



THE CONFEDERATION OF CANADIAN UNIONS LA CONFÉDÉRATION DES SYNDICATS CANADIENS

February 14, 2018

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Re: Ratification of ILO Convention 98

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

On behalf of the Confederation of Canadian Unions (CCU), the largest affiliation of independent unions in the country, **I want to congratulate you and your government for ratifying International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 98.**

Since our founding in 1968, the CCU has advocated for the protection of workers' rights and collective bargaining, two fundamental values that are cornerstones of a free, just and democratic society.

In so doing, Canada has finally joined 164 other countries in ratifying this convention, which commits governments around the world to respecting those two key values.

As you are already aware, its official title is called the "Convention on the Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively," and is one of eight key ILO agreements that protect the basic right to join and belong to a union. And the timing of this couldn't be more important.

One of our affiliate-member unions based in Manitoba, the [Association of Employees Supporting Education Services \(AESES\)](#), has joined with others throughout the province and formed the Partnership to Defend Public Services (PDPS) in opposition to the provincial government's Bill 28, which will end free, collective bargaining and endanger the democratic rights of well over 100,000 workers in the province.

This is the first time that such a coalition has been formed, illustrating how seriously AESES and the CCU view Bill 28 and its violation of basic workers' rights and constitutional freedoms.

In other regions of the country, several CCU affiliate-members have recently fought back against cutbacks to wages and benefits, and threats to collective bargaining as well.

For nearly four decades, it's been exceptionally clear to legal experts throughout Canada that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms guarantees free and fair collective bargaining through the right of association.

And as the ILO specifically states: Convention 98 "requires Member States to ensure that workers enjoy adequate protection against acts of anti-union discrimination and to ensure protection of workers' organizations, and of employers' organizations against any acts of interference by the other. These represent the necessary conditions to ensure the full and meaningful collective bargaining which the Convention calls on Governments to promote."

That's why Canadian unions have brought numerous complaints to the ILO about the anti-labour practices of both federal and provincial governments. And in the vast majority of cases, the ILO has ruled in organized labour's favour.

This clearly illustrates that ratifying and living up to the expectations of ILO conventions makes a real, positive difference in the lives of millions of workers, both here in Canada and around the world.

After all, independent institutions like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) have concluded that **weaker unions result in stagnating incomes, particularly in the middle class, and higher levels of income inequality, leading to profoundly adverse effects on economic growth rates and unemployment.**

The fact remains that the most successful economies in the world with the highest incomes and living standards have the strongest labour movements and political environments that – along with progressive economic and social policies – allow unions to bargain collectively for better incomes and benefits, and more rights and protections on the job.

Unions aren't just good for workers who belong to them, they're also good for those who don't, since they put upward, competitive pressures on wages, benefits and rights for non-unionized workers as well.

By forcing employers in Canada to recognize the ideals set out by the International Labour Organization and respect collective bargaining, your government is helping that process in a very important way.

Once again, on behalf of workers throughout Canada, I want to congratulate you and your government for ratifying ILO Convention 98.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. Johnson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Kelly Johnson
President, Confederation of Canadian Unions
250.365.5309
contact@ccu-csc.ca
www.ccu-csc.ca