growth in China (an important export market for Canadian commodities) and also an oversupplied market, resulting from

Since the summer of 2014, commodity prices have come crashing down, driven by decreases in energy prices, which have fallen by two-thirds.

new technologies such as horizontal drill and fracking (which helped unlock vast stores of oil and natural gas in the United States). And while the energy-producing regions of Canada were major beneficiaries of the commodity boom, one consequence of higher energy prices was an inflated Canadian dollar.

The rapid appreciation of the Canadian dollar, which climbed from 62 cents U.S. in 2002 to 1.04 per U.S. dollar in 2011, coincided with the loss of more than half a million manufacturing jobs—one-quarter of Canada's industrial base—and many others in export-led industries, like film production, tourism and hospitality.

Figure 1: Slow growth in China and slumping commodity prices



Because Canada's exports fluctuate with the relative value of the Canadian dollar (see Figure 2), the commodity boom also coincided with a deteriorating trade performance. Hopefully, with the dollar now trading closer to its long-run average of 80 cents U.S., Canada's export performance might finally improve.

Canada's manufacturing deficit has hit an all-time high: over \$120 billion—and that's not a record we should be proud of.

Canada's poor trade performance...

Over the past 15 years, Canada's trade performance has been dismal. It makes a mockery of Ottawa's long-standing commitment to "free" trade.

Over their tenure, the Harper Conservatives signed trade and investment agreements with dizzying speed (40 altogether), not including the controversial Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) with Europe and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement with the U.S., Japan and others. Rather than expanding Canadian exports and faster GDP growth, Canada's exports nose-dived, its trade balance worsened and GDP growth slowed. In fact, Canada's manufacturing deficit has hit an all-time high: over \$120 billion—and that's not a record we should be proud of.

Instead of trade-promoting, industry-expanding, job-creating arrangements like the Auto Pact, Canada's current approach to international trade and investment has failed to stimulate investment, exports or meaningful job creation.

Early in his tenure as Prime Minister, Stephen Harper stated his vision to transform Canada into an "energy superpower"—and in the throes of a commodity boom, that looked promising to many observers (especially when prices were rising). But as the boom became bust, the weakness of this approach to economic development became obvious. Today, the commodity-producing regions of Canada are reeling from lower raw material prices. Meanwhile, the non-commodity areas

Figure 2: Exports fluctuate with the Canadian dollar

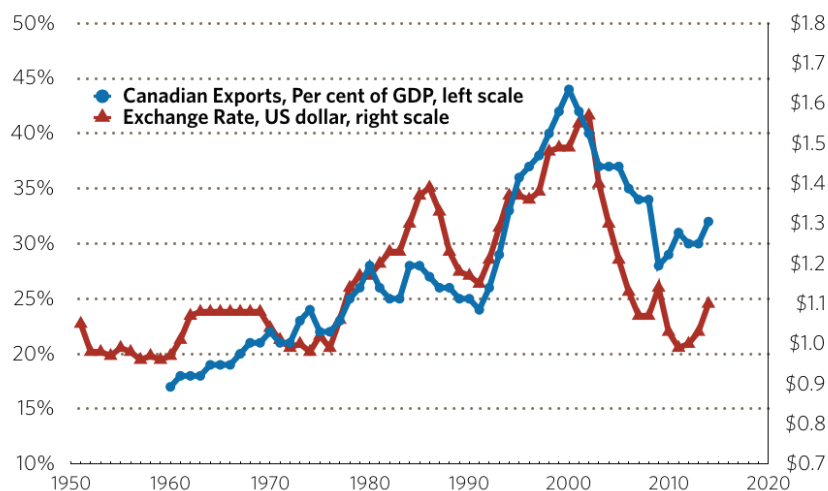
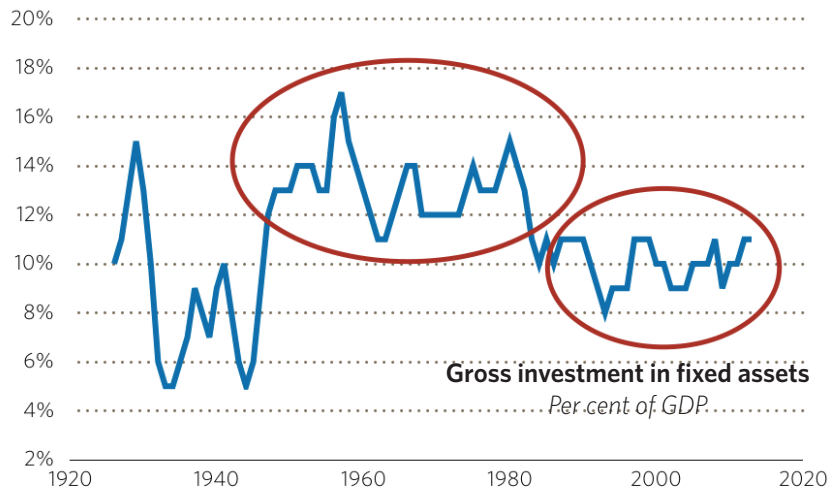


Figure 3: Business investment falls in corporate tax cut era



of Canada have experienced a decade (or more) of stagnant investment and growth.

Contrary to what some might expect (given the enormous resources ploughed into Canadian energy projects over the past 15 years), business investment in Canada has been historically weak (see Figure 3). Economists have long understood that investment in fixed assets—buildings, machinery and equipment—is closely associated with job creation and GDP growth. Even with a decade of high commodity prices under our belt, investment has been hovering at a postwar low in the decades since 1980.

The failure to stimulate job creation and business investment suggests a broader failure of the economic model Canada has experimented with over the past generation. It's been called different things, including: *laissez-faire*, neoliberalism, and the Washington Consensus. Essentially, it is a business-led, trickle-down vision of economic development which suggests that shrinking the role of government and enlarging the role of private business will produce more freedom and more

prosperity. The primary “job” of government, in this vision, is to free up markets and reduce the obstacles faced by business.

To this end, Canadian governments at the federal and provincial levels have:

- Cut corporate income tax rates in half (from 50 per cent in the late 1980s to 25 per cent more recently);
- Adopted “business-first” rules for global trade through a series of new international trade and investment agreements;
- Privatized crown corporations like Air Canada, CN Rail, Petro Canada and Potash Corporation, and others—once a source of national pride and smart economic development;
- Deregulated labour and other commodity markets, weakening the rules of collective bargaining and other worker rights;
- Relentlessly pursued a reduction in budgetary deficits and public debt, even in times of public need.

And what have the consequences of this transformation been? Let's take stock.

The consequences of neoliberal economic policy...

Despite Canada's entry into more (and ever more elaborate) free trade arrangements, Canadian exports have shrunk over the past 15 years, not expanded (see Figure 2). Despite the dramatic reduction in corporate income tax rates, business investment has fallen, not risen (see Figure 3). And despite the commitment to balanced budgets and public debt reduction (which, in theory, should make the economy more "efficient"), economic growth has slowed, not accelerated.

And despite all the cheerleading, the neoliberal model of economic development has failed to improve the most important economic indicator of all: the standard of living (see Figure 4).

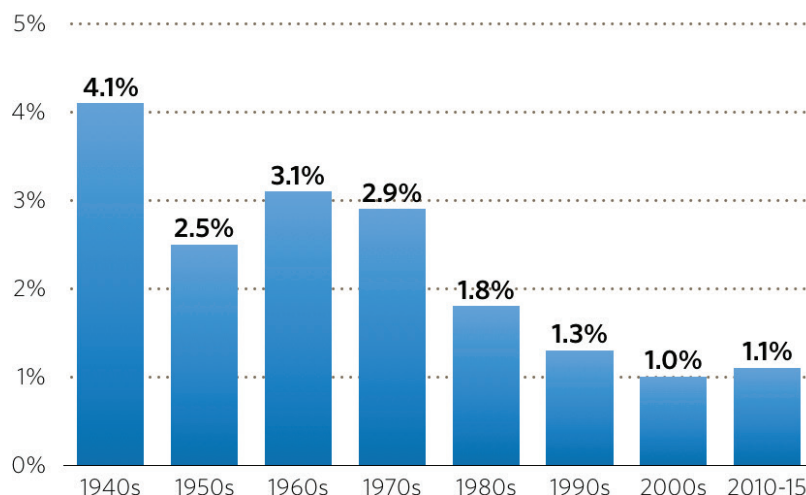
In the generation between 1940 and 1980, GDP per person grew at an average annual rate of 3.2 per cent, which implies that the standard of living was doubling every 23

years. In the generation between 1980 and the present, GDP grew at an average annual rate of just 1.3 per cent per year, implying that the standard of living doubles every 55 years.

