

Canada's unions welcome support for forest sector workers and communities

Canada's unions are welcoming the announcement that the federal government is taking steps to support forest sector workers and communities affected by the United States' imposition of duties on Canadian softwood exports.

In particular, the CLC welcomes the following steps announced today:

- Reducing lay-offs by extending the maximum period for Work Sharing agreements from 38 weeks to 76 weeks;
- Expanding access to retraining and skills development programs to help workers transition to new jobs;
- Wage insurance or "Targeted Earnings Supplements" for workers who find new jobs that pay less;
- Federal loans and loan guarantees from the Business Development Bank of Canada and Export Development Canada to help forestry companies in the short and medium term; and
- Investments to diversify export markets overseas and promote the diversification of the forest products sector in Canada.

We are pleased to see the federal government adopt some of the measures proposed by the CLC and its member unions, and are hopeful there is more to come.

We'd like to see an extension of Employment Insurance benefits for workers in hardest-hit regions, a move that made an enormous difference to workers and communities affected by falling oil prices in 2015 and 2016.

We also believe that a negotiated settlement is in the best interests of both Canada and the United States, and we look forward to supporting efforts to negotiate a new Softwood Lumber Agreement which gives Canada fair access to the U.S. market.



Canada's unions celebrate Pride, committing to work for more justice



Over the next few months, Canada's unions will join others in communities across Canada to celebrate Pride and support LGBTQ2SI equality and justice.

While Pride is a time to celebrate, it is also a time for reflection and activism. Pride originated in response to the police crackdown on LGBTQ2SI spaces like the 1981 bath house raids in Toronto.

“It is important for us to continue to challenge ongoing discrimination and the challenges faced by members of the LGBTQ2SI community,” said CLC President Hassan Yussuff.

There are still many countries where homosexuality is illegal and subject to extreme punishment and even execution. In Chechnya, for example, gay men are being detained in concentration camps, tortured and in some cases killed, and families are being pressured to kill their gay sons.

Rainbow Railroad, a Canadian organization that helps LGBTQ2SI people who face physical violence, imprisonment, or death, has been working with Russian LGBTQ2SI organizations to bring Chechnyans to Canada as refugees. At this May's CLC Convention, delegates gave unanimous support for a resolution calling on the Canadian government to actively support these efforts and to condemn Chechnya's actions.

Canada has its own dark history of state-sanctioned discrimination and much work needs to be done to make reparations. Canada has yet to formally apologize for a decades-long national security campaign that targeted public service workers and members of the RCMP and military perceived to be homosexuals. Many were questioned, outed, and fired.

“These individuals and their families have waited decades for justice. It is long past time not just to apologize to those whose lives and careers were destroyed, but to secure pardons and provide compensation for the harm inflicted upon them,” said Yussuff.

“We encourage everyone to be loud and proud at parades and pride events across the country and we will celebrate the ways Canada's unions have helped advance LGBTQ2S1 rights. But we also commit to continuing our work to achieve more fairness and justice for these communities in Canada and abroad,” Yussuff added.



\$15 minimum wage and fairer employment coming to Ontario



The Canadian Labour Congress joins workers' advocates celebrating the announcement that the Ontario government will raise the provincial minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2019, and reform the province's employment standards and labour relations laws to improve fairness for all workers.

Raising the minimum wage to \$15 will support millions of Ontario workers – thirty percent of the province – who are currently earning less than that and struggling

to afford basic necessities like rent, transportation, and groceries.

Unions also celebrated the announced changes to the Employment Standards Act to make it easier for workers to balance work and family commitments, and make ends meet, including:

- Equal pay for equal work protections for part-time workers;
- Fairer rules for scheduling, including a new regulation that will require employers to pay an employee for three hours of work if their shift is cancelled with less than 48 hours' notice;
- Access to 10 days of Personal Emergency Leave per year (two paid); and
- Three weeks of paid vacation (up from two) after five years with one employer.

While these changes are a good step forward, there are still areas for improvement. For example, unions had pushed for shifts to be scheduled two weeks in advance, access to paid vacation to start sooner, and better paid time off for workers experiencing domestic violence.

Unions had also hoped the changes would go further to reform the province's Labour Relations Act. Today's announcement commits to extending card-check certification to three particularly vulnerable sectors – the temporary help agency industry, the building services sector, and home care and community services – but still leaves other workers open to employer intimidation during a union certification drive.



Canadian Labour Congress

Congrès du travail du Canada