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REALIZING OUR  
**POWER**  
POTENTIAL

**A PROGRAM FOR ACTION  
IN UNIFOR'S RETAIL AND  
WHOLESALE SECTOR**

**Produced by:**

The Unifor Retail Wholesale Industry  
Council & Unifor Research Department



# Table of Contents

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## **Why a Program for Action?**

*Letter from the Retail Wholesale Industry Council Executive* ..... 1

**Part 1:** *A snapshot of retail and wholesale work in Canada*..... 3

**Part 2:** *Unifor in the retail sector* ..... 8

**Part 3:** *Identifying opportunities in a precarious economy* ..... 11

**Part 4:** *Building a 'Program for Action'* ..... 13

**4.1:** *Bargaining smartly, bargaining strategically* ..... 13

**4.2:** *'Critical mass' is critical: organizing new members*..... 19

**4.3:** *Power in numbers: strengthening our political action*..... 20

**4.4:** *Union-building: Communication, education and participatory democracy*..... 22

**Part 5:** *Summary of action items and checklist*..... 26



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*Retail is one of the largest sectors within Unifor, accounting for nearly 7% of our total membership.*

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## Why a Program for Action?

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# Letter from the Retail Wholesale Industry Council Executive

Sisters and brothers,

Unifor is one of Canada's largest and most influential labour unions. Formed on Labour Day weekend in 2013, our organization set out to be a different kind of union; a union that would represent all working people: young and old, employed and unemployed, those in jobs that are secure and those that are precarious. Unifor members work in nearly every major economic sector, giving the union a unique opportunity to identify best practices and explore innovative approaches to collective bargaining, membership engagement, campaigns, and especially organizing - identified as a key objective during the union's founding convention.

In Canada, there are more unorganized workers in the retail and wholesale sectors than any other industry. It's no surprise then that Canadian retail sales clerks are the lowest-paid, have the highest rates of workplace turnover and are provided the fewest work-

hours. Retail and wholesale workers deserve better.

Few people outside Unifor know that we are one of Canada's largest retail and wholesale workers unions - with more than 20,000 members working in supermarkets, warehouses, pharmacies, department stores, food co-ops, wholesale outfits and others across the country. In fact, retail is one of the largest sectors within Unifor, accounting for nearly 7% of our total membership.

Today, retail workers are at a crossroads. The industry continues to turn out jobs, but it is clear many of these jobs are insufficient for workers to make ends meet. The relatively few unionized shops that were once bastions of good-paying and family-supporting jobs face growing pressure as standards decline, and wages stagnate. At the same time, popular movements led by low-wage retail and fast-food workers are surfacing in communities across North America.

Workers are demanding "living wages", the right to unionize, equal treatment and other improvements. Marginalized women, workers of colour, new immigrants, young workers and others are drawing the connection between social equality and workplace justice in retail.

As Unifor continues to bargain with some of Canada's largest retailers and wholesalers (including Metro, Loblaws, Sobeys, Canadian Tire, Rexall, and others), and as we continue to organize new members in the broader service sector, we must do so with purpose, direction and vision. Retail is Canada's lead employment sector. One in eight Canadians work in this sector. It might not seem this way to us individually, but retail workers can be a

powerful political force. We can only realize this power potential if we are organized, and if we work together.

This "Program for Action" is a document designed to guide our work, to contextualize the challenges retail workers face, to identify opportunities for collective action and to outline specific steps Unifor leadership, local unions and activists can take to raise workplace standards in this industry. Together we can make this happen.

In solidarity,

***Unifor Retail and Wholesale  
Industry Council Executive***

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*Workers are demanding "living wages",  
the right to unionize, equal treatment  
and other improvements.*

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# 01

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*Retail and wholesale are, by many accounts, high-growth and high-demand segments of the labour market.*

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## Part 1

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# A snapshot of retail and wholesale work in Canada

**R**etail is Canada's single largest employment sector. Step back and think about this for a minute: Since 2007, there have been more Canadians working in stores and shops selling things than there are in factories making things.

Globalization has long threatened to shift Canada's goods-producing industries (like auto, steel, electronics and others) to cheaper overseas destinations while transforming our economy into one dominated by service-producing industries (like retail, health care, hospitality, finance) – workplaces that are less likely to be uprooted and relocated. This transition has had major implications for Canadian workers, including retail and wholesale workers. As factories went offshore, many of our country's best-paying jobs were lost at sea. As good jobs are removed from the economy, individuals are left with fewer dollars to spend in stores – leaving them with two options: take on higher debt loads to pay for things they need and want, or actively seek out

lower prices on the goods they buy. Both of these trends have helped shape the development of Canada's retail sector in recent decades.

## Job gains and workplace pains

Since 1987, retail employment has ballooned by more than 30%. The wholesaling sector (a sister industry to retail, dealing mostly with corporate customers) has increased by 47%. Retail and wholesale are, by many accounts, high-growth and high-demand segments of the labour market.

It's not surprising that more and more retail workers are needed to fill more and more retail space in Canada. Retail square footage continues to expand (11.5 million square feet per year from 2007 to 2013), thanks to steady growth in shopping malls, "power centres" (i.e. big-box store clusters often found in dense suburban areas), supermarkets, gas stations and other worksites. Retail shops are also becoming more productive, turning out higher sales by square footage year after year. Many retail workers possess important skills that contribute to these productivity gains: customer service, time-management, multi-tasking, working under pressure and managing conflict, among others. In fact, retail sales clerks are often viewed as front-line experts in the products and services they sell, which is of critical value to suppliers and manufacturers. Yet, all of this has not translated into tangible (and material) benefit for many workers.

### The reality is that working conditions in the retail sector lag far behind those in other industries:

- Average wages for sales clerks are \$13.72/hour - 42% lower than the national average;

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*Retail sales clerks are often viewed as front-line experts in the products and services they sell, which is of critical value to suppliers and manufacturers.*

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- Average work hours are 28.1 per week - 22% lower than the national average;
- Part-time workers make up 35% of the entire retail workforce - nearly double the national average<sup>1</sup>;
- For 'front-line' retail workers, part-time work predominates. Nearly half (48%) of all salespeople/clerks and more than two-thirds (65%) of cashiers are employed part-time; and
- Turnover is high, with 4.5 years as the average time spent in a retail job - a turnover rate that is 44% greater than other jobs.

Worse still: many of Canada's retail and wholesale workers, regardless of province, will earn only as much as the legislated minimum wage provides them. After adjusting for inflation, retail wages actually declined between 2000 and 2011. Sadly, wage growth in this industry has more to do with changes in political headwinds than any measure of true economic value - despite the fact that retail trade generates more than \$80 billion in value-added economic activity for Canada's provinces and territories each year.

If the retail sector is where most Canadians will seek employment now and in the future, then these challenges will have a much larger

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<sup>1</sup>According to a special Labour Force Survey tabulation run by the Retail Council of Canada, a national industry association, part-time work in the retail sector grew by 5% from 2007-2012, while full-time retail work declined by 4%.

impact on our economy as a whole. How can our economy thrive when our largest employment sector turns out the poorest quality jobs?

## Retail in Canada: big and diverse

Canada's retail and wholesale industry includes a long list of sub-sectors, selling a diverse range of products, including: home furnishings (e.g. Home Outfitters); electronics and appliance stores (e.g. Tepperman's, The Source), building materials (e.g. Home Depot); clothes (e.g. Hudson's Bay); food (e.g. Metro, Loblaw, Sobeys); automotive products (e.g. Canadian Tire); medicine and personal care products (e.g. Pharma Plus, Shoppers Drug Mart); gas stations (e.g. Petro Canada) and sporting goods (e.g. SportChek), among others.