And despite all the cheerleading, the neoliberal model of economic development has failed to improve the most important economic indicator of all: the standard of living

For all the hype about the links between free markets and prosperity, the most striking fact about the past generation is how poor economic performance has been. From a labour perspective, the story gets worse. Between 1945 and 1980, Canadian unemployment averaged just five per cent. In the three decades since 1980, unemployment has averaged

Figure 4: GDP growth rate slows in neoliberal era



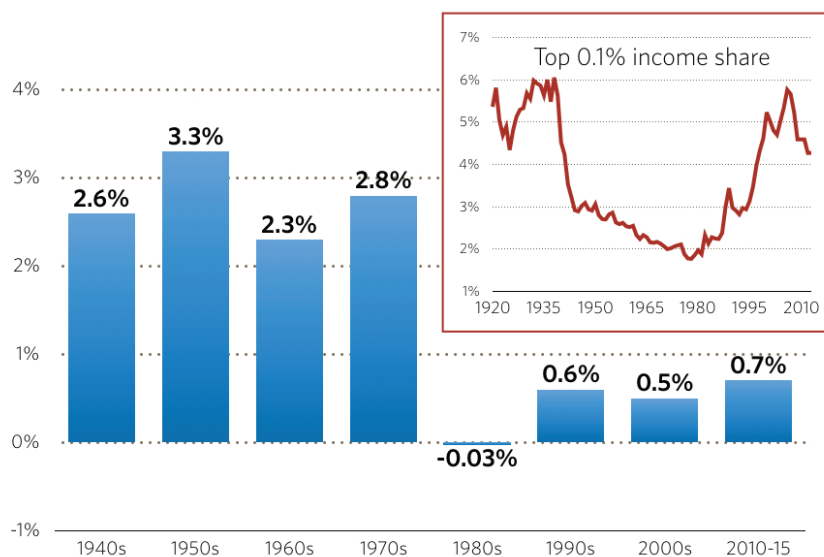
eight per cent. These troubling facts ignore the rise of precarious forms of employment (temporary, part-time, self-employment), which have been growing two or three times faster than standard employment forms. They also ignore the disproportionate impacts of unemployment on Indigenous Peoples, women, workers of colour, workers with disabilities, LGBTQ workers and young workers.

And importantly, in the decades when trade unions were growing (1940s to 1970s), annual wage growth averaged 2.8 per cent (see Figure 5). In the decades since 1980, when the labour movement was comparatively weak, wage growth has been anemic, averaging just 0.4 per cent per year. If the gains from economic growth are not shared with workers in the form of higher wages, then they go elsewhere, namely to corporations and the top income group. In the early 1990s, approximately 48 per cent of national income went to workers in the form of wages and salaries. That number has fallen to 44 per cent today.

Corporate profit, on the other hand, has been soaring. Canada's corporate sector pulled in an astonishing \$305 billion in 2014—an all-time high. The profit share of national income has roughly doubled in the last two decades, having risen from eight per cent in the mid-1990s to 15 per cent today. This is one reason why the four decades prior to 1980 saw a sharp decrease in income inequality, while the three decades since 1980 have witnessed a dramatic increase in inequality (the chart embedded in Figure 5

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Figure 5: Wage growth rate drastically slows in neoliberal era



captures the national income share going to the richest 0.1 per cent of the population).

Anyone who wants to argue that neoliberalism is a superior model of economic management has to contend with some very inconvenient facts. “Free markets” are simply not the best way to improve living standards, though they are remarkably effective at redistributing income from lower to upper income groups! For this and other reasons, there are signs that neoliberal principles are beginning to be abandoned.

Learning from past mistakes...?

If we didn't know already, the meltdown of 2008-09 reminded us that financial markets are not equipped to 'police themselves'—nor will they ever be.

While de-regulated Wall Street was busy receiving an \$800 billion dollar bailout by the U.S. government—a plum reward for its recklessness—heavily regulated and protected Bay Street in Canada was being hailed by officials around the world as a model of stability and fiscal responsibility (although left to its own devices, the Harper government would likely have removed many of the same banking rules they took credit for during the crisis!).

In the same vein, the Trudeau government's decision to run budgetary deficits (in the absence of a recession) is a sharp deviation from past neoliberal approaches. Canada's new government has promised to utilize the power of the Canadian state, namely its borrowing and spending powers, to rebuild our social and physical infrastructure. What's more, the government appears committed to a more equitable model of social and economic development (at least in some

respects). This is a most welcome shift in economic policy and political tone, regardless of which political party it comes from.

Through its political activism during the 2015 election, the labour movement had a hand in encouraging the Liberal Party to follow a different economic path than the Harper government. So far, the signs have been mixed. Promises of job creation and infrastructure spending are good, but must not be financed by the sale of important public assets, particularly to private investors. We must hold this government's feet to the fire to ensure their promises are delivered and public services maintained.

Taking advantage of this opportunity

Despite the fact that Canada's economic future is unknowable, there are reasons for hope.

In the past, when the commodity boom in Western Canada ended, the export-oriented manufacturing regions of Central Canada could be relied upon to help resume the growth process. The loss of one-quarter of Canada's industrial base since 2002 has led many to question whether there is enough capacity in the manufacturing regions left to sustain an economic recovery. Canada has long-needed a coordinated industrial development strategy (especially across key economic sectors), and the conditions are right to pursue this demand and make it a reality.

Additionally, the Trudeau Liberals are showing signs of returning to a progressive model of economic governance. This Keynesian-inspired model involves a more prominent economic role for government in stimulating job creation—a much-needed boost to our communities. To some extent, provincial

governments are following suit, with bold proposals to increase wages, incomes, and pensions among other considerations. While others still cling to the false hope that corporate tax cuts, public sector austerity and eroding workers' rights will build prosperity.

Ultimately we know that none of what we desire can happen unless working Canadians are united and share a common resolve to raise standards and raise their own expectations. Workers win when they take action.

As a union, we have an opportunity now to reverse some of the negative trends we've experienced in recent years at the bargaining table—and to chart new ground to improve work standards. We should be emboldened in our bargaining demands, and confident in the resolve of our members.

STATE OF THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET: IN BRIEF

A seismic shift is happening in the world of work

Under the shadow of neoliberalism Canada's labour market has undergone a profound transformation.

Most notorious, of course, is the loss of more than 500,000 manufacturing jobs since the turn of the century—the majority of those in central Canada. The traditional bastion of good, middle-income (and unionized) jobs in Canada has been hollowed out, and for a variety of reasons. New technologies have displaced workers in many cases, and so has globalization—shifting capital (and work) to jurisdictions where costs are low. Today, just 1 in 10 Canadians go to work to make things: in factories, mills and processing plants. A generation ago, that number was closer to 1 in 4. Canada is “deindustrializing”, in some cases faster than other developed economies, losing value-added production and the associated productivity and good jobs that come with it.

More recently, the end of the commodity boom led to a significant decline in resource sector employment—a sector of growing strategic importance to Canada, although subject to rollercoaster swings in prices. In Alberta, a full 10% of resource jobs were lost in 2015 alone, as oil prices sank. Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and Saskatchewan experienced notable declines as well.

Since the turn of the century, Canada has added three million new service sector positions to its labour force—some of which are good jobs with decent salaries but many of which are lower paid and more precarious.

The ups and downs of Canada's goods-producing industries tend to dominate our public and political discussions. Strangely, what is less often discussed is work in the services sector: a wide-ranging industry that is home to 80% of all workers in the country (including workers in health care, education, retail, hospitality, transportation, communications, and others). In fact, since the turn of the century, Canada has added three million new service sector positions to its labour force—some of which are good jobs with decent salaries but many of which are lower paid and more precarious than work in the manufacturing and resource sectors tend to be.

Few are aware that, for decades, Canada's manufacturing sector employed the largest number of workers. Today our lead industry for employment is retail—an industry notorious for low-pay (under \$14 per hour for clerks, including full-time), low-unionization (just 14%, or half the national average) and erratic work schedules. This should raise flags among government officials and policy-makers.

Canada's labour market has undergone a profound transformation, and workers are feeling the pinch.

The underlying inequity of work in Canada

The predominance of service jobs disproportionately held by women, youth and other equity-seeking groups, points to a concerning trend in Canada: The large gaps in pay equity and job quality.

For instance, in 2015 women workers earned just 72¢ for every dollar earned by a man. University-educated Aboriginal workers earn 44% less than their non-Aboriginal peers. Workers of colour earned as much as

20% less than their counterparts. LGBTQ workers often remain "closeted" in order to avoid discrimination on the job.

