



## Charter of Inclusive Workplaces & Communities

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

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

That is why we affirm that:

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

## LABOUR COUNCIL PLAN CHALLENGING RACISM & DISCRIMINATION



Labour Day Parade, Toronto 1952

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

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

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

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

## THE ROOTS OF RACISM

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

## PRINCIPLED AND PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO EQUITY

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

## OVERCOMING DENIAL

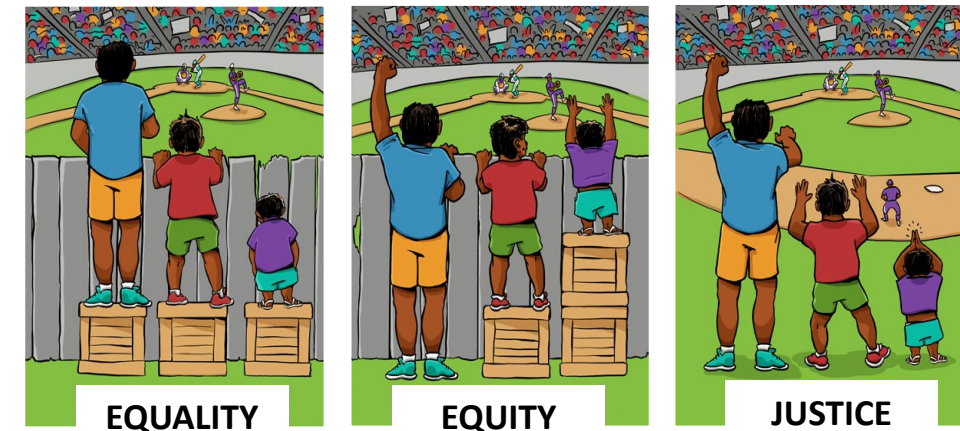
Many of us would be more comfortable imagining that racism isn't a factor in our union work. Very few Canadians want to own up to the prejudices we have grown up with, and talking about race can make even the most fair-minded person uneasy. Overcoming denial will be an important task for this work to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

## STRATEGIC PLAN, MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT, ALLIANCES

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

## AN EQUITY NARRATIVE

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



## TOOLS FOR THE CAMPAIGN

Determining the best narrative will be followed by creating written material, social media strategies, training modules and more. Labour Council will have a speakers' bureau available for local union meetings and public events. The key aspect of our effectiveness will be the willingness of affiliates to use these tools, to include them in their ongoing communications work and leadership practice. Research shows that we receive thousands messages per day from a wide variety of sources. That means that our message needs to be repeated many times over for it to connect with our members or the public. Building on the general narrative, individual messages should be tested with focus groups to ensure maximum impact. The words are crucial, but graphics and design features are also important for people to find our message interesting. Short video clips or transit ads can be used to reach thousands at a time. There needs to be a way to measure how far we are reaching and how well the message is being received. This evaluation will be built into the campaign plan.

## UNITY IS POWER

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