More than 195,000 stores dot Canada's retail landscape, altogether generating \$475 billion in sales revenue. The Canadian retail sector is intensely competitive. Entry into the market is relatively easy as compared with other economic sectors (i.e. setting up a small local hardware store or a comic book shop is far less costly than, say, an auto parts factory). However, increasingly sophisticated global supply chains are tilting the business advantage to big, multinational players - who can wield extensive purchasing power over suppliers and utilize rapidly-moving international distribution networks, all in an effort to deliver cheaper prices to consumers. These multinationals also have the financial means to starve out worker unionizing drives, particularly in North America.

In this landscape, there's no surprise that large retail outfits are growing at a faster clip than small, "mom-and-pop" shops. Between 1997 and 2014, the number of large retail shops in Canada (stores that employ more than 100 people) has grown 2.5 times faster than the small outfits employing less than 20 people.<sup>2</sup> This helps illustrate the "big-box" retailing phenomenon that is not only homogenizing the shopping experience for consumers (largely in big city suburbs), but also rubbing out the independent book stores, supermarkets, sporting good shops, and other local outfits that have long been an important contributor to community life. However, despite these latest growth trends, 80% of retail workers (4 in every 5) can still be found in small boutique shops and medium sized stores, of less than 100 people.

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*Many of Canada's retail and wholesale workers, regardless of province, will earn only as much as the legislated minimum wage provides them.*

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Advanced retailing technologies (whether online purchasing, automated warehousing, automated check-outs, and others) is not only changing shopping habits, but also how businesses engage with their customers.

The digital revolution of retailing has not come to fruition as quickly as some observers had originally thought (e-commerce accounts for just 1.5% of total retail sales in Canada), but there's no denying that technology will continue

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<sup>2</sup>CANSIM Table 282-0076

to change the dynamics of the sector, including for workers, with potentially fewer jobs as well as changing tasks and responsibilities.

The advantage to workers and unions is that these incredibly wealthy, multi-national retailers inadvertently re-enforce the growing issue of income inequality. The low wages, lack of benefits, and constant opposition to union organizing efforts by these employers is viewed as a clear injustice, one that typically will engender sympathy from the general public. The link between global retail brands and shoddy, sweat-shop work conditions in countries like Bangladesh and others only serves to further this narrative.

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## **Reaching a boiling point**

If the retail industry is at a crossroads, the path most workers will choose involves a major rethink in how they are paid, scheduled, treated and valued. Too many retail workers in North America are attempting to eke out a living, without a living wage. This has spurred an unprecedented level of retail and fast-food worker activism. Millions of low-wage workers have reached a boiling point, demanding living wages for their work, the right to unionize and fairness on the job.

Unfortunately, most major retailers (apart from an enlightened few) continue to advocate the status quo. Low wages, high turnover, few benefits - all of these things are justified, so long as there are workers willing to do the job. This overlooks the desperation that afflicts many households and the scarcity of jobs in many communities. This also reflects an industry's general reluctance to invest in its workers, treat them as a strategic resource, and pay them a fair wage.

It's no surprise that the best-paid retail jobs are often found in unionized workplaces. Historically high levels of union density in supermarkets and department stores have yielded relatively high wages, access to benefits and fair treatment among employees. But as sector density has declined (only 14% of retail workers have a collective agreement, less than half the national average) so too have work standards. This has emboldened a growing crowd of anti-union retailers (led by the likes of Walmart and Target), those desperate to control costs, lower prices and presumably better manage their operations. As is the case with Target in Canada, this hard-line and anti-worker approach to doing business has proved an abysmal failure.

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## Unifor moving forward

Unions will have a critical role to play in raising standards for retail workers. There are 2 million Canadians in this industry who have no collective agreement and no union representation.

Unifor is Canada's largest union in the private sector and one of the lead unions in Canadian retail, representing more than 20,000 retail and wholesale workers. Ours is a storied history - one marked by momentous struggles, challenging campaigns, as well as landmark victories. We negotiate with Canada's biggest retailers. Our members are present in nearly every province, working in stores and warehouses that are fixtures in their communities.

Our union commits to working with allies in the labour movement, to win workplace gains for retail workers, to advocate for their best interests on the job and make improvements to their standard of living both at the bargaining table and in the halls of government.

Unifor will draw inspiration from the past and chart a new path forward in this important sector - fashioning new strategies on how we bargain, communicate, engage in political action work and involve our members; examine innovative solutions to workplace challenges; and protect long-standing benefits. Retail and wholesale jobs do not have to be precarious jobs. They can, and should, be good jobs. Jobs that workers can be proud of; jobs that can help us build a stronger, more prosperous economy.

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*Millions of low-wage workers have reached a boiling point, demanding living wages for their work, the right to unionize and fairness on the job.*

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# 02

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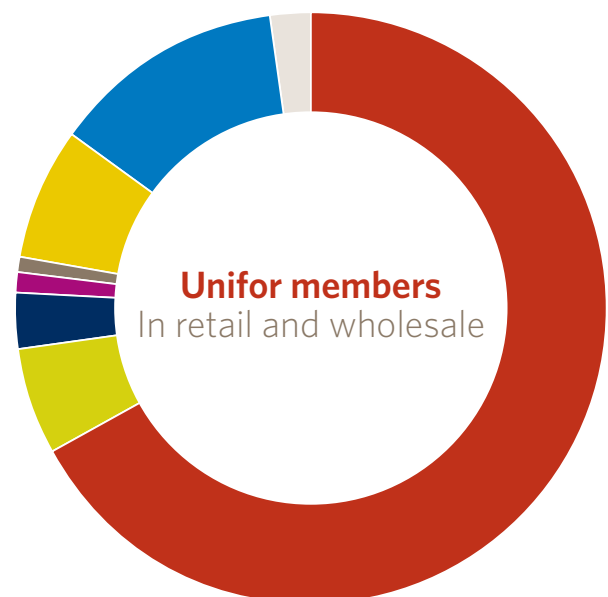
## Part 2

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# Unifor in the retail sector

Unifor represents more than 20,000 retail workers in a variety of shops, including at pharmacies, department stores and furniture and appliance stores as well as at various wholesaling, warehousing and food distribution outlets. However, the bulk of Unifor members (67%) work in supermarkets, including the largest three grocery chains in the country (namely Loblaw, Metro and Sobeys). In fact, with approximately 9,000 active members, Metro supermarket is one of the largest employers of Unifor members in the country.

|                                                                   |     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <span style="color: #C00000;">■</span> Grocery                    | 67% |
| <span style="color: #90EE90;">■</span> Department/Clothing        | 6%  |
| <span style="color: #000080;">■</span> Pharmacy                   | 3%  |
| <span style="color: #800080;">■</span> Furniture & Appliance      | 1%  |
| <span style="color: #654321;">■</span> Other Retail               | 1%  |
| <span style="color: #FFD700;">■</span> Food Wholesale & Warehouse | 7%  |
| <span style="color: #0070C0;">■</span> General Warehousing        | 13% |
| <span style="color: #A9A9A9;">■</span> Other Wholesale            | 2%  |



Unifor's supermarket members work across a range of different banners mostly owned by one of the big three grocers (although the union represents various worker-run co-op food shops as well). In most cases these stores, as well as the warehousing facilities that distribute products to the stores, are corporate-owned and operated. In other cases, stores and distribution centres are operated by franchisees. This is the case with most 'discount banners' (like Loblaw's No Frills banner and Metro's Food Basics banner) as well as third-party distribution centres like Atlas Logistics, which ships frozen product across the Loblaw chain.

