

LABOUR RIGHTS & INEQUALITY

ROLE OF CTF

CTF stands for high quality public education, professionalism, the right to free and full collective bargaining, trade union rights, human rights, equity, bilingualism and national unity in a democratic society. (Policy section 1, paragraph 2.3 – *CTF Handbook*)

PURPOSES OF CTF ADVOCACY

To develop CTF's advocacy profile, in accordance with the direction given by the Board of Directors.

KEY MESSAGES

- Over the past three decades, there has been a significant erosion of labour rights in Canada. According to the Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights (CFLR), “between 1982 and 2012, there have been 200 restrictive labour laws passed by the federal and provincial governments.” Examples include back-to-work legislation, suspension of workers' bargaining rights and imposed wage freezes or rollbacks, restrictions on unions' ability to organize, and restrictions on the scope of bargaining and other union activities.
- The attack on labour rights has intensified in the climate of fiscal austerity. Bill C-377 is a recent manifestation of the attack on unions and labour rights. Some see Bill C-377 as setting the stage for ultimately eliminating the Rand formula and importing right-to-work legislation into Canada from the U.S.
- As union density in Canada has decreased over the years, it is no coincidence that income inequality has worsened.
- There is growing international recognition that income inequality can hurt the economy. Divided societies also have more social problems with associated costs. More equal societies (less divided societies) are overall healthier societies and as such, reducing inequality is good public policy.
- The labour movement often touts the traditional union advantage as better wages and benefits, and decent working conditions. Another face of the union advantage is that it helps to keep income inequality in check. The message is clear – growing income inequality is bad for the economy, contributes to numerous social problems, and can be reduced through progressive labour law reform and other measures such as restoring fairness to the Canadian tax system.
- Unions protect and advance the interests of their members and of society as a whole. When considering the critical role of the labour movement in Canadian society, we need to ask ourselves: What would the middle class, our social safety net, our public education system, our democracy look like without unions?
- Indeed the success of public education is built on a high quality teaching profession supported by strong teacher unions.
- When teachers stand up for their collective bargaining and other labour rights, they are putting into practice the lessons in democracy they



teach their students every day – the importance of fighting for hard-won democratic rights and freedoms and of being active responsible citizens in a democratic society.

- Teachers' ability to exercise their fundamental labour rights is integral to the achievement of quality public education.

CURRENT CTF ACTIVITIES ON THIS FILE

- ✓ Hear My Voice national pro-democracy campaign – <http://vox.ctf-fce.ca>
- ✓ Government briefs on Bill C-377
- ✓ CTF recently co-sponsored with the Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights, NUPGE and UFCW Canada an international conference on the theme of "Labour Rights and Their Impact on Democracy, Economic Equality and Social Justice", held in Toronto.

CTF POLICY ON THIS TOPIC

Collective Bargaining (Policy section 2, subsection 2 – *CTF Handbook*)

Role and Functions of CTF (Policy section 1, subsection 3 – *CTF Handbook*)

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Froese-Germain, Bernie (Nov. 2013). "Labour rights, inequality and democracy." *CTF Perspectives*.

<http://perspectives.ctf-fce.ca/en/12/>

Labour Rights, Inequality and Democracy, CTF Research & Information, July 2013 (issue paper).

www.ctf-fce.ca/Research-Library/LabourRightsInequalityDemocracyWEB.pdf

Sran, Garry, et al. (March 2013). *Unions Matter: How the Ability of Labour Unions to Reduce Income Inequality and Influence Public Policy has been affected by Regressive Labour Laws*. Canadian Foundation for Labour Rights. Ottawa.

http://www.labourrights.ca/sites/labourrights.ca/files/documents/cflr_unions_matter.pdf

Manitoba Teachers' Society – Union Watch website.

www.mbteach.org/unionwatch/unionmain.html

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives – Labour Matters website.

<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/projects/labour-matters>