

Advancing Workers' Rights in a Changing World of Work

The world of work has changed and is changing rapidly. The key sources of change are:

1. The long-term deterioration in workers' rights, individual and collective, caused by the four decade-long neoliberal bias against them and in favour of employers and the wealthy.
2. The trend toward automation and/or offshoring leading to rising unemployment and loss of high quality jobs.
3. The rise of precarious part-time work with few benefits and no pensions, creating a veritable 'precariat' consisting of marginalised and young workers. .
4. The pandemic that has transformed the world of work for nearly everyone, bringing with it home-working, social distancing and the need for new standards of workplace health and safety to make workplaces safe against the threat of Covid-19 and other epi- and pandemics.
5. Large corporations that prey on small business and their ability to provide decent jobs.
6. The gig economy and precarious work
7. Pension poverty and lack of pensions for a growing proportion of the workforce.
8. Rising Discrimination against marginalised groups including women, immigrants and indigenous people despite legal safeguards in place so far.

Workers deserve a positive work environment. Fair and high wages make for a motivated workforce and a prosperous economy. Freedom from discrimination and low-income differentials between management and workers promote belonging and commitment.

We have come a long way from the wage slavery and subjection to employer whim of the early industrial revolution. Today, we expect a shared relationship with management. It is the combination of management and workers that will determine the success and sustainability of the firm.

We think of workers' rights as part of our broader plan for the economy and the environment and this document must be read in conjunction with our plans for them.

Finally, workers rights in Canada are indivisible from those abroad and we will promote them through our broader economic policy and foreign policy aimed at promoting similarly high wage and prosperous economies abroad and, where necessary, by working in solidarity with organizations of workers, formal and informal, and peasants elsewhere without infringing on the national sovereignty of other countries.

In light of this, Dimitri will work to

Improve bargaining rights

1. Enshrine into law a guarantee of workers' rights to bargain collectively, whether in an existing or new general or industrial union (i.e. not a company union) capable of bargaining with similarly organised employers.
2. Ensure that the law makes certification easy and decertification hard to ensure long-term and stable relationships between workers and those who represent their interests. This will be accompanied by stronger legislation on the right to fair representation in the workplace.
3. Provide all temporary migrant workers a pathway to permanent residency, legally ensure their right to bargain collectively through existing unions and by forming new unions in conformity with point 1.
4. Enact legislation to ensure that a simple majority of workers suffices for certification. Interruptions to this process simply provide opportunities for employers to intimidate workers and undermine the will of the workforce.
5. Adopt legislation banning the use of replacement workers during strikes and lockouts.
6. Collaborate with unions to appoint and fund a National Labour Commission. It should be composed exclusively of unions' representatives and charged with keeping track of important changes in the world of work and propose revisions to relevant federal and provincial law and regulation concerning topics like following every two years:
 - a. the Labour Code,
 - b. minimum wages,
 - c. working from home,
 - d. protection workers from present and future pan- or epidemics and other health threats,
 - e. health and safety procedures generally
 - f. pension contributions,
 - g. anti-discrimination practices,
 - h. gig economy and precarious work
7. Provide that after continuous employment, whether temporary or part time, of one year, should be afforded the same legal rights as full time employees, in particular regarding protection against dismissal.
8. A new Department of Labour must be established to provide credible support for the non-unionized by advocating and providing resources for unionization. It should target for unionization sectors where bad pay and working conditions have become a norm.

Raise Wages, Compensation and Income Equality

1. Enshrine a Federal national living wage into law. It will be set initially at \$20/hour, to be achieved within 2 years, for all federal government bodies, indexed to inflation and reviewed periodically by the above-mentioned National Labour Commission, Crown corporations and all corporations that do business with them. This minimum wage will be subject to review periodically by the above-mentioned National Labour Commission. The adoption of the minimum wage by provincial governments – for own, contractors' and sub-contractors' employees and/or for all employees in the province – will be encouraged by