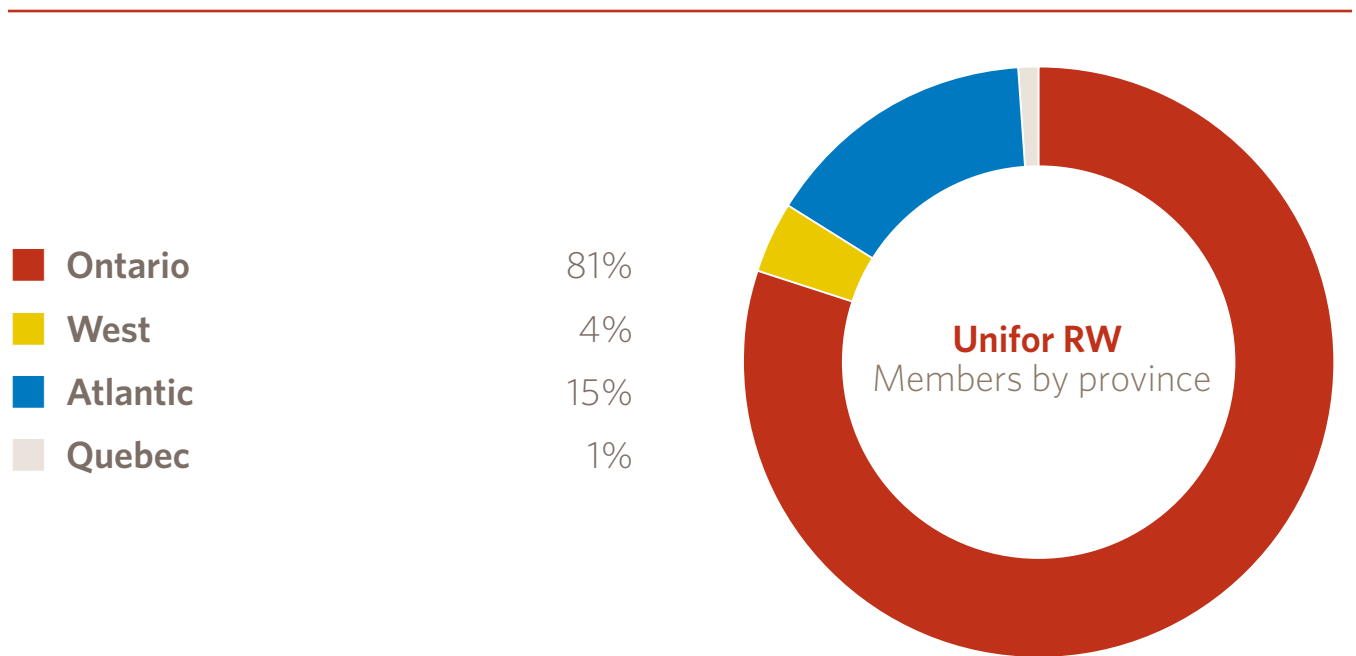
Unifor has successfully integrated multiple stores into single-unit collective agreements, leveraging greater power during contract negotiations. The union has also advanced an innovative model of integrating various, individually-owned, franchised locations into a single collective agreement – standardizing wages and working conditions across the banner. As a result, the retail sector is home to some of Unifor's largest single bargaining units. However, many of Unifor's 140 retail and

wholesale bargaining units negotiate stand-alone, single location agreements.

Unifor's retail and wholesale membership is spread across eight provinces (all except Saskatchewan and P.E.I.), with the majority (approximately 80%) concentrated in Ontario.

There are 45 local unions representing members in this sector across Canada. The largest of which is Unifor Local 414, an amalgamated local representing the bulk of supermarket, grocery warehousing, pharmacy and other retail workers across Ontario. With more than 12,000 active members, Local 414 is not only Unifor's largest retail local, it is Unifor's largest single local union (based on active membership numbers).

Local 597 represents 2,000 Loblaw workers in the province of Newfoundland, along with small retail shops on the island. The Loblaw unit is one of the largest retail bargaining units in Unifor, and is organized under the Dominion Stores banner. Locals 596, 1971 and 4624 in Nova Scotia represent hundreds of retail workers, including at Shoppers Drug Mart, Sobeys and Canadian Tire, respectively. Local



468 represents hundreds of workers at the former Safeway (now Sobeys) distribution centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba (slated for closure in 2015). Local 1090 represent workers at Sobeys Whitby, Ontario warehouse, while Local 222 represents three large logistics centres in Oshawa, shipping groceries, auto components and military equipment.

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## **Unifor's Retail Wholesale Industry Council**

Unifor has an active Industry Council that represents workers in the retail, wholesale and light food processing sectors – reflecting the membership structure when, in 1999, the former Retail Wholesale Canada (RWC) merged with the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW-Canada), one of Unifor's predecessor unions.

The Industry Council meets once each year, in a forum that coincides with Unifor's annual Canadian Council. Local unions affiliated to the Industry Council will send delegates to its meetings. Delegates are responsible for voting on any resolutions and others matters that may arise.

The Industry Council examines and analyzes trends in the retail industry, communicates bargaining and political action developments to leadership and delegates, and at times provides financial support to workplace strike efforts and other campaigns.

### **Key Demographics of Canadian retail workers**

- More than half of Canada's retail workers are women (54%). This figure climbs to over 60% when considering 'front-line' retail workers (e.g. cashiers, salesclerks). In the wholesale sector, nearly three-quarters (70%) of workers are men.
- Women represent a disproportionate share of part-time workers in the retail sector. In fact, 65% of all part-timers are women.
- Nearly one-third (31%) of all Canadian retail workers are between 15 and 24 years old.
- Approximately 258,000 retail workers are "racialized" (or about 1 in 9).

Source: Statistics Canada, annual Labour Force Survey figures, CANSIM table: 282-0008 and Unifor Research

# 03

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*Workers, through their unions, have been instrumental in building a more equal, fair and humane Canada.*

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## Part 3

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# Identifying opportunities in a precarious economy

**B**uilding a strong, relevant and progressive movement that advocates for the rights of working people is our goal. How we best build this movement is our perennial challenge - a challenge made more difficult by:

- An increasingly precarious economic climate;
- Growing corporate consolidation and power;
- The globalization of business and finance;
- Relentless employer and right-wing government attacks on workers' rights; and
- Rising inequality.

These forces work against the interests of working people. Today, a strong, relevant and progressive union movement must have the voices of retail workers at the forefront.

The bi-product of this imbalanced economic landscape is that jobs in Canada are becoming increasingly unstable, insecure and "on-demand". Wages, for many, are not keeping up with the cost of living. Work hours are more difficult to come by. The standard employment

relationship is continuously broken down, as a result of outsourcing, reliance on third-party employment agencies and overuse of temporary work arrangements. At the same time, public services are being cut and income supports are increasingly out of reach for those in need. All of this represents an economy that is precarious; a scourge on our collective well-being as workers.

But precariousness is old hat for many retail and wholesale workers. The week-to-week shifts in schedules; the ups and downs in work hours; the over-reliance on part-time labour as a means to cut costs; the denial of employment insurance and others workplace benefits for workers who do not work enough hours to qualify (and not by any fault of their own); the relentless downward pressure on wages; the denial of paid time off the job, even when sick, are commonplace to retail workers. This is the only workplace reality that many retail workers have ever known. And it is quickly seeping into other sectors of the economy.