Additionally, the more than 200,000 temporary foreign workers (including seasonal agricultural workers and live-in caregivers largely flowing from the global south) continue to face exploitation both from chronically low-wages, insufficient workplace protections, and limited access to proper immigration channels.

The lessons we can take from these statistics are clear. There are deeply-rooted inequities embedded in Canada's labour market, based on race, gender, age and physical ability—and this affects not only worker pay and income mobility, but employment opportunities. Some have dubbed ours a "colour-coded" job market, symbolizing the differences in both opportunities and outcomes realized by

There are deeply-rooted inequities embedded in Canada's labour market, based on race, gender, age and physical ability

workers along these equity lines, as opposed to the skills, experience or value they bring to the job. These are challenges we must recommit to tackle at the bargaining table at every turn.

A transformation is underway

The industries that have seen the most job creation in the past 15 years include health care and social assistance, construction,

and retail. Industries with the lowest or negative job creation (as noted above) include manufacturing, agriculture, utilities and natural resources. (A full breakdown is provided in Figure 6).

This shift in employment composition during the recession years and since, has contributed to a growing sense of instability for workers in Canada. Many who were displaced have endured bouts of long-term unemployment and were forced to survive on (often insufficient) employment insurance funds—if they happen to be among the minority of Canadians to qualify. Others fortunate enough to re-enter the labour market often suffered a significant cut to their take-home pay, starting from scratch in jobs that differed wildly from what they were originally trained to do. Some simply gave up looking for work altogether.

But the changes in the labour market don't end at the sectoral breakdown of employment.

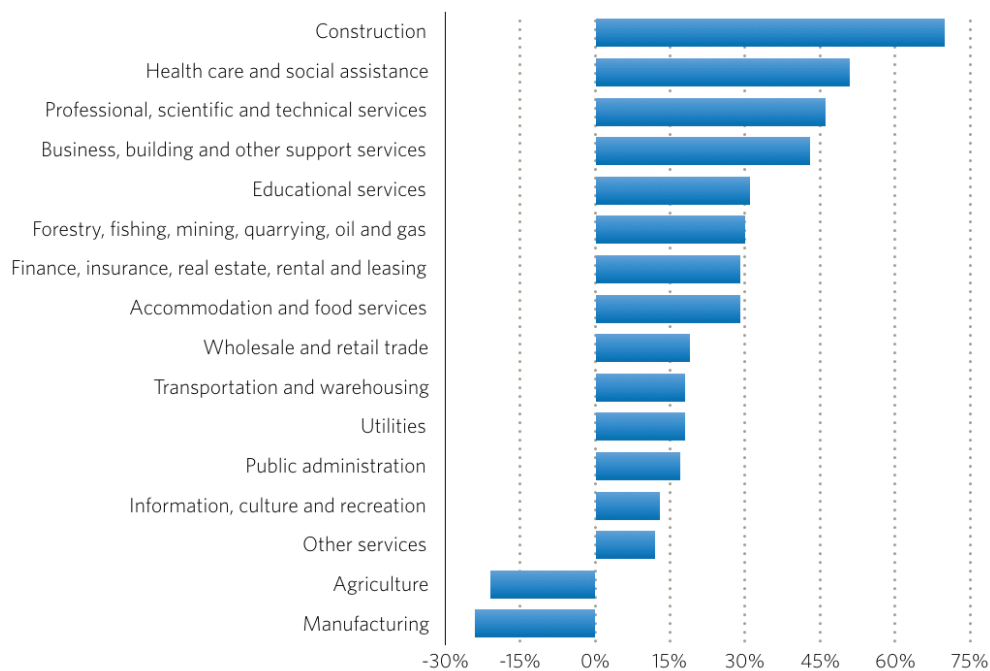
It's the change in the nature of work itself that is raising major concerns too.

Human resources practices have changed dramatically during this same time period, as have labour laws, unionization rates and the strength of Canada's social safety net. Trends toward lower wages, sub-contracting, zero-hour contracts and involuntary part-time and other insecure working relationships are becoming more apparent (in some cases the norm) in certain industries; while others have resorted to the use of free labour through unpaid internships.

Job quality has eroded

There is much evidence to suggest that this seismic shift in our labour market has resulted in a steep decline in the quality of work. Today, more than 2 million Canadians are in "temporary" jobs—the most ever recorded. Since 2000, the number of workers on "contract" has ballooned by almost 50%—

Figure 6: Change in employment, by industry 2000-2015



More than 2 million Canadians are in “temporary” jobs—the most ever recorded. Since 2000, the number of workers on “contract” has ballooned by almost 50%—more than double the pace of “permanent” job growth in Canada.

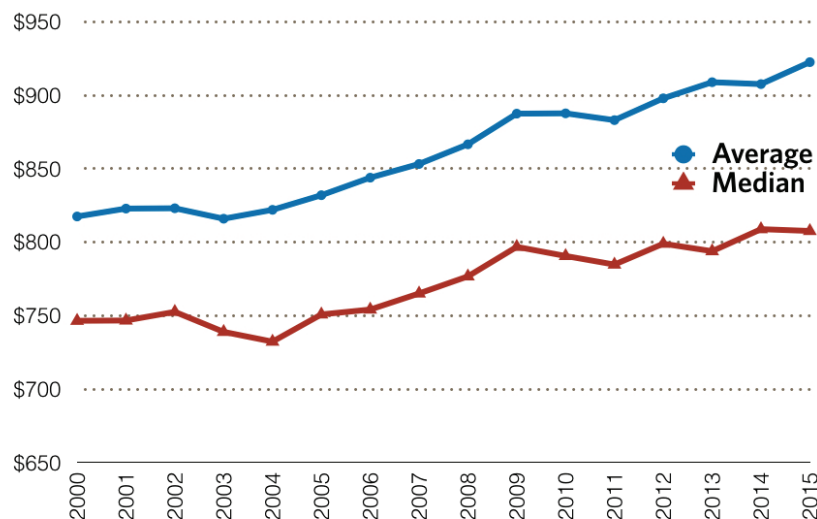
more than double the pace of “permanent” job growth in Canada. Part-time jobs are still being created at a faster clip than full-time jobs. And almost one million Canadians are working two jobs in order to make ends meet.

Knowing this, it’s no surprise that wages haven’t kept pace either. Adjusted for inflation, median weekly wages for Canadians have

increased by only 4% in seven years (“median” wage refers to the exact mid-point of all wages in Canada—half of all workers earn less, and half earn more). What’s not surprising is that average hourly wages have actually been on the rise. Why the discrepancy? That’s because the wages of the folks way at the top continue to rise, pulling up the average—giving the illusion that we’re all better off, when in fact we’re not (see Figure 7).

Perhaps most concerning is the erosion of job quality brought about by new modes of online technology, which is being developed at a furious pace. Tech companies, large and small, have strategically exploited gaps in existing laws and regulations to promote their services, and compete with existing companies—often at an unfair advantage. This “disruptive” technology is penetrating many of our workplaces (from taxis to television), exerting downward pressure on wages and working conditions. Worst of all: these same tech firms have made a habit of exploiting the labour of workers, treating

Figure 7: Weekly earnings of employees paid by the hour, adjusted for inflation



them as willing participants in a “sharing” economy—rather than as employees under law.

A deeper dive into unemployment numbers

Not only are jobs of lesser quality than in the past, they are also more difficult to come by.

Relatively new data collected by Statistics Canada reveals that there are 5.8 unemployed persons for every job vacancy. Given there were over 1.3 million unemployed workers in Canada in 2015, this means that even if every official vacancy were filled there would still be one million people left unemployed in Canada.

This generally depressing (and worrisome) picture is not widely acknowledged. In fact, last year’s election season did not tire of reminding us that, since 2009, Canada has created more jobs than it lost during the recession. While the statement is technically true, it side-steps the important conversation about job quality—which has continued to erode since the recession hit.

It also conveniently masks the fact that job creation has not kept up with population growth. The “employment rate” (the percentage of the total population that is employed) is still lower today than it was before the 2008 crash. In fact, Canada would still need to create 600,000 additional jobs, now, just to reach the same employment rate before the recession struck.

By 2015, Canada’s official unemployment rate (the percentage of Canadians employed as a share of all that are in, or looking for, work) sat at 6.9% and was rising in the first quarter of 2016 (with much regional variation across the country). That same year, while the unemployment rate was rising in

Alberta, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador it was falling in Ontario, Nova Scotia and Quebec. The dynamics are related to broader economic factors including the end of the resource boom (see: “State of the Canadian Economy: In Brief” for more information on the drop in resource and commodity prices), migrant labour between provinces and the declining value of the Canadian dollar which has (hopefully) made the Canadian manufacturing industry more attractive to investment and growth once again.

