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Dignity and justice for all of us

## International Human Rights Day

December 10

### On the Back



It has been sixty years since the United Nations signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The declaration was drafted following the atrocities and indignities that occurred to human life during the second world war. In the past sixty years there have been advances made, but full compliance is far from being achieved. Women are still being tortured under the veil of religious beliefs. Children are being exploited sexually for the pleasure and profit of others. Workers are enslaved in deplorable conditions to provide cheap and often free labour for large companies that sell their goods for huge profits.

It is time for men and women who enjoy the fulfillment of all their basic needs to make an honest effort to assist those who do not. It is impossible for any one person to change the world, but if we all took the time to change the world for just one person, what a difference we could make.

## Human Rights are Labour Rights

The formation of unions had two real purposes — to offer workers protection from the unfair work practices of employers and governments and to create a realization among workers that they deserve to be treated with dignity and respect no matter what their job may be. The resulting solidarity that developed within the groups was just as important as the increase in wages and benefits that were achieved. Protecting and enhancing human rights for all people is not a supplementary role of a union it is the basis of its foundation.



### Who are most often the victims of abuse?

It would be a rare occurrence for a wealthy individual to have an issue with their human rights. Normally the persons who suffer injustices of this nature are working people. Within this group there are sub groups who are more prone to be the victims of discrimination in Canadian workplaces. They include; Aboriginal People, Gay, Lesbian, Bi-sexual and Transgender People (GLBT), Workers of Colour, Workers with Disabilities and Working Women.

### Who gains from these violations?

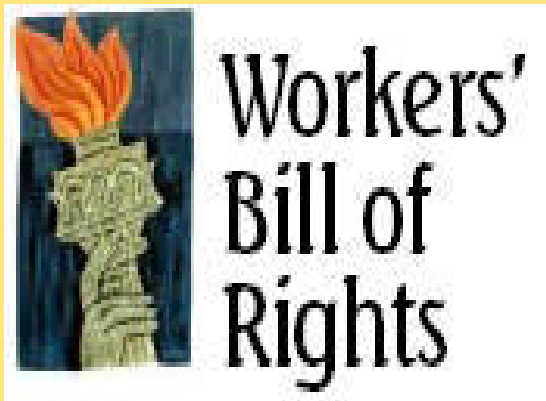
Employers who take advantage of the most vulnerable to maintain their operations and increase their profit margin.

### What must union members do?

If unions are ever going to have a real chance at ensuring labour rights are recognized and enforced in all workplaces then union members need to work toward resolving their own discriminatory practices. We must stand united in the fight for equal rights for our Aboriginal People, Visible Minorities, Working Women, Person's with Disabilities and GLBT workers. How can we fight for what we know is right and just in the workplace when we remain silent about what is going on in our communities?

UPSE is proud to represent members in both the Public and Private Sectors





**IT IS RECOGNIZED THAT:**

Democracy and human rights cannot flourish where worker's rights do not exist or are not enforced

Unions have been, and continue to be an important force for democracy, not just in the workplace, but beyond, in the community - locally, nationally and globally.

Unions have historically been a major force in humanizing and democratizing the economies of nations by promoting higher levels of economic equality and economic justice.

Unions provide workers with decent wages, benefits and working conditions so they and their families can enjoy a quality standard of living and financial security.

**THIS IS CONFIRMED BY:**

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) which sets out fundamental principals for human rights including the right to freedom of association (Article 21) as well as the right of everyone to form and to join trade unions. (Article 23)

The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principals and Rights at Work (1998) which reaffirms the commitment of the international community "to respect, to promote and to realize in good faith" the rights of workers to freedom of association and the effective right to collective bargaining.

**IT IS THEREFORE AFFIRMED THAT:**

-1-

All workers have the right to form unions for the promotion and defence of their interest without interference of the employer or government. This basic human right goes together with freedom of association and freedom of expression. It is the basis of democratic representation and governance.

-2-

All workers have the right to a legal framework that recognizes collective bargaining as the means of determining their wages, working conditions and terms of employment.

**Proclaimed in Ottawa this 10th day of December 2005**