In challenging these workplace trends, the union movement has (and will continue to) draw on the successes of the past for hope and inspiration. Workers, through their unions, have been instrumental in building a more equal, fair and humane Canada. The standardized work week, nine-hour workday, universal health care, public pensions, health and safety laws, pay equity – all of these things (and more) help define us as a compassionate, caring and conscientious nation.

But the union movement must also put past successes into context. Arguably, there's not been a useful response from unions to the question of precariousness in the past – otherwise, unionization in the retail industry would not be stuck at half of the national average.

How do we bargain gains effectively for both full-time and part-time retail workers? What

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## *What benefits can we provide prospective members in the retail sector, working in shops with high levels of employee turnover?*

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benefits can we provide prospective members in the retail sector, working in shops with high levels of employee turnover? How do we communicate with retail workers that live and work across vast distances from one another?

How do we craft legislative demands that benefit workers with limited work hours, low wages and no guarantee of work? How do we foster participation, engagement, activism and solidarity among members, regardless of age, work status, nationality, race or gender?

These and other important questions provide the context for Unifor's Program for Action in the retail and wholesale sector – a program to guide our work and help us identify opportunities for collective action.

### **Our opportunity**

Unifor has the opportunity, unlike other worker organizations, to learn from its own retail and wholesale members – drawing on their direct experiences in the workplace and at the bargaining table. This offers Unifor the chance to explore innovative workplace solutions to the challenges retail workers face. Not only is this an opening for the union to make a significant difference in the lives of 20,000 members, it enables the union to speak with confidence to the 2 million unorganized retail and wholesale workers in Canada that are in need of support.

# 04

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## Part 4

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# Building a Program for Action

The following proposals have been developed in coordination with representatives of Unifor's Retail Wholesale Council executive board, national and local union leadership as well as Unifor staff. These proposals were also informed by the union's retail sector leadership and activists participating in Unifor's Retail Wholesale Workers Conference in March 2015.

### **4.1: Bargaining smartly, bargaining strategically**

Collective bargaining is our most effective tool to raise workplace standards and make meaningful and positive change in the lives of members. Having the legal right to negotiate improvements and necessary changes to our work, directly with our employers, is an empowering (although sometimes frustrating) exercise in workplace democracy. Few retail workers in Canada have the opportunity to bargain collectively with their employer. This can partly explain the low-wages and poor working conditions many workers face. Unifor must take full advantage of its bargaining

opportunities to inspire confidence in its members and to set a workplace standard that non-union workers in the retail and wholesale industry can aspire to.

### *Bargaining approach*

How we approach bargaining in the retail sector is of crucial importance. Each round of bargaining is different from the next, and each workplace will have its own unique set of challenges. But in all cases, union leadership and activists must take steps to ensure that our approach to bargaining is consistently:

- **Inclusive** – actively seeking input and guidance from all members in our bargaining units, reflecting the diversity of our members;
- **Accessible** – creating mechanisms that enable the full participation of members (e.g. organizing multiple meetings to ensure participation across shifts, organizing membership surveys for those who cannot attend in person, providing food if meetings are held during mealtimes, translating materials into all required languages, etc...); and
- **Transparent** – members must be fully briefed on all relevant details pertaining to bargaining and their collective agreement, prior to, during, and after the negotiations process.

### *Bargaining policies*

The following is a list of key bargaining policies that local leadership and staff in the retail sector should strive to achieve and maintain in the course of negotiations:

#### **A. Three-year contract terms**

- Unifor has established a policy that requires all collective agreements be negotiated on a three-year term. This applies to the entire union. Employers often seek to lock in collective

agreements for longer periods of time, despite constant changes in economic conditions. Further to this, collective bargaining is an important part of our union's democracy – and long-term agreements only serve to limit worker input on workplace matters.

#### **Action #1:**

*All Unifor agreements will be negotiated for the duration of no longer than three-years. In the event that an agreement term exceeds the three-year limit, bargaining committees will make every reasonable effort to negotiate future deals on a three-year term. Any proposal to negotiate an agreement for longer than a three-year term must be approved by the Unifor President, Secretary-Treasurer or Quebec Director's office.*

#### **B. Membership-led mandates and deadline bargaining**

- Unifor members are responsible for putting forward contract proposals and setting the mandate of their democratically-elected bargaining committee. Officers of the local union, along with union staff, may be requested to assist in preparing for negotiations enabling the committee to fulfill its mandate.
- Negotiations should also be conducted within a reasonable timeframe, as determined by the elected bargaining committee along with the union staff representative tasked with overseeing the negotiations. To ensure that timeframes are adhered to, bargaining committees and staff are expected to identify and communicate to members a bargaining deadline, for all rounds of negotiations.



### Action #2:

*Upon entering negotiations, bargaining committees must have a clearly-defined mandate, established by the members. All negotiations will take place in a pre-determined timeline (that is of reasonable length), culminating in a bargaining deadline.*

#### C. Fair representation on bargaining committees

- More than half (about 54%) of Canadian retail workers are women. In some of Unifor's bargaining units, the ratio between part-time and full-time is even wider. It is vital that local union leadership are aware of these, and other, workplace demographics. It is also important for local leadership to actively encourage participation among equity-seeking groups in bargaining and other union work (i.e. women, young workers, workers with disabilities, workers of colour, aboriginal workers, LGBT workers).

### Action #3:

*Where possible, and without undermining the democratic integrity of the union's elections process, local unions will strive to ensure a fair level of representation on bargaining committees between members that work full and part time. Local unions must also encourage the participation of members in equity-seeking groups to run for election to these committees, including identifying and removing barriers to participation wherever possible.*

#### D. Coordinated bargaining across units

- The retail sector is increasingly dominated by large firms. This is partly a result of mergers and acquisitions and the unfortunate decline of small, independent retail shops in many communities. As retail chains grow larger, it is important that our union explores ways to leverage our bargaining power with major employers, and across the retail supply chain.

### Action #4:

*Unifor locals across Canada will examine ways to better coordinate negotiations across bargaining units to not only exercise greater leverage over the employer, but to also build collaborative working relationships and solidarity among the leadership, activists and members of a single employer. This may involve the alignment of contract expiry dates, commitments to pattern collective agreements, or other collaborative initiatives.*

#### E. Expand scope and recognition clauses

- Large retailers and wholesalers in Canada will operate multiple shops and warehouses across its chain and in a given region. Part of the challenge workers face when trying to form a union is that employers will often treat each individual workplace as a standalone unit, enabling them to sow divisions between unionized and non-unionized employees. This destabilizing practice will continue unless collective agreements in the RW sector contain expansive "scope" clauses (e.g. clauses that extend contract coverage to all employer shops in a given area or region) as well as voluntary recognition

agreements, that prevent employers from opening up non-unionized locations to circumvent or undermine existing collective agreements.

### Action #5:

*Bargaining committees should expand existing contract scope clauses so that collective bargaining rights are extended to non-union workers employed in Unifor-represented workplaces. Additionally, bargaining committees should strive to negotiate voluntary recognition clauses that provide collective bargaining rights to workers in shops, warehouses and other facilities under a common employer banner. These recognition clauses should cover workers across provinces, territories or other appropriate geographic regions. Voluntary recognition clauses should extend to future worksites, as well as existing ones.*

## F. Standardize contract 'tiers'

- The nature of any negotiation requires some form of give-and-take. However, the practice of two-tiering (i.e. protecting, or "red-circling", contract provisions for an existing group of workers, while removing or weakening those same provisions for future hires) is a divisive tactic that undermines solidarity. It is an act that privileges certain workers over others, often based on a worker's date-of-hire. Two-tiering has sown lasting divisions in workplaces, including in Unifor-represented workplaces. The consequences have been significant, including for employers who must deal with productivity declines and poor workplace morale.