What can we do about it?

The good news (if we can call it that) is there is growing consensus among politicians and policy-makers that this shift to more low-wage and precarious work is harmful to the economy. The even better news is that this shift in thinking is being driven by workers themselves: through their courage, their community organizing and their political activism.

Calls for a \$15 minimum wage across North America, once ridiculed by conservative commentators, have now penetrated mainstream policy discussions—and have become reality in a number of jurisdictions, including in Canada (Alberta will be the first province to have legislated a \$15 minimum wage as of 2018). Income support measures, like a Guaranteed Annual Income, are being explored in earnest. Governments are revisiting labour laws in an effort to better regulate precarious work. Big businesses are responding to public pressure campaigns and making serious changes to wage and scheduling policies.

There is much work to be done, but workers are winning.

In fact, recent research from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) points out that unionization and robust minimum wages are two of the strongest protectors against high levels of income inequality. The paper also suggests that high levels of income inequality are a drag on economic growth. In essence, we need regulations and norms that ensure wealth is shared fairly and workers receive the benefits of the economic gains they produce.

Right here in Canada, ground breaking research into the effects of precarity and uncertainty on workers and their families found that job insecurity has a significant effect on anxiety levels and mental health—no matter one’s income level.

Couple this with growing research that points to good jobs contributing to higher profits and more successful businesses and there is ample ammunition to bargain protections against rising precariousness and to develop policies that raise the floor for all workers.

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BARGAINING OUTLOOK FOR CANADA: IN BRIEF

Canada's overall economy is forecast to grow moderately over the coming years, at around 2 per cent annually. But, as we know, looking too closely at the national picture risks overlooking important regional economic differences that are often a more significant factor influencing our proposals at the bargaining table.

The economies of British Columbia and Ontario are expected to see the biggest gains in gross domestic product (GDP) in the coming years, of between 2.5 and 3 per cent—well above the Canadian average—followed by Manitoba, Quebec and PEI. Slower growth is expected for the remaining Maritime Provinces save for Newfoundland and Labrador, which is expected to see modest GDP declines, largely as a result of falling oil prices. Not surprisingly, Canada's major oil-producing provinces will see similar declines over the next year, including Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Economic growth in Canada loosely tracks the overall cost-of-living for Canadians, which grew by 1.1 per cent between 2014 and 2015, and is forecast to rise by 1.8 per cent and 2.2 per cent in the next two years.

In 2015, average annual wage settlements for workers (1.2%) slightly outpaced the rate of inflation—which is good news for workers. It means our purchasing power is rising faster than the price of the goods we buy. Unifor wage settlements did even better, averaging 1.5 per cent in 2015.

Wages for unionized private sector workers continue to grow faster than their public sector counterparts. This reflects the steady resurgence of Canada's manufacturing and processing sectors (as well as strong wage packages negotiated recently by resource sector workers). It also reflects the persistent push by governments looking to cut budgets and lower public service costs. Wage adjustments for public sector workers have

not kept up with inflation over the past year and are expected to further lag private sector wage growth in 2016 and likely beyond.

A Changing Political Climate

Since Unifor's founding convention, we have negotiated approximately 1,000 new collective agreements, covering one-third of our total membership. In that time there were a total of 46 work stoppages (many generating public and community attention, and about one-third of which the result of employer lock-outs). As anyone knows, our union doesn't back down from a fight—not when the interests of our members are at stake. And our ability to withhold our labour in a contract dispute, through legal strike action (and the threat of strike action), remains a critical tool for workers to win improvements, protect work standards and fend off unreasonable employer concessions (as we will see throughout this document). But despite the constant attacks levied against us by right-wing governments and commentators, it's important to note that only 5 per cent of our contract negotiations have resulted in strikes or lockouts in the past 3 years.

This is a remarkable figure, considering the challenging political climate we have faced—instigated largely by the former Conservative government.

Not in a generation has anti-union sentiment been stoked so intensely by a sitting government—prompting an equally intense response from our union, our allies and members of the public. After watching conservative governments, at all levels, introduce bills intended to weaken the role of unions (e.g. Bill C-377), undermine the

Our ability to withhold our labour in a contract dispute, through legal strike action, remains a critical tool for workers to win improvements, protect work standards and fend off unreasonable employer concessions.

right to unionize (e.g. C-525), interfere with collective bargaining (at Air Canada, Canada Post and the railways), it's astonishing that so few workplace labour disputes have occurred.

The Harper government's defeat in the 2015 election has helped change the narrative between government and unions and, hopefully, signals a return to a system of healthier collective bargaining relations. Although government-worker relations still differ wildly at the provincial level, the Trudeau government has committed to open lines of communication with labour unions—a small but welcome shift in political tone. The new government has also made good on its promise to overturn the worst of Harper's legislative attacks on workers: an important step.

Unifor Bargaining: The Next Three Years

It is difficult to predict what specific challenges our union will face in the coming years at the bargaining table. What is clear is that Canada's economy will continue to see a modest, but steady, pace of growth—with notable differences

between regions (based on the intensity of resource and manufacturing capacity).

Wages and benefits will inevitably be a focal point for bargaining committees, along with ongoing discussions around pensions. But in a growing number of workplaces, questions around scheduling and work-time, sick pay and job security (particularly for part-time and temporary workers) will likely escalate as precarious work continues to infiltrate our workplaces. Additionally, ongoing pressure to “contract-out” work to outside vendors or lower-wage suppliers will inevitably continue—threatening to depress both the quality of work and union bargaining power.

Our success in collective bargaining will be measured by how we respond to these pressures—how we are able to raise work standards as well as protect and create jobs, for Unifor members and all workers. And how well we respond will also be judged in our ability to inspire new workers to join Unifor.

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CORE BARGAINING ISSUES:

LOW-WAGE AND PRECARIOUS WORK

It's no secret that the world of work has changed. Global competition and the ever present drive to increase profit and shareholder returns has put considerable pressure on companies large and small to lower the wage bill, thus lowering many a worker's quality of life. These pressures have devalued work and lowered the bar for human resources practices and employment standards to a point where many hard working people no longer have the stability in their working lives on which to build for the future.

Low-wage and precarious work takes a disproportionate toll on workers from equity seeking groups. Workers of colour, Aboriginal workers, workers with disabilities, women, and young workers are all over-represented in precarious work. Many of our members face threats of contract flipping, have no guarantee of work hours and receive their work schedules on short notice (although big strides have been made to change these practices in our union). Too many people work part-time involuntarily and need a more structured pathway to a full-time job. Most concerning is that many part-time workers are made to work full-time hours while only receiving part-time benefits.

Across a range of public and private sector workplaces, Unifor members face the detriments of competitive bidding (often through Request-for-Proposals)—a practice that drives down wages and weakens our position at the bargaining table. It is also increasingly common for members to work alongside temporary or contract workers who earn less money, receive fewer benefits and are afforded unequal protections while performing the same work.

Precarity was once an issue faced predominantly by workers in the retail and services sector. Now it has become a threat in every industry and is stretching up the income ladder into traditionally high-wage, professional occupations.

These changes to the more “traditional” employment relationship are hailed by some as driving value creation for the economy. We know that is not the case. These changes are eroding standards, suppressing wage gains, and negatively affecting the health and well-being of workers and families. More disturbingly, they are facilitating the transfer of wealth from working people to corporate executives and CEOs.

Our Vision to Strengthen/ Improve Worker Rights

As precarious work becomes more commonplace in Canada there is an increasing recognition that something must be done to protect working people from its negative effects. Grassroots movements, like the Fight for \$15, have helped politicize the issue—prompting a response from governments and employers alike. All across North America, working people are coming to realize that “flexible” labour market practices might help boost profits, but they often do so at the expense of workers’ quality of life.

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Our approach to combatting the rise of precarious work through our bargaining starts with solidarity. Raising standards for workers at the top-end of our wage scales in future means raising the floor for those on the low-end today. When our members understand that their best

interests are achieved by uniting in common cause, workers win. Bargaining succeeds in a culture of respect among workers—respect for each other’s skills, abilities, and experiences. And, as trade unionists, we must foster that culture of respect.

Unifor has made major strides in recent contracts on fair scheduling provisions and transitioning part-time and precarious workers into full-time jobs. These provisions must be expanded. We have also broken ground on new wage provisions that ensure low-wage workers receive proportional benefit when minimum wages are increased: a helpful tool that ensures fairness in our pay structures.