- instituting federal transfers to the provinces for this purpose on the model of the health transfers through which uniformity in health care is achieved nationally.
2. Adopt legislation requiring all business entities to maintain a compensation differential between executives and employees that is no greater than 8:1.
 3. Indigenous peoples suffer one of the highest unemployment rates.
 - a. We need to develop the economy of indigenous nations sustainably, based on the mix between traditional means of livelihood and modern industry chosen by the indigenous community concerned.
 - b. Inner City indigenous people need special programmes to facilitate their full participation in the economy through a combination of public and private initiative with indigenous representation on the governing boards thereof.
 4. Amend federal bankruptcy legislation to give workers' claims the highest priority among claims on the firm's assets, including priority over preferred creditors.
 5. Require that all pension funds propose plans for a transition away from reliance on financial markets. The goal should be a nationally organized pay-as-you-go pension scheme covering all retirement-age individuals. Canada should appoint a task force to determine the relative roles of workers, employers, and federal and provincial governments' roles in the pay-as-you-go national scheme and to ensure equity and relative equality in pension payments within and between generations and sustainability over the long run. Arguments against pensions that mobilize the resentment of those without pensions must be countered by including all adults in pension schemes. Pensions should be fully transferable to encourage labour mobility.
 6. Ensure legal safeguards to provide equal opportunities for all Canadians regardless of ethnicity, race, culture, religion or political persuasion. It should be illegal to discriminate.
 7. Establish a commission to look into how to distribute work and its rewards more broadly by reducing working time without loss of access to a liveable income. This will serve to reduce unemployment, increase leisure for autonomous activity and continue the historic trend toward translating increases in productivity into reduction of labour time. This trend operated throughout the history of capitalism before being interrupted in recent decades. Encourage job-sharing. Finally, for those not covered by the work and income measures proposed so far, we propose a minimum income guarantee operated through the tax system to be set at \$XXXX per month, income tested. While current Party policy promotes a universal basic income for all, research suggests that while this may continue to be a long-term goal, our approach, which blends many measures is more politically and economically feasible and is urgently needed as part of the pandemic recovery plan. Establish a national task force aimed at reducing the workweek and stress in workplaces.
 8. Create a Labour Redeployment Commission to re-train and re-deploy workers rendered redundant by technological and economic development or change. It could work in close cooperation with vocational or other post-secondary educational institutions.

9. Ensure that the Ministry of Labour acts as an advocate, guarantor and protector of workers' rights where necessary against employers' organizations and the rest of government.
10. Care giving, most often provided by women, has been underpaid or not paid at all. Establish a wage for all unpaid carers. Bring up the wage of all low paid carers – day care workers, teachers, nurses and nurses' aides, midwives, long-term care workers and the like – initially to the national living wage. This should then be revised upwards through a reassessment of the value of this work, whose importance has been brought to light by the pandemic.

Make Corporate Governance more democratic

1. Enact or amend relevant legislation to require that at least one quarter of the members of the boards the following sorts of corporations be elected by employees of the corporation.
 - a. Crown Corporations
 - b. *Canada Business Corporations Act (CBCA)* corporations
 - c. Non-*CBCA* corporations that wish to be eligible for contracts from the Federal government.
2. Create a national business school curriculum for worker-owned cooperatives and/or collectives or incorporate such instruction in existing technical institutes and colleges.
3. Facilitate worker buyouts and cooperative and/or collective forms of ownership of existing or new firms, including by ensuring tax treatment on par or better than privately owned firms and corporations.
4. Require all sales of interests in Canadian corporations beyond a threshold size to be permitted only by Cabinet (Parliament?) after an investigation. Prohibit reverse takeovers that cross the Canadian border. Q: What about reverse takeovers within Canada?

Improve Workplace Health and Safety

1. Workplace health and safety was always very important and has become more so in the context of the pandemic. It can best be achieved by
 - a. ensuring that corporate executives can be held personally liable, both criminally and civilly, for unsafe working conditions that result in death or serious injury to workers.
 - b. mandating regular inspections and monitoring of workplaces by ministry of labour with confidential worker input.
2. Mental Wellness is a critical part of workplace health and safety. As a first step towards implementing a mental wellness strategy, we will implement the voluntary national standard for Psychological health and safety in the workplace issued by Health Canada at all Federal government workplaces and promote its acceptance by other levels of government and in the private and voluntary sector.

The National Standard provides a framework to create and continually improve a psychologically healthy and safe workplace.

3. For those unable to work due to illness or injury, insurance benefits must be made available without delay.
4. Employees must not be forced to return to work after any public health emergency without adequate safety arrangements for them and their families.

Increase the social relevance of firms in the Canadian economy

1. Nationalize or take a controlling interest in any strategic manufacturing firm in Canada that can be repurposed in a green and socially relevant manner beginning with the GM plant in Oshawa to produce made in Canada electric vehicles. Identify other firms that would serve Canadian society better in public hands, beginning with natural monopolies such as transport, communications, energy and resources and pharmaceuticals and medical equipment and begin the process of taking them into public or some other socially responsible form of ownership.
2. Ensure the transformation of Canada's financial sector on the model of public utility banking, focused on providing long-term 'patient' capital for financing production, nationally and locally, rather than short-term, fickle, capital for speculation. Speculating firms should not be bailed out by states, a practice that has created too many moral hazards. It should also focus on reducing incomes deriving from ownership alone and increase incomes from effort. This will also vastly increase income equality in Canada.
3. Ensure that all publicly owned firms are in the forefront of R&D, keeping the Canadian economy on the technological frontier in many fields.
4. Impose a reclamation tax on all polluting and climate warming enterprises and use the proceeds to clean-up the pollution and reduce global warming.