### Action #6:

*Unifor does not endorse the practice of two-tiering. That said, the union acknowledges that extraordinary circumstances in the past have resulted in certain agreements containing tiered provisions within them. The union shall not propose the practice of tiering in any future round of bargaining. Any future proposal brought forward by a bargaining committee for a two-tier collective agreement must first be discussed with the office of the Unifor National President.*

### Action #7:

*Where possible, and in situations where tiers currently exist in collective agreements, bargaining committees will take all reasonable steps to harmonize provisions to a single standard that is acceptable to members.*

## G. Wage protection

- Minimum wage increases are important legislative tools to progressively raise work and living standards for low-wage workers. The threat that higher minimum wages kill jobs is not grounded in fact. Many studies suggest that higher minimum wages have the opposite effect: higher wages lead to greater spending power which, in turn, increases the demand for work. Unifor will continue to champion minimum (and living) wages, in all jurisdictions.
- However, we cannot ignore the frustrations expressed by workers who earn wages marginally above the legislated minimum. Some workers, including many in our union, have spent years navigating through complex wage

scales, gaining on-the-job experience, only to find themselves at or near the bottom rung of the pay ladder once a minimum wage hike kicks in.

### Action #8:

*Unifor bargaining committees should strive to negotiate wage "escalator" clauses that ensure all members receive a proportional benefit from a legislated minimum wage increase.*

## H. Guaranteed hours of work

- Retail workers, particularly part-time workers, should have the security in knowing how many work hours they will receive, week-to-week. Severe swings in work hours create uncertainty and stress on workers, making it difficult to manage personal and household finances and negatively affecting their health. Various Unifor collective agreements have provisions for guaranteed hours of work (i.e. a minimum number of work hours that qualifying members are promised, each week).

### Action #9:

*Guaranteed hours of work provisions should be negotiated in all retail collective agreements. Efforts should be made to constantly improve these provisions, including by shortening the qualifying period and establishing complementary "guaranteed work days" (e.g. dedicated days of the week where an employee knows they will be scheduled to work).*

## I. Fair scheduling

- The total income received by part-time workers has as much to do with their hourly rate of pay as it does the number of hours they work. Employers constantly strive to reduce hours in an effort to cut costs. Too often, the process of scheduling workers is rife with unfairness - schedules can be easily manipulated to favour certain employees over others. In some cases, the act of scheduling can be used as a tool for discipline over retail workers.
- Limiting the availability of work hours also has the potential to create friction among workers, who end up competing for those available hours. Without clear (and fair) scheduling processes, workers are subject to arbitrary decision-making by the boss.

### Action #10:

*Unifor will strive to negotiate fair scheduling language in all retail and wholesale collective agreements, and protect and strengthen fair scheduling language in agreements where it already exists. Fair scheduling includes (but is not limited to) rules governing the assignment of available hours and the eligibility to receive them. Fair scheduling also includes rules providing workers sufficient advance notice of their work schedules and safeguards against shift cancellations. Work hours should be allotted to members on the basis of seniority and ability to perform the work properly. Additionally, workers should be given full opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to perform various tasks, across multiple departments. This would provide them the flexibility to work any available hours.*

## J. Wage scales

- Wage scales (also referred to as “wage schedules”, or “grow-in periods”) are common in most sectors, including the retail and wholesale sector. These scales will outline the time it takes a new hire to reach the standard rate of pay for the workplace, or the “top rate” for their job classification. Wages increase as workers gain more experience on the job, or so the thinking goes. It’s important for our union to establish wage scales that are fair to workers. In the case of most part-time retail workers today, they are required to work thousands of hours (in some cases 9,000 hours) before reaching the top rate of pay. Sometimes, the end rate is just marginally higher than the original start-rate. Hours-based scales are confusing (with no clear end-date in sight), have served to drag down wages and create a sense of frustration among workers (leading to high rates of turnover).

### Action #11:

*Unifor supports wage schedules that provide workers a clear, unambiguous path to reach the top rate of pay within a reasonable timeframe. Unifor believes this is best achieved by seniority or service date – not by hours worked. In cases where hours-based scales currently exist, bargaining committees are encouraged to renegotiate them accordingly.*

## K. Pensions and benefits

- Employer-provided pensions are under constant attack. For those lucky enough to have a workplace pension, many employers are looking to shave costs by lowering contributions, or refusing to guarantee a set pension benefit. Investment risk is increasingly being shifted on to the backs of workers. In light of these changing trends, public pensions (including CPP and QPP) need to be expanded to ensure retirement security for all.
- In Ontario, for instance, the provincial government is moving ahead with plans to implement its ORPP (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) in 2017. This presents an opportunity to improve retirement security for retail and wholesale workers, and Unifor supports the initiative.

However, we should be aware that employers are likely to attack existing workplace pension plans to pay their share of contributions to the ORPP – a move Unifor bargaining committees must ward off where possible.

- Unifor has successfully negotiated defined benefit pensions for retail workers in the past, in an industry where pension protection is lacking. Many full-time workers have access to these pensions as well as employer-provided health and dental benefits. Some part-time workers have these benefits as well. All Unifor members in the retail and wholesale sector deserve pension and benefit protection, to enhance their retirement security and personal well-being.

### Action #12:

*Unifor will continue to defend current defined benefit pension plans and work to enhance these plans in all cases. Where plans do not currently exist, the union will strive to negotiate pensions and other retirement security provisions for both full and part-time members. Unifor will also actively negotiate health, dental and other personal well-being benefits for all members. The union will work to ensure full access to these benefits regardless of full-time or part-time status.*

### Action #13:

*In an industry that is disproportionately filled with young workers, students and workers in search of training, bargaining committees will identify opportunities to negotiate employer contributions to educational attainment, and create the conditions for a complementary school-work balance.*

## 4.2 'Critical mass' is critical: organizing new members

Unifor was built to be an organizing union – one that fosters a 'culture of organizing', an activity that all leadership, activists and staff will participate in. Unifor has devoted unprecedented resources to new member organizing, and will be guided by advanced and strategic organizing techniques.

We know that economies with high levels of union density are better off. There is a correlation between high unionization and worker well-being. Unions democratize the workplace, help redistribute income from wealthy corporations to the working class, and offer a political counterforce to wealthy and privileged private interests.

Not surprisingly, where retail workers are unionized they are typically better off. Historically high levels of union density in Canadian supermarkets, department stores and distribution centres have yielded better than average wages, benefits and working conditions. Unfortunately, unionization in the broader retail sector has been low. Worse still, unionization has significantly declined in supermarkets and department stores, which are no longer the bastions of good retail jobs they once were. The 'critical mass' of unionization that workers once enjoyed (where union wages dictated the average market wage) has slipped away. This has left retail workers worse for wear.

We cannot deny that unions have had a difficult time organizing workers in the broader retail sector. Much of the sector has been, and remains, non-union. With high turnover rates, many of those involved in union drives will not stick around long enough to see certification through to completion. Big gains are seldom realized in a first-round of negotiations, which can deflate worker expectations.