Our approach to bargaining for low-wage and precarious workers also needs to strike a fair balance on important issues like paid sick days, vacation, training and access to personal time. These provisions must be championed for all workers, and must not be seen as the exclusive benefit of a select few—which is how they are viewed under most current labour law regimes.

In all cases, Unifor must work to lift the floor for low-wage and precarious workers and enhance stability and work-life balance.

Our Bargaining Priorities

At the bargaining table we have the opportunity to build more stability and certainty into the working lives of our members. What follows is a list of key bargaining priorities to reduce the precariousness of work and increase stability for our members. Unifor will:

- Negotiate wage “escalator” provisions that ensure Unifor members in low-wage work benefit proportionally from any minimum wage increases in their jurisdiction;

Bargaining succeeds in a culture of respect among workers—respect for each other’s skills, abilities, and experiences. And, as trade unionists, we must foster that culture of respect.

- Negotiate wage rate increases on a cents-per-hour basis (instead of increases based on per centages) to ensure low-wage workers do not fall further behind their counterparts in higher-wage classifications;
- Negotiate paid sick days—either through a sick bank or other employer-paid avenue—to ensure all members have access to the time they need to protect their own health as well as the health of others, including children and elderly parents;
- Negotiate, protect and strengthen scheduling language to include rules that govern the assignment of available hours, providing advance notice of work schedules and assurances that shift cancellations without appropriate notification will not result in lower earnings;
- Encourage cross-training in workplaces such that employees are able to acquire the skills to perform multiple functions on the floor thus increasing the number of hours they may be eligible to work and the flexibility to work more available hours. The establishment of cross-training protocols must not be used to undermine negotiated job classifications or the creation of full-time work.

- Strive to ensure that workers classified as “temporary” are included in the scope of our collective agreements. Where possible, and through bargaining, our union will aim to eliminate the perceived cost advantage for employers to hire temporary staff in place of permanent staff;
- Negotiate guaranteed hours to ensure that workers have the security of knowing both the number of hours they will work and, where possible, the days they will work week-to-week;
- Negotiate fair processes for the distribution of gratuities, to ensure that these are appropriately shared among workers (and not taken by management) and that tipped workers do not suffer substandard benefits as a result of lower hourly wage rates or undocumented gratuities;
- Protect against “part-time creep” by ensuring members who consistently put in more than part-time hours are classified as full-time workers and receive the full benefits they are entitled to.

SOME OF OUR BARGAINING SUCCESSES

- **General Motors/CAMI (2013):** At the General Motors plant in Ingersoll, Ontario Unifor successfully bargained the transition of more than 300 temporary workers (referred to as Supplemental Workforce Employees) into full-time, permanent jobs.
- **Servantage (2015):** In this recent round of bargaining Unifor members working in the building cleaning services industry across B.C.’s Lower Mainland successfully renewed an important wage “escalator” provision that ensures workers receive an automatic pay adjustment in the event of an increase to the provincial minimum wage.

SOME OF OUR BARGAINING SUCCESSES (CONT'D)

- **Air Canada (2015):** Unifor negotiated significant pay increases for the lowest-paid airline customer service agents, some as high as 25%. The union also successfully protected bargaining unit work by fighting off the potential for contract flipping at the Greater Toronto Airport Authority and greater precariousness in customer service jobs.
- **Supermarkets (2015/2016):** Pattern bargaining in the Ontario grocery sector has led to groundbreaking agreements that include significant wage increases and inflation protection for part-time workers through an innovative new Minimum Wage 'Plus' pay schedule. These agreements also include greater access to benefits for part-time workers, improvements to scheduling practices as well the creation of new, full-time positions.
- **University of New Brunswick (2016):** Unifor members successfully negotiated a reduction in the number of weekly work hours required to qualify for employer-sponsored benefits, expanding access to more part-time members in the bargaining unit.

CORE BARGAINING ISSUES:

TWO-TIER WAGES

Having two workers doing the same work, but with permanently different wages, goes against the most fundamental principles of trade unionism. The call for “equal pay for equal work” and the fight against unequal treatment in the workplace date back to the earliest struggles of the labour movement. Overcoming competition among workers, and removing management’s power to play favourites, are among our most basic principles.

Two-tier wages are a bad idea that keeps coming back, despite a long legacy of failure. Facing a demand to give things up is not new. But the push for two-tier agreements comes with the insidious appeal to sacrifice workers who have yet to be hired, in exchange for the false promise that the jobs and conditions of existing workers can be protected.

By setting up a permanent second-class of members, this kind of concession holds the promise to ultimately destroy the union. Telling the next generation that they can never enjoy the same benefits within a collective agreement as their predecessors is too far a departure from the principle of equality. It can only create deep and lasting divisions among workers.

For existing workers, think about what a permanent lower tier means down the road. What happens when the existing workers inevitably become the minority in the workplace? Are the lower-tier workers going to fight for the rights of the upper-tier workers to be paid

The push for two-tier agreements comes with the insidious appeal to sacrifice workers who have yet to be hired, in exchange for the false promise that the jobs and conditions of existing workers can be protected.

higher rates? Are they going to watch over the upper-tier workers' higher pensions once the upper-tier workers have retired? And how do we build solidarity in the workplace, on any issue, in the face of such divisions?

Beyond damaging the union, the companies that have pushed for two-tier agreements in recent years obviously don't know their history. Experience shows that the impact of divisions among workers, ongoing resentment and dissatisfaction also take their toll on productivity, quality and profits. Major corporations that pushed two-tier agreements in the recessions of the early 1980s and early 1990s eventually saw their plans backfire and dropped them amid turmoil in the workplace (famously including American Airlines, Hughes Aircraft, General Dynamics, and LTV Corporation, among others).

History has a way of repeating itself, and sometimes there is no saving management from themselves. In the U.S. auto industry, during the financially precarious years even before the financial crisis of 2008-09, workers were pushed into accepting a dramatic two-tier system in the auto parts sector that eventually made its way into the contracts with the Detroit Three automakers. We faced incredible demands to follow suit in Canada in our negotiations in 2012, but refused and instead adopted an extended grow-in to make sure we stayed in the ballpark for investments while our dollar was at par. By the time U.S. autoworkers were back in negotiations in 2015, at some companies up to half the workforce was on the bottom-tier. The frustration reached a boiling point and the two-tier system was one of the key reasons initial agreements were rejected. In the end, the

Americans got out of the two-tier system by adopting a grow-in similar to ours in Canada.

The push for two-tier wages may be ebbing again given the disastrous outcomes in the high-profile U.S. auto industry. But history shows that this bad idea has a habit of returning, and we have seen it rear its ugly head in many sectors of our union. We must stay firm on our position and remain on guard.

Our Vision to Stop Two-Tiering

Our history is about fighting inequality and we are not going to help perpetuate it. At bargaining tables across the union, our opposition and resistance to two-tier agreements is loud and clear.

Our union has proudly refused to embrace two-tier agreements as the solution for broader problems in the economy. And yet employers have exploited weak economic conditions for their gains, and made some in-roads at the margins in some of our workplaces. We will use our recovering strength to continue to reject two-tier wages, and to turn back the clock and fight to restore equality among our members.

At bargaining tables
across the union, our
opposition and resistance
to two-tier agreements
is loud and clear.

Our Bargaining Priorities

At the bargaining table we must continue to challenge the short-sighted logic of two-tier arrangements in order to promote equality

and build solidarity among our members, both current and future. To achieve this, Unifor will:

- Continue to reject permanent two-tier wage structures;
- Bargain to eliminate two-tier wages and restore equality among members, in cases where employers have made in-roads and implemented elements of two-tier systems;
- Ensure movement within negotiated wage schedules is automatic and based upon seniority, and that members reach the full rate in a reasonable period of time, in instances where there is a wage grow-in process.

SOME OF OUR BARGAINING SUCCESSES

- **Navistar (2014):** Thirty members at this truck parts warehouse struck in September 2014 to undo an existing two-tier system, and fight off employer demands for a three-tier system. After two weeks on the picket line they won.
- **BC Transit (2015):** Public transit workers in Victoria negotiated a new collective agreement that effectively phase out a lower-wage job tier (Community Shuttle Driver), blending more than 80 union members into the higher wage driver classification.
- **Unifor IPS Auto Parts Task Force (2015):** To build greater strength among the 17,000 members in the sector, the Industry Council adopted a report and action plan explicitly rejecting two-tier wages, prioritizing undoing any tiered systems, and setting limits on wage grow-ins.

