

## The Value of Unions in our Society



Jessica Lisiiecki, daughter of  
André Lisiiecki, 3 Nations  
Logging

When one looks through the latest headlines, it's an unfortunate reality that they are often reporting on rights being revoked, either by an employer or by the government. Of course, the common man is not powerless in the face of governmental or corporate dominance. Through unions, working people have a collective voice at work to advocate and work towards equitable treatment and economic security. They provide a powerful check to the almost total power of management in the workplace and ensure that workers have a voice in the workplace decisions that directly affect them. In essence, unions allow workers to organize and protect their rights, bargain collectively for equitable working conditions and help direct political change to prevent corporate interests from dominating government, all of which contribute great value to our society.

Unions help both the employer and employee to come to an agreement, without being taken advantage of. This gives the employee a voice and support when approaching or negotiating with their employer which helps them discuss wages, benefits, working conditions and many other things. When an employer makes your workplace unsafe, this is when your union takes control and establishes a safe work environment preventing injury and creating safety for the employee. As many workers say, unions protect your "brothers". They have your back for anything that comes up. It could be your seniority, in which helps protect your job in the work industry, to asking for a raise, to discussing better working conditions, etc... No matter what, a union will support you and will speak up for you if you have any complaints or to improve.

Unions emphasize collective bargaining for the reason being that it benefits both the employer and employee. For one, a standardized contract is fair for the employees, but it also makes handling disputes a lot easier for the employer, as the rules are the same for everyone, not to mention that contingency plans are in place for different issues. For example: sick leave, worker responsibilities, etc... Collective bargaining is a process in which a trade union and an employer negotiate a first collective agreement or the renewal of a previous collective agreement. The parties usually focus on such issues as wages, working conditions, grievance procedures and fringe benefits. There are many unions out there for different kinds of jobs. The Canadian federation of nurses unions is the national voice of unionized nurses. CFNU is there for nurses as they fight to protect the national health system and promote nurses and the nursing profession at every level. (<https://nursesunion.ca/why-unions>)

Lastly, unions can help direct political change, particularly in opposition to corporate interests and the very wealthy (the 1%). An example would be in the recent Ontario provincial election. The conservative leader, Tim Hudak, promised to cut 100,000 government jobs, as well as lower corporate tax rates. Of course, this type of plan would be beneficial to the very wealthy but would directly bring harm to workers everywhere in the province. In order to combat this, several important unions such as IUPA, ONA and OSSTF publically announced their opposition to Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservatives. Ultimately, Hudak's Conservatives lost what should have been an easy victory, especially considering the political climate up to and during the election. This illustrates the value that unions add to our society, in that they can affect political change and prevent corporate interests from taking over.

To conclude, unions play a very important role in our society. They are a voice for employees that work to ensure fair working conditions and practices. Also, through collective bargaining, every worker is treated fairly and given the wages and benefits they deserve. Finally, unions can help direct political change to counteract the influence of large corporations and the very wealthy, who would seek to undermine what unions have fought so hard to achieve. In the end, all these reasons explain how unions can be of great value and why their continued existence is of the utmost importance for maintaining a fair and just society.