These are significant challenges to overcome – challenges that require tenacious effort, custom-made organizing strategies (based on a workplace's unique design), and open lines of communication to be developed. As more retail workers unionize, the fear of organizing will subside and the more likely industry standards will rise.

## Organizing policies

The following is a list of key policies that should guide the union's organizing efforts in the broader retail sector:

### A. Engage Unifor retail members to assist retail organizing efforts

- Unifor members in the retail and wholesale sector offer a wealth of experience to organizers. Our members are knowledgeable, are attuned to recent developments in the industry, represent a range of diverse racial-ethnic communities and with proper training and preparation can be a major asset to any strategic organizing effort.

#### Action #14:

*Strategic organizing campaigns in the retail and wholesale sector should involve Unifor retail and wholesale local unions and members, where possible.*

### B. Strategic organizing assessment

#### Action #15

*Unifor's Retail Wholesale Industry Council shall undertake an examination of strategic organizing targets in the retail and wholesale sectors, and provide recommendations to the national union's Organizing Department. The Industry Council shall conduct these assessments on a regular basis.*

### C. Community-based organizing

- Experience tells us that there are unique challenges for workers organizing in the retail and wholesale industry. High turnover makes it hard to stabilize "inside" committees. Constantly-changing work hours make union

sympathizers more vulnerable to management intimidation. Low wages mean there's a lot at stake. Too often, workers choose to protest by quitting (which might feel satisfying at the moment, but it doesn't change the fact that working conditions are poor).

- Different organizing models are needed to help retail workers understand the value of unions, work in solidarity with one another, and exercise their rights. The good news is that many groups are testing out new models of retail worker outreach. These models stretch beyond individual workplace organizing and explore community-based approaches to organizing and political action.

#### Action #16:

*Unifor's Retail Wholesale Industry Council shall undertake an examination of various community-centred retail worker organizing models, in Canada, the United States and around the world. The Council shall report back on the feasibility of a program for Unifor and recommendations for further action to an upcoming Industry Council meeting.*

## 4.3 Power in numbers: strengthening our political action

Most of the power that unionized workers wield is at the bargaining table. Negotiating the terms and conditions of employment, directly with the boss, is a true manifestation of democracy at work.

However, not all workplace and industry problems can be solved through collective bargaining. Sometimes the challenges we face

affect a much larger society of people, not just those in a specific workplace. Minimum wages, employment insurance, universal pensions, child care: these issues (and more) are largely guided by democratically-elected governments, and the legislative direction they have set. Workers have a right to voice their opinions on political matters; and unions have the right to champion their interests.

Social bargaining (or political bargaining) is often just as important as collective bargaining. A strategic and coordinated collective bargaining strategy must be complemented with a clear commitment to political action among union activists and all members, for retail workers to raise their standard of living.

### *Political action policies*

The following is a list of key policies that should guide the union's political action work in the broader retail sector:

#### **A. Minimum wages and living wages**

- Many retail workers earn the minimum wage and minimum wage rates fluctuate based on province and territory. In most jurisdictions, minimum wage levels do not rise in conjunction with the cost of living, often making it more difficult for low wage workers to make ends meet.
- Minimum wages are the lowest legal rate an employer can pay someone to work. Although, in many cases, 'sub-minimum' wages exist – legislated wage rates that are below the standard minimum, typically for young workers and designated occupations. Living wages, on the other hand, would provide a worker, working full-time hours, enough income to live above the poverty line.

#### **Action #17:**

*Unifor will actively campaign for improvements to provincial, territorial and federal minimum wage levels. Unifor also supports efforts to ensure minimum wage rates match living wage standards, and will work toward this goal.*

#### **Action #18:**

*Unifor will not support legislated 'sub-minimum' rates of pay for young workers or liquor servers and will advocate for one single minimum wage standard for all workers – indexed to the rate of inflation. Unifor bargaining committees should strive to remove any provisions for 'sub-minimum' wages, if they exist in current collective agreements.*

#### **B. Statutory holidays**

- Governments are responsible for legislating statutory holidays. These are a set of recognized public holidays where workers are generally provided time off, with pay. There are various exemptions to statutory holiday laws that allow select retailers to continue operating – and workers to continue working (although at a mandatory premium rate of pay). It's no surprise that some retailers actively lobby governments to extend the statutory holiday exemptions or simply eliminate stat holidays laws altogether.

### Action #19:

*Unifor will actively oppose any weakening of statutory holiday laws, and believe all retail and wholesale workers should enjoy guaranteed time off the job. Unifor also supports the expansion of statutory holidays in Canada, providing all workers additional days of personal (and paid) time off.*

### C. Legislated work hour protections/Retail Worker 'Bill of Rights'

- In union shops, qualifying part-time workers are afforded guaranteed weekly hours (pending availability), guaranteed payment in the event of a shift cancellation (within a reasonable time frame) and access to the 'most available hours' in a store, regardless of department (as long as the employee is properly trained to do multiple jobs). Most retail workers in Canada do not enjoy these benefits. For many, scheduling – and access to hours – is equally (if not more) important than hourly rates of pay. Unifor must work to not only strengthen work hour protections in its collective agreements, but ensure all retail workers – union and non-union – have these protections as well.

### Action #20:

*Unifor will champion a suite of legislative work hour protections for part-time workers, including (but not limited to): guaranteed weekly work hours, full reimbursement of hours in the event of late shift cancellations and most available hours protocols in a workplace.*

### Action #21:

*Inspired by developments in the United States, where worker advocacy groups and unions are championing a retail worker 'Bill of Rights' (a suite of legislative protections granting retail workers better access to work hours and equal treatment between part-time and full-time workers), Unifor's Retail and Wholesale Industry Council shall explore the merits of such an initiative in Canada in collaboration with sister unions, worker advocacy groups, anti-poverty organizations and other progressive civil society institutions.*

## 4.4 Union-building: Communication, education and participatory democracy

Unifor is a stronger union with a fully active and engaged retail and wholesale memberships. The voices of retail workers must always be present, informed and challenging. Retail workers must speak as loud as its share of the union's total membership, if not louder. Retail sector leadership and activists must be a part of the decision-making and direction-setting of the union.

Unifor is an activist union, and an activist union requires an engaged and inspired activist base. The union boasts one of the richest union educational programs in the world. Its ranks of expert staff and leadership are useful resources to assist campaigns and other member-led initiatives.

Unifor was also built to be an open union. One that takes proactive steps to communicate with members - bringing their union to them, and not the other way around.



A union that advocates for retail and wholesale workers is a union that understands the connections between workplace and community life; a union that supports retail workers is a union that explores innovative solutions to ever-changing workplace challenges; a union that attracts retail workers is one that builds bridges between members, and actively communicates with them; a union that inspires retail workers is a union that empowers its members. Unifor, its local retail unions, and its Retail Wholesale Industry Council commit to building this type of union.

### *Union-building policies*

The following is a list of key policies that should guide Unifor's work in building a strong union for retail and wholesale workers:

#### **A. Maximum participation in Unifor Councils**

- Unifor's Regional and Canadian Councils act as parliamentary bodies of the union. Local union delegates get to see the full breadth of the union's work on display, and are able to actively participate in floor debates on resolutions and other matters. Retail and wholesale workers can offer their own unique analysis in political debates, labour law discussions, equity strategies and a host of other workplace and social issues. Raising awareness of the challenges in retail, and how those challenges intersect with other Unifor workplaces, starts at these important Council meetings.