CORE BARGAINING ISSUES:

UNION REPRESENTATION AND UNION BUILDING

Attacks on unions and working people have amplified in recent years, especially with the election of regressive governments at all levels and the erosion of transparency and democracy in our institutions.

Legislative changes over time have made it more difficult for unions to organize and bargain. Cutbacks to public programs, exacerbated by below-average economic growth, have brought added challenges to our workplaces—in many cases, limiting our bargaining gains.

Gaps in outdated labour laws have also emboldened employers. Many seek to find new ways of creating more compliant and disciplined workers, while lowering their overall wage bill. Contracting-out, “casual” or temporary labour, and a growing reliance of short-term, part-time, pay-as-you-go work are becoming more commonplace. Under these forms of work, workers have very little security and protection—and can usually be fired on a whim. But beyond the financial cost for workers, these strategies are contributing to the erosion of bargaining unit structures, the fragmentation of our workplaces and are undermining worker solidarity.

In this context, it is more important than ever to have strong union representation and an empowered membership in our workplaces, and much of that can be fostered through collective bargaining.

A strong union needs an informed and engaged membership; and that includes well-resourced and active local unions. Front-line stewards and

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committeepersons must be equipped to properly address workplace issues, enforce contract rules, and to instill confidence in our membership. Union reps need the time and space to do union work. And members need to be given the opportunity to know their union.

A strong union is also able to link its bargaining successes to broader political struggles within our home communities and communities of workers around the world. By extending our bargaining goals outward, we are able to advocate for legislative and social change in a meaningful way. Ground-breaking programs like Unifor's Social Justice Fund and Canadian Community Fund contribute to this important work.

We take tremendous pride in our ability to push-back against employer attacks and win gains at the bargaining table, even when the odds are stacked against us. As our traditional workplace structures continue to evolve, as new precarious work arrangements threaten to disconnect workers from their union, and as globalization requires us to forge stronger ties with our international sisters and brothers, our responsibility to build union capacity must evolve too.

Our Vision for Building Union Strength through Collective Bargaining

Our members want good, secure jobs; retirement with dignity; wages and benefits that adequately support their families; democracy and respect at work; safe workplaces; and protections when times get tough. These are goals shared by all workers.

Building a stronger union through bargaining requires us to negotiate language that facilitates more opportunities for

members to do effective union work, that builds solidarity, and that supports the struggles of other workers in our local communities and around the world.

This can take many forms: from negotiating more time for rank-and-file union reps to handle workplace issues, to financial contributions that help under-privileged communities in developing nations—and everything in between. Building our union means building our capacity to connect with workers—all workers—in our common quest for social and workplace justice. It is through this lens that we can effectively push back against our employers, make gains in every round of bargaining and confront the challenges in the years to come.

Our Bargaining Priorities

At the bargaining table we must continue to foster union and membership development, including membership orientation and education. Further, we must continue to support mechanisms intended to support all working people, beyond the confines of our workplace. To achieve this, Unifor will:

- Bargain more workplace representatives, wherever possible—including stewards, health and safety reps, equity reps, women's advocates and bargaining committeepersons, among others.
- Ensure union representatives are provided sufficient paid time to conduct union business, enabling our union to develop local capacities and address workplace issues;
- Ensure all collective agreements provide for new member orientation, aimed at connecting new members with the union

and its work. Where orientation programs currently exist, it is important for workplace representatives to recommit to updating these orientation sessions, as needed.

- Bargain Paid Education Leave (PEL) which provides negotiated funding for members to attend education courses, and ensure PEL courses are accessible to our members. Where possible, committees should strive to increase PEL contributions (typically done on a cents-per-hour basis) and explore other measures to support our union's educational programming, and encourage participation.
- Ensure that the Social Justice Fund (SJF) contributions, which are used to support workers and communities at home and around the world for development and emergency relief (typically done on a cents-per-hour basis), are negotiated in all collective agreements and ensure that funding levels are increased in units where members already contribute to the fund.
- Expand the Canadian Community Fund (CCF) contributions, which are used for community development projects in Canada (typically done on a cents-per-hour basis). The CCF was created in 2015 after negotiations with CP and CN Rail.

SOME OF OUR BARGAINING SUCCESSES

- **Cascade Aerospace (2014):** Facing demands from the employer for a two-tier system that included lower benefits and vacations for new hires, 440 members struck in May 2014 to safeguard jobs for the next generation. Despite the employer backing down from many of its demands, members voted to extend strike action to fight off a final demand to eliminate the full-time unit chairperson position. The position was ultimately maintained.
- **Air Liquide (2014) and Linde Gas (2015):** Unifor members at two specialty gas facilities in Edmonton successfully negotiated Paid Education Leave (PEL) into their collective agreements (a cents-per-hour contribution made by their respective employers). Over 40% of Unifor collective agreements include PEL.
- **CP and CN Rail (2015):** Unifor members at both CP and CN Rail operations across Canada created the new Canada Community Fund in 2015. The CCF is funded with employer contributions (one cent per hour) and will be used to support emergency efforts and community projects, such as the Fort McMurray relief project.
- **Film and television technicians (2016):** Recognizing the importance of union representation among film and television crews across Ontario, Unifor members working as film, television and new media technicians successfully negotiated premium pay rates for elected union reps and safety reps on set.

CORE BARGAINING ISSUES:

EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Canada is a diverse nation. In many ways, Canada is a nation comprised of many nations—each with its own history and identity; each with its own struggles. The multiculturalism that many celebrate in Canada today is constantly evolving—shaped by an ongoing understanding and collective reconciliation of our past, including the exploitation of First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples and their lands; the historic exclusion of women in society; and the systemic racism faced by workers of colour, newcomers, and others. Our diversity is a source of pride and the envy of other countries around the world. But we acknowledge it is always a work in progress. Each day, we all must strive to build a more equal and inclusive country. That is our constant goal.

Unfortunately, there are still too many in Canada that face systemic societal and workplace barriers including racism, sexism, marginalization, exclusion and harassment in their workplaces and their communities on a consistent basis.

Consider that:

- Aboriginal and workers of colour face unemployment, poverty and low-wage and precarious work at a far higher rate than other workers;
- Workers who silently identify as LGBTQ continue to remain “in the closet” to avoid harassment and discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation;
- People with disabilities are significantly less likely to be employed than the general population and face lower wages despite similar education level and ability to participate;
- Women are still paid far less than men in Canada. In fact, our national “gender pay gap” remains unchanged at 28%. Work that has traditionally

been classified as “women’s work” (e.g. health and other services) is often denigrated, disrespected and subject to low pay;

- Young workers—despite being highly-educated—are faced with diminishing quality job prospects, and massive debt-loads that impact their ability to earn a decent living and plan for the future. One-third of all post-secondary graduates, aged 25 to 29, move into low-paying jobs for which they are overqualified, while half of all young workers are employed in either the retail or hospitality sectors—both notorious for low-wages and low unionization.

It is shameful that Canada’s job market continues to reproduce such inequitable and unjust outcomes for so many workers. All of these groups are more likely to report facing harassment and discrimination at work based on their race, gender identity, sexual orientation or the presence of a disability.

If nothing else, these figures serve to highlight the deep-rooted and long-standing prejudices embedded in our culture and in our institutions: including the institution of collective bargaining. It is our responsibility, as a union, to identify these inequities in our workplaces—and in society—and to ensure we are challenging them and eradicating them, at every turn—especially in our work at the bargaining table.

Our Vision to Strengthen/Improve Equity and Human Rights

Every individual deserves to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace and to be fairly compensated. Unifor continues a long and proud history of struggling for equity and human rights in the workplace. We helped pave new ground in the fight for

It is shameful that Canada’s job market continues to reproduce such inequitable and unjust outcomes for so many workers.

same-sex benefits in the workplace, equal pay, worker’s compensation, and others. Our internationally-renowned Women’s Advocate program has helped raise awareness of domestic violence, its impact on the workplace and the role of the union in supporting workers seeking a life without violence. We’ve spearheaded progressive anti-harassment language in our agreements, fostered “safe spaces” for workers and helped develop forward-looking employment equity policies. We have fought hard and won many improvements and protections from violence, harassment, and bullying.

But despite all of this work, there is still so much to be done.

Our collective bargaining proposals must always be viewed through an equity-lens. Our responsibility is to ensure we do not contribute to the reproduction of systemic inequities for workers in our bargaining units. We must ensure the voices of all members are represented at the bargaining table and in local union leadership. And we must be vigilant in measuring our performance by collecting workforce data—the primary tool by which to understand and analyze the demographics of our workplaces, and hold our employers (and ourselves) to account.

