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## The Value of Unions in our Society

**Note: This essay was submitted in french. This is a translation of the original.**

A union is defined as a socio-political movement established to protect their interests and their rights by bringing changes to working conditions. However, unionism has not always been easy and constant in business management.

To start, unionism in Canada started only in the 1800s. In 1812, during the war, Canadians worked with the British to create their own commission. This had a snowball effect, and many offices were established throughout Canada. After that, unionism became bigger and bigger, and Canada aligned itself with American committees. In that period, unionism was considered an illegal activity and many members of the organisation were arrested. On the other hand, because the workers went on strike, the dictators were constrained to legalize

union activity. In 1883, the association changed its name from "Trades and Labour Congress of Canada" to "Canadian Labour Congress". First, in the first years of the 1900s, the reinforcement of unions had a huge impact on business management. The days shorten, the salaries increase, and workers are initiated to sane policies. In 1975, Pierre E. Trudeau of the liberal government introduced a wage control. With this new law, it is now necessary to give wage increases. All that thanks to the union movement in businesses.

A union's goal is to defend and represent the interests of workers. Today, members of union organizations represent about 30% of Canadian employees. They benefit, among other things, of a higher remuneration than those that are not unionized. They also have benefits programs and more competitive pension plans as well as a saner and safer environment than their non-unionized counterparts.

The industrial revolution, in the 19th century, brought many changes in the society. It is at that time that the middle class, mainly laborers, made its appearance. In consequence, this had an impact in the three economic sectors, that is the production, the distribution, and the consumption of goods. People who practice similar jobs gather more and more to defend their interests, to negotiate agreements with their employers and have their values known. Thanks to union organizations, bills are drafted and working conditions improve.

In 1872, the Trade Unions Act was created. This gives the right to Canadian workers to join a union association. It is also at that time that the workday is shortened to 9 hours and that the Labor Day annual holiday was introduced. Through the years, union groups in Canada exercised an important influence so that, for example, the law for industrial safety is adopted and that the Canada Labor Code and the Occupational Health and Safety Act are drafted. Some laws ensures that the health and safety in the workplace is the shared responsibility of employers and employees. WHMIS is an example of collaborations that exists between workers, the government, and the employers. Thanks to the union associations employment insurance programs are created, women have the right to a maternity leave, sick days and bereavement leaves exist, we have injury indemnities, coffee breaks, etc.

Union groups are progressists and their members are very present in our communities and on the political scene. The union's role evolves and changes with the needs of the time. Automation, Technology, environment, recession, pandemic, aging population, workforce shortage, formation, health and safety, pay equity and so on are all at the heart of the union groups' actions.

In short, the union is at the center of all actions that bring important changes in the workplace. It makes sure that we know our rights and that we are recognized and protected in our workplace. The union helps to develop a collective language and exercises pressure to draft policies that reinforce the rights and ensure the well-being of workers. For example, it is for that reason that there are more and more policies on wrongful treatment, bullying and harassment at work.

Being a union member is a privilege and it is everyone's responsibility to recognize the efforts of union associations by exercising our right to know, to be informed and to refuse work that is a danger to our well-being.