#### **Action #22:**

*Unifor's retail and wholesale locals will aim to send a full complement of delegates to Unifor's regional and Canadian councils, and encourage members to attend as observers as well.*

#### **B. Affiliating more local unions to Unifor's Retail Wholesale Industry Council**

- Unifor's Retail Wholesale Industry Council is an important body for the union's retail membership. The Industry Council provides a forum for cross-local collaboration and strategizing around issues like bargaining and organizing. All Unifor local unions that represent retail and wholesale workplaces are entitled to affiliate with, and participate in, the Retail Wholesale Industry Council, and are encouraged to do so.

#### **Action #23:**

*The RW Industry Council executive board will undertake a regular review of Unifor's retail and wholesale sector membership, and encourage local union affiliation to the Council. The Council shall strive to represent all retail and wholesale bargaining units in the union.*

#### **C. Ongoing retail and wholesale worker dialogue**

- In 2015, Unifor organized its first National Retail and Wholesale Workers Conference. The Conference provided participating members and staff with information on industry developments, changing trends and an opportunity to hear from leading experts within the broader progressive movement. This dialogue is critical. It complements the ongoing work of Industry Councils and can provide important 'capacity-building' opportunities for members (e.g. education, training, skills development).

### Action #24:

*Unifor's national and local union leadership, along with the RW Industry Council executive board and staff will determine a schedule for regular Retail and Wholesale sector-wide dialogue, whether through special organized events, future conferences, workshops, guest presentations in conjunction with, or in addition to, regular RW Industry Council meetings.*

#### D. Facilitating membership education

- Education plays a vital role in building a strong, socially-conscious, trade union movement. Unifor boasts a comprehensive and world-class union member education program. A well-informed activist base is the precursor to a more engaged union membership, strong collective agreements, and a committed steward body; and it starts with education.

### Action #25:

*Union staff and local union negotiating committees will aim to bargain Unifor's Paid Education Leave in all retail and wholesale collective agreements. Local unions will also canvass interested members to participate in the 4-week PEL Program, the Family Education Program among other relevant programs and courses offered at the Unifor Family Education Centre.*

### Action #26:

*Unifor locals will assign annual benchmarks to encourage (and measure) overall membership enrollment in educational programs. Benchmarks should be assigned by the local union executive board in coordination with the local union education committee, and reviewed regularly. Locals should also strive to reconnect with trained members, to explore ways of utilizing their skills, abilities and interests to support the union's work.*

#### E. Connecting and communicating with members: Being open and transparent

- The structure of retail and wholesale locals has long posed a challenge when attempting to organize membership meetings. Multi-location bargaining units that are spread across relatively vast distances, deters many members from participating.

The irregular schedules that members work (in what are often 24-7 store operations) simply add to that challenge. For an increasing number of members who don't speak fluent English or French, language becomes a barrier to participation. Nevertheless, gathering members together to discuss their issues, to share information and to give them the space to ask the tough questions, is vital to union-building. Most of this work happens in the period leading up to contact re-negotiation, which is every three years or more. This is insufficient. More needs to be done.

- Membership meetings – in whatever form they take – are critical union building opportunities. As new technologies surface, opportunities to connect with members have become easier and more affordable.

### **Action #27:**

*Local unions will identify opportunities to regularly engage with and inform its members about union business, through in-person, online or telephone conference meetings, as well as making collective agreements, financial statements and other relevant information fully accessible to members. The union must be visible to our members. It must also continue to be open and transparent with members.*

### **Action #28:**

*Local unions will establish an online presence, whether through an official Unifor local union website or other means. Local unions should set aside ample resources to regularly maintain its website, and promote it to members.*

### **Action #29:**

*Local unions will maintain active membership mail (and email) lists. These lists will be used by local union leadership to provide members up-to-date information about union events, campaigns and other workplace-related matters.*

### **Action #30:**

*Local unions should become familiar with various online social media tools. Local union leadership should determine how best these tools can be utilized to share information and open lines of communication with members.*

## **F. Build steward support networks**

- Holding an elected workplace union position can be one of the most rewarding experiences for a member. In the eyes of most members, stewards and sub-stewards are the face of the union. These are our front-line union-builders.
- Despite being a rewarding experience, holding an elected steward position can also be very stressful and time-consuming. Nearly all of the elected stewards in Unifor's retail workplaces volunteer their time to do the job (with occasional time negotiated for union business). Stewards are often thrown into challenging situations and expected to be experts on collective agreement language, legal matters, pensions and benefits – whether they have proper training or not.
- Unifor's retail sector is made up of many small-to-medium-sized workplaces, each with its own elected steward body (sometimes these positions are left vacant). Unifor locals must proactively support and communicate with workplace stewards, to ensure the best possible representation for members.

### **Action #31:**

*Unifor local unions will establish their own steward support network, to facilitate regular dialogue with elected workplace representatives, identify training and other support needs, and to encourage information-sharing between stewards across the various worksites.*

# 05

## Part 5:

# Summary of action items and checklist

| Category   | Subject                                      | Item # | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Local union progress |
|------------|----------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Bargaining | Contract terms                               | 1      | All Unifor <b>agreements will be negotiated for the duration of no longer than three-years.</b> In the event that an agreement term exceeds the three-year limit, bargaining committees will make all reasonable effort to negotiate future deals on a three-year term.                                                                                                                                                                                            |                      |
|            | Member-led mandates and bargaining deadlines | 2      | Upon entering negotiations, <b>bargaining committees must have a clearly-defined mandate, established by the members. All negotiations will take place in a pre-determined timeline</b> (that is of reasonable length), culminating in a bargaining deadline.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |                      |
|            | Fair representation                          | 3      | Where possible, and without undermining the democratic integrity of the union's elections process, <b>local unions will strive to ensure a fair level of representation on bargaining committees between members that work full and part time. Local unions must also encourage the participation of members in equity-seeking groups to run for election to these committees,</b> including identifying and removing barriers to participation wherever possible. |                      |

| Category | Subject                                | Item # | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Local union progress |
|----------|----------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|          | Coordinated bargaining                 | 4      | Unifor locals across Canada will <b>examine ways to better coordinate negotiations across bargaining units</b> to not only exercise greater leverage on a given employer, but also build collaborative working relationships and solidarity among the leadership, activists and members of a single employer. This may involve the alignment of contract expiry dates, commitments to pattern collective agreements, or other collaborative initiatives.                                                                                                                                                                                         |                      |
|          | Expanded scope and recognition clauses | 5      | Bargaining committees should <b>expand existing contract scope clauses so that collective bargaining rights are extended to non-union workers employed in Unifor-represented workplaces.</b> Additionally, <b>bargaining committees should strive to negotiate voluntary recognition clauses that provide collective bargaining rights to workers in shops, warehouses and other facilities under a common employer banner.</b> These recognition clauses should cover workers across provinces, territories or other appropriate geographic regions. Voluntary recognition clauses should extend to future worksites, as well as existing ones. |                      |
|          | Standardize contract "tiers"           | 6      | Bargaining committees shall <b>never propose the practice of tiering in any future round of bargaining.</b> And any future proposal brought forward by a bargaining committee for a tiered collective agreement must first be discussed with the office of the Unifor national president.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                      |
|          |                                        | 7      | Where possible, and in situations where tiers currently exist, <b>bargaining committees will take all reasonable steps to harmonize provisions to a single standard that is acceptable to members.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                      |
|          | Wage protection                        | 8      | Unifor bargaining committees should <b>strive to negotiate wage escalator clauses that aim to ensure all members receive a proportional benefit from a legislated minimum wage increase.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                      |
|          | Guaranteed hours of work               | 9      | <b>Guaranteed hours of work provisions should be negotiated in all collective agreements.</b> Efforts should be made to constantly improve these provisions, including by shortening the qualifying period and establishing complementary "guaranteed work days" (e.g. dedicated days of the week where an employee knows they will be scheduled to work).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                      |