Our Bargaining Priorities

In order to meet the needs of our members and ensure a diversity of voices is heard at the bargaining table, local unions must ensure that bargaining committees and leadership reflect the demographic composition of the bargaining unit members. At the bargaining table we have the opportunity to improve employment equity, enhance protections, and build workplace cultures that are free from harassment and discrimination. Unifor will:

- Negotiate and improve anti-harassment language that creates a harassment-free workplace, provides access to joint (i.e. labour-management) investigations and allows workers redress and protection if harassment occurs. Unifor has had much success with developing and training joint anti-harassment committees across our workplaces;
- Negotiate employment equity plans in all workplaces (not only in federal workplaces where employment equity is required) to ensure equal access to good jobs for women,

Our collective bargaining proposals must always be viewed through an equity-lens. Our responsibility is to ensure we do not contribute to the reproduction of systemic inequities for workers in our bargaining units.

Aboriginal workers, workers of colour and workers with disabilities. Policies should include language that encourages employers to match the demographic composition of the workforce to that of the community as well as union access to the data;

- Negotiate a process for implementing and maintaining pay equity that includes frequent reviews for compliance (such as job description/duties and job classification reviews). Ensure bargaining practices (such as percentage increases) do not reproduce pay inequities between women and men;
- Negotiate a process for ongoing and meaningful dialogue around accessibility and accommodation in the workplace for workers with disabilities;
- Ensure no Unifor collective agreement contains provisions for unpaid internships, and that all incidences of unpaid work (especially targeting young workers and students) in our workplaces is challenged;
- Continue to prioritize workplace supports for people leaving violent relationships. Supports include the negotiation of Women's Advocates, first day sickness, accident top-up coverage and other paid leave provisions for women fleeing situations of domestic violence, protection for time off the job and a non-discipline clause protecting people from unfair discipline by employers;
- Encourage bargaining committees to negotiate Paid Education Leave in all collective agreements and urge local unions to prioritize participation among members that represent the full diversity of the bargaining unit, including Aboriginal workers, workers of

colour, women, workers with disabilities, young workers and LGBTQ workers.

- Negotiate maternity and parental leave “top-ups” that ensure parents do not face a reduction in income (or are made to rely solely on unemployment insurance benefits) during their time away from the job. Committees should also strive to negotiate child care subsidies within collective agreements; a temporary support for workers that must complement our union’s broader efforts to win a universal, affordable, accessible and quality child care program in Canada.
- Ensure all Unifor contract language is written in a gender-neutral manner.

SOME OF OUR BARGAINING SUCCESSES

- **SaskTel (2016):** Unifor members in Saskatchewan have negotiated new Women’s Advocate positions in each of three bargaining units at SaskTel. Since 2013, Unifor has negotiated 67 new Women’s Advocate positions in workplaces across the country, bringing the union’s total to more than 300.
- **CAA (2016):** Women working at the Canadian Automobile Association (CAA) received a significant base pay increase, retroactive to 2009, following the successful negotiation of a pay equity adjustment by Unifor.
- **Irving Shipbuilding (2016):** Unifor in partnership with Irving Shipbuilding is focusing on increasing the number of under-represented Nova Scotians working in Canada’s shipbuilding industry by supporting programs and training to optimize opportunities and create a more diverse workplace. To this end, the Pathways to Shipbuilding project was launched, jointly negotiated by Unifor and the employer, which will train Aboriginal workers for work at the shipyard. This project builds on an earlier and unique partnership with Women Unlimited that focuses on education and training of 20 women in welding and metal fabrication. In both cases, Unifor members and activists serve as liaisons with those in training to ensure there is an ongoing connection to the workplace as we strive to make shipbuilding a more inclusive workplace.

CORE BARGAINING ISSUES:

CONTRACT TERM

The length of a collective agreement is not an arbitrary timeframe nor is it a minor element within the bargaining process. When we negotiate a new contract, it does not mean that our working conditions remain unchanged over its lifespan. Our working environments are always changing and are influenced by public policy decisions, legislative changes and broader political and economic factors. They are also influenced by employer decisions that affect our job security, compensation, working conditions and basic rights.

While members are active in their union in many ways, it is through the bargaining process where members are typically most engaged. Meetings are better attended. Union bulletins are read more carefully. Website traffic starts to increase. Naturally, members care about how bargaining will impact their livelihoods and working conditions, and understand that their union has power in bargaining. Therefore, the term of our collective agreements will impact how members connect to the bargaining process and, more broadly, to their union.

Many employers will push for longer-term contracts as a strategic tactic. They are interested in the security and certainty that long-term contracts provide, with limited risk of a workplace dispute (although workers often find creative ways to resist during the life of an agreement!). Sometimes, workers buy into this false logic of security and stability—not surprising given the highly precarious nature of work today. The reality is that employers will utilize long term contracts to limit the opportunities for workers to address issues around working conditions and compensation—issues

While members are active in their union in many ways, it is through the bargaining process where members are typically most engaged.

that continuously need to be reviewed. Long-term deals can also contribute to an erosion of union power over time, as members become more disengaged from union affairs. Collective bargaining is the lifeblood of union democracy, and must not be undermined.

Despite the many developments that occur over the course of a contract term, employers often think that they can avoid addressing these issues until the next round of bargaining. And it's distressing to see the steady growth of long-term contracts propagating throughout the country, in warehouse, air transport and supermarket agreements, among others.

Our Vision for a Fair Contract Term Standard

It is the union's objective to establish a contract term standard that will most benefit our members and long enough for employers to find a measure of stability. History and experience has shown that three years is an ideal contract length, as it is short enough to keep negotiations close to our members and address issues as they arise. In fact, three years is the average contract length for all recently negotiated collective agreements since Unifor's inception.

By committing to three-year contract terms throughout the union, we create collective pressure to resist longer-term contracts and establish a strong standard across sectors.

In certain circumstances, there have been exceptions to this standard. Our bargaining always reflects the realities of our industries, economy and communities, and in rare cases, our union has adopted agreements that were longer than three years (and in some cases, shorter). In these instances, the union made an agreement to give our members a strategic

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advantage—for example, to strengthen our power around a major investment; to put our bargaining off-schedule with other major external negotiations; or to align an agreement with the rest of the sector in order to be more coordinated in the long-term.

With the expectation of negotiating three-year contracts, terms that exceed this duration need to be approved by the President's office or the Quebec Director's office.

Our Bargaining Priorities

In order to guard against employer pressures to extend the terms of collective agreements, and to ensure our members are constantly engaged in the democratic processes of the union, Unifor will:

- Commit to a contract term standard of three years; such a standard is in line with current practice in Unifor and ensures our members are able to respond to new challenges and workplace changes in a timely manner. Members are more frequently engaged in the bargaining process when this standard becomes the norm, which encourages meaningful decision-making.

- Ensure that, wherever existing contract terms are in excess of three years, bargaining committees will strive to shorten those terms where possible, and practicable;
- Ensure all bargaining committees and staff representatives acquire approval from the office of the President or Quebec Director when seeking a contract term of longer than three years. Such requests will be examined carefully, with consideration to how it will improve work standards for our members, secure significant investment, or meet other strategic bargaining objectives.

SOME OF OUR BARGAINING SUCCESSSES

- **Three year contracts are still the norm in Unifor:** Many new agreements have been bargained since the formation of Unifor in the fall of 2013. A review of these new agreements reveals that roughly 85% of them have terms of three years or less. The weighted average term of the new agreements is three years.
- **Oldcastle BE (2015):** Unifor members working at Oldcastle, a building and supply firm in Quebec, successfully negotiated a first contract with their new employer that is three years in length. This victory essentially broke the employer's own policy to negotiate, at minimum, five-year collective agreements.
- **Eden Valley Poultry (2015):** Following a major round of workplace restructuring, Unifor members working at a poultry processing facility in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley fended off employer demands for significant collective agreement contract concessions and, in the process, successfully reversed their contract term from five years to three.

CORE BARGAINING ISSUES:

PENSIONS AND RETIREMENT SECURITY

Unifor is proud of the pensions that we bargain in the workplace on behalf of our members. Many Unifor members take great pride in the fact that they participate in a collectively bargained, well-governed pension plan—and they should. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer Canadians have access to employer-provided pension plans (a key pillar in our “three-pillar” retirement income system), putting the retirement security of millions at risk.

A large segment of Canadians are approaching retirement. There are more than 5 million seniors today and that number is expected to hit 9.3 million in 2030 as more baby boomers retire—a consequence of the population “bubble” that economists and demographers have monitored for years. Yet, nearly two-thirds of all working people in Canada do not have an employer-sponsored pension plan. They are totally dependent on individual savings (of which most middle- to low-income workers have little) and government pensions (which provide woefully inadequate income).

What’s worse: among those who do have a workplace pension, most plans are under threat from employers looking to shave costs from their bottom line—particularly those in the private sector. High-standard “defined benefit” (DB) pension plans, which provide workers a set pension benefit in their retirement years, are becoming less common (although they still account for 71% of all workplace pension plans)—replaced, in some cases by inferior and more risky “defined contribution” (DC) plans, which (although at least partially funded by employers) downloads the responsibility of managing the investment on to workers.

Across nearly all industries, unions are dealing with employers actively trying to wind-up (i.e. pay-out workers and close) existing pension plans

Nearly two-thirds of all working people in Canada do not have an employer-sponsored pension plan.

or are trying to create two-tiers of benefits, providing less retirement security for the next generation of workers. With so few Canadians secure in their retirement savings, these sorts of changes will simply make a bad situation worse. It's no wonder that there has been a near 70 per cent increase in employed seniors (over age 65) since 2008.

Our Vision to Strengthen Canada's Retirement Income System

All Canadians deserve to retire from the job, with a decent standard of living and a stable income. Workers who have dedicated their lives (sometimes at the expense of their personal health) to producing enormous wealth and value to their employers should expect no less.

By fighting back against pension cuts and tabling proposals to strengthen and salvage existing plans (like "hybrid" model plans or "target" benefit plans) we send an important message to employers: retirement security is a major bargaining issue for our members and all workers. Our efforts to secure pensions through bargaining are complemented by our political efforts to enhance universal public pensions, like the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and the Quebec Pension Plan (QPP). They are also complemented by our ability to craft other innovative solutions, when needed, including industry-wide "target" benefit plans (like the Pulp and Paper Industry Pension Plan) or member-funded pension plans (like that created through the Solidarity Fund of the Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec—FTQ).

Our Bargaining Priorities

In order to guard against the further erosion of Canada's "three-pillar" retirement security

All Canadians deserve to retire from the job, with a decent standard of living and a stable income.

system, and specifically the decline in employer-provided pensions, Unifor will:

- Continue to support our own local unions and other unions in their defence of workplace pensions by providing access to expert resources;
- Hold the employer responsible for their employees' retirement in the event we cannot bargain defined benefit pension plans, particularly in small workplaces. Workers in small workplaces with stable employment can also benefit from various alternative pension programs, including well-managed target benefit plans or other member-funded pension plans;
- Ensure employers pay a price for shifting the investment risks onto the employee, where we have little option but to accept a defined contribution plan. Employer contributions to a defined contribution plan should include an additional levy to cover the administration costs and investment risks that the employee must take on;
- Resist ongoing employer attempts at "two-tiering" pension plans, which inevitably hurt the next generation of workers;
- Promote pension literacy in our workplaces leading up to, during and after bargaining.

SOME OF OUR BARGAINING SUCCESSES

- **Bombardier (2014):** Following an eight-week strike, Unifor Local 1075 members in Thunder Bay managed to fight off company demands for pension concessions and maintained the defined benefit pension plan for both current and new hires.
- **New Flyer (2015):** Unifor members at the New Flyer bus manufacturing facility in Winnipeg protected their current defined benefit plan, along with annual improvements to the plan, despite company efforts to ditch the current plan for a defined contribution model.
- **Ontario Lottery & Gaming Corporation (2015):** Workers at Woodbine Racetrack, Sudbury Downs and Casino Brantford endured a three-week lockout and were able to bargain language that protects member pensions in the face of a province-wide privatization scheme.

CORE BARGAINING ISSUES:

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Today's workplaces are safer and workers are healthier largely because unions—led by activists—spoke up, exercised their right to refuse work, organized campaigns, and won much-needed improvements to the conditions of work. As a result, everyone is better off.

Looking back on our struggles to stop workplace malpractices, identify and control hazards, manage the pace of work and hold our employers to account, we shifted an entire culture of thinking around what safe workplaces ought to be. Every worker that punches out from their job in the same condition as when they punched in is another testament to the good work of unions and the strength of our bargaining.

But despite our gains workplaces continue to change: and so do the risks on the job. Our manufacturing, processing, warehousing and other industrial workplaces continue to adopt new computerized and automated production processes, as well as new health and safety hazards. The rise of service sector work (which is incredibly diverse and broad in scope) requires us to expand our more traditional thinking about safety, stress and musculoskeletal injury. In all workplaces, we must be vigilant in our ability to monitor the negative consequences of constantly evolving shifts in work patterns and designs. For too many workers, their jobs (oftentimes inadvertently) are the root cause of mental health problems, chronic disease and shortened life span.

How governments and employers approach the health and safety of workers is evolving as well: and often not for the better. Efforts to promote safety incentive programs (also known as Behaviour-Based Safety

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programs) are being extensively promoted by employers. In this environment, workers face pressures to avoid reporting accidents or lost-time for injuries—a benefit to employers who can pay lower insurance premiums. And some employers will discipline workers for getting hurt (they say it is the workers' responsibility to be safe). These backward trends are not in the best interest of workers. They won't stop workers from getting hurt. But they will stop workers from reporting their injuries.

Our bodies are constantly exposed to new chemical agents, toxins, mineral fibres, and other synthetic ingredients. And we are being essentially force-fed them on the job. New and more intense work processes place our members at increased risk for accidents and long-term health issues including mental, cardiovascular, cancer and muscular-skeletal disorders.

We must ensure our members are protected from these new sources of ill health.

Our Vision to Strengthen Workplace Health and Safety

Through our bargaining program and our workplace activism we continue to emphasize the three core worker health and safety rights: participation in workplace health and safety committees; knowledge about workplace hazards; and the right to refuse unsafe work. These three rights form the basis of our health and safety work, and the lens through which we negotiate workplace improvements. Our job is to never take these rights (or our relevant collective agreement language) for granted, but to constantly strive to strengthen the rules to make us safer. Worker representatives must have the power

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to act and to prevent injuries in changing workplace environments. They must have the training as well. Our representatives need the ability to make real-time interventions on the job to effectively and independently evaluate occupational health and safety hazards.

Our Bargaining Priorities

At the bargaining table we have the opportunity to confront our workplace health and safety challenges; get out in front of technological change before it happens; and protect workers from psycho-social hazards and other workplace stressors. Unifor will:

- End the use of safety incentive programs and discipline regimes for workers who are injured on the job ensuring that health and safety rules actually make our workplaces safer;
- Ensure the right to refuse unsafe work includes severe cases of harassment, threats of violence and the presence of violence, in addition to physically unsafe work;
- Bargain the appropriate processes to refuse excessive workloads caused by short shifting or short staffing, whether as a result of down-sizing or temporary absences, ensuring that our members are

not put in the position between “overwork” and not meeting the needs of the job;

- Build the capacity of our health and safety representatives by negotiating time and resources including more time off for representatives in small workplaces and a full-time representative in large workplaces as well as time off to support prevention measures;
- Develop language that addresses broader health concerns such as stress and terminal illness caused by workplace environments. Clauses must deal with many possibilities in the unpredictable and rapidly changing world of new technologies; the definition of technological change; the establishment of committees to deal with new technologies and/or processes; notice and disclosure; and the principle of pollution prevention;
- Adopt the Psychological Health and Safety in the Workplace Standard to identify ways of reducing and eliminating the stigma of mental health in the workplace and occupational psychosocial hazards through a joint forum;
- Negotiate workplace prevention programs. Such programs should be designed with each individual workplace in mind, focused on monitoring any negative short- and long-term effects of workplace hazards (e.g. physical or psycho-social) on workers and, ultimately, eliminating those hazards.

SOME OF OUR BARGAINING SUCCESSES

- **Nasittuq (2014):** A first agreement won by Unifor members at Nasittuq (a services and supply firm for the Department of National Defence, based in the remote town of Alert, Nunavut) included contract language that strives to build a work environment free from discrimination, and harassment and guards against disciplinary action related to an employee by reason of their demographic identifiers.
- **Expertech (2015):** Unifor members at telecommunications firm Expertech, with operations in both Quebec and Ontario, successfully negotiated a joint return-to-work committee, enabling workers to co-develop safe and effective return to work processes and protocols in the workplace.
- **Health care bargaining (2015):** Through bargaining, Unifor members at four different Ontario health care units have established committees to assess and identify possible features of an unhealthy workplace from a mental health perspective. The new committees will look for ways to eliminate these hazards or reduce their effects.