| Category | Subject               | Item # | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Local union progress |
|----------|-----------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|          | Fair scheduling       | 10     | Unifor will <b>strive to negotiate fair scheduling language in all collective agreements, and protect and strengthen fair scheduling language in agreements where it already exists.</b> Fair scheduling includes (but is not limited to) rules governing the assignment of available hours and the eligibility to receive them. Fair scheduling also includes rules providing workers sufficient advance notice of their work schedules and safeguards against shift cancellations. Work hours should be allotted to members on the basis of seniority and ability to perform the work properly. Additionally, workers should be given full opportunity to acquire the necessary skills to perform various tasks, across multiple departments. This would provide them the flexibility to work any available hours. |                      |
|          | Wage scales           | 11     | In the retail and wholesale sectors, Unifor supports wage schedules that provide workers a clear, unambiguous path to reach the top rate of pay within a reasonable timeframe. Unifor believes this is best achieved by seniority or service date - not by hours worked. In cases <b>where hours-based wage scales currently exist, bargaining committees are encouraged to renegotiate them accordingly.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                      |
|          | Pensions and benefits | 12     | Unifor will <b>continue to defend current defined benefit pension plans and work to enhance these plans in all cases.</b> Where plans do not currently exist, <b>the union will strive to negotiate pensions and other retirement security provisions for both full and part-time members.</b> Unifor will also actively negotiate health, dental and other personal well-being benefits for all members. The union will work to ensure full access to these benefits regardless of full-time or part-time status.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                      |
|          |                       | 13     | In an industry that is disproportionately filled with young workers, students and workers in search of training, <b>bargaining committees will identify opportunities to negotiate employer contributions to educational attainment, and create the conditions for a complementary school-work balance.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                      |

| Category         | Subject                                         | Item # | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Local union progress |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| Organizing       | Utilize Unifor RW members in organizing efforts | 14     | Strategic <b>organizing campaigns in the retail and wholesale sector should involve Unifor RW locals and RW members</b> , where possible.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                      |
|                  | Strategic organizing assessment                 | 15     | Unifor's Retail Wholesale Industry Council shall <b>undertake an examination of strategic organizing targets in the retail and wholesale sectors</b> , and provide recommendations to the national union's Organizing Department. The Industry Council shall conduct these assessments on a regular basis.                                       |                      |
|                  | Explore community-based organizing models       | 16     | Unifor's Retail Wholesale Industry Council shall <b>undertake an examination of various community-centred retail worker organizing models, in Canada, the United States and around the world</b> . The Council shall report back on the feasibility of a program and recommendations for further action to an upcoming Industry Council meeting. |                      |
| Political Action | Minimum wages/living wages                      | 17     | Unifor will <b>actively campaign for improvements to provincial, territorial and federal minimum wage levels</b> . Unifor also supports efforts to ensure minimum wage rates match living wage standards, and will work toward this goal.                                                                                                        |                      |
|                  |                                                 | 18     | Unifor will <b>not support legislated 'sub-minimum' rates of pay for young workers or liquor servers and will advocate for one single minimum wage standard for all workers</b> - indexed to the rate of inflation. Unifor bargaining committees should strive to remove these provisions, if they exist in current collective agreements.       |                      |
|                  | Statutory holidays                              | 19     | Unifor will <b>actively oppose any weakening of statutory holiday laws, and believe all retail and wholesale workers should enjoy guaranteed time off the job</b> . Unifor also supports the expansion of statutory holidays in Canada, providing all workers additional days of personal (and paid) time off.                                   |                      |
|                  | Work hour protections/ Bill of Rights           | 20     | Unifor will <b>champion a suite of legislative work hour protections for part-time workers, including (but not limited to); guaranteed weekly work hours, full reimbursement of hours in the event of late shift cancellations and most available hours protocols in a workplace</b> .                                                           |                      |

| Category                               | Subject                                | Item # | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Local union progress |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|                                        |                                        | 21     | Inspired by developments in the United States, where worker advocacy groups and unions are championing a retail worker 'Bill of Rights' (a suite of legislative protections granting retail workers better access to work hours and equal treatment between part-time and full-time workers), <b>Unifor's Retail and Wholesale Industry Council shall explore the merits of such an initiative in Canada in collaboration with sister unions</b> , worker advocacy groups, anti-poverty organizations and other progressive civil society institutions. |                      |
| <b>Union-building + Communications</b> | Participation at Unifor Councils       | 22     | Unifor's <b>retail and wholesale locals will aim to send a full complement of delegates to Unifor's regional and Canadian councils</b> , and encourage members to attend as observers as well.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                      |
|                                        | Affiliating more members to RW Council | 23     | The <b>RW Industry Council executive board will undertake a regular review of Unifor's retail and wholesale sector membership, and encourage local union affiliation to the Council</b> . The Council shall strive to represent all retail and wholesale bargaining units in the union.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                      |
|                                        | Ongoing Unifor RW dialogue             | 24     | Unifor's national and local union leadership, along with the RW Industry Council executive board and staff will <b>determine a schedule for regular Retail and Wholesale sector-wide dialogue</b> , whether through special organized events, future conferences, workshops, guest presentations in conjunction with, or in addition to, regular RW Industry Council meetings.                                                                                                                                                                          |                      |



| Category | Subject                                             | Item # | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Local union progress |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|          | Membership education                                | 25     | Union staff and local union negotiating committees will <b>aim to bargain Unifor's Paid Education Leave in all retail and wholesale collective agreements.</b> Local unions will also canvass interested members to participate in the 4-week PEL Program, the Family Education Program among other relevant programs and courses offered at the Unifor Family Education Centre.                                                                            |                      |
|          |                                                     | 26     | Unifor locals will <b>assign annual benchmarks to encourage (and measure) overall membership enrollment in educational programs.</b> Benchmarks should be assigned by the local union executive board in coordination with the local union education committee, and reviewed regularly. <b>Locals should also strive to reconnect with trained members, to explore ways of utilizing their skills, abilities and interests to support the union's work.</b> |                      |
|          | Connecting with members (openness and transparency) | 27     | Local unions will identify opportunities to <b>regularly engage with and inform its members about union business, through in-person, online or telephone conference meetings, as well as making collective agreements, financial statements and other relevant information fully accessible to members.</b> The union must be visible to our members. It must also continue to be open and transparent with members.                                        |                      |
|          |                                                     | 28     | Local unions will <b>establish an online presence, whether through an official Unifor local union website or other means.</b> Local unions should set aside ample resources to regularly maintain its website, and promote it to members.                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                      |
|          |                                                     | 29     | Locals unions will <b>maintain active membership mail (and email) lists.</b> These lists will be used by local union leadership to provide members up-to-date information about union events, campaigns and other workplace-related matters.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                      |
|          |                                                     | 30     | Local unions <b>should become familiar with various online social media tools. Local union leadership should determine how best these tools can be utilized to share information and open lines of communication with members.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                      |

| Category | Subject                  | Item # | Action                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Local union progress |
|----------|--------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
|          | Steward support networks | 31     | Unifor local unions will <b>establish their own steward support network, to facilitate regular dialogue with elected workplace representatives, identify training and other needs</b> , and to encourage information-sharing between stewards across the various worksites. |                      |