

[gsu-ssg@psac-afpc.com](mailto:gsu-ssg@psac-afpc.com)

**In your opinion, what is the most significant gain workers have received universally across Canada as a direct result of union activism since the Trade Union Act of 1872? And why?**

I have never worked in a factory. I have never participated in a strike. But even so, the impact of union activism is all around me, especially when it comes to equality. In today's workplaces, we often take rights such as equal pay, parental leave, and non-discrimination policies for granted. But these protections did not just appear out of nowhere. The reason I can expect fairness, safety, and a real chance at success in a workplace is because generations before me stood up and demanded those rights. Since the enactment of the *Trade Unions Act, 1872*, unions in Canada have pushed for better wages and fought for a fairer, more inclusive society. That is why I believe the most important gain unions have won for workers is equality.

From the beginning, Canadian unions have fought for much more than just money. They have been key in making work fair for everyone. After 1872, people not only organized for shorter hours but also began tackling issues such as discrimination, inequality, and unfair treatment. What I especially admire is that unions did not just focus on one group, but they stood up for women, immigrants, racialized workers, and others who were often left out. For example, in the 1970s and 1980s, public sector unions helped push for equal pay for women, which was a huge step forward. They also supported things such as maternity leave, protection from discrimination, and more inclusive hiring. These changes did not happen by themselves, and they definitively were not handed out for free. People had to protest and speak out to make it happen. I find it remarkable how even people who are not in a union today still benefit from those efforts, as many of those rights became standard across all workplaces. To me, this shows how powerful union activism really is, as it changed the system for the better not just for union members, but for everyone. Without unions taking the first step toward fighting inequality in the past, we would not have the foundation we stand on today. Even the existence of human rights commissions and labour boards today connects back to early union efforts, proving that the fight for equality has a long history, and it is one that keeps growing.

Secondly, even though unions have achieved much in the past, I believe their role in protecting equality is just as vital today, and maybe even more so. Workplaces are changing quickly with advancements like AI, which could potentially pose risks, particularly for individuals in lower-paying or less secure jobs. Also, many new jobs, including gig work or short-term contracts, do not come with the same protections unions fought for, such as benefits, job security, or parental leave. In the future, equality has to mean more than just equal pay. It should also mean access to digital skills, fair hiring through unbiased technology, and rights for gig workers. I think unions need to grow and change with the times, but their mission stays the same, to make sure no one is excluded from fair treatment, no matter how much the workplace evolves. For example, if a grocery store owners choose to replace cashiers with self-checkouts, what happens to the workers who don't have technical skills or other job options to lean toward? What if an app-based job does not offer health benefits: how can workers be expected to take care of their families? These are the types of issues unions now must take on moving forward. It is also important that unions speak up for young workers, newcomers and people entering the workforce for the first time. Not everyone knows their rights or has the confidence to demand fair treatment. That is where union support can make a real difference. Unions have already demonstrated their ability to lead change, and I believe they are capable of doing it again, even in a world increasingly shaped by technology.

In the end, I believe equality is the most meaningful and long-lasting gain that unions have achieved for workers in Canada. Thanks to union activism, people today, regardless of their backgrounds, enjoy greater protection, opportunities, and fairness in the workplace. Even though I have never had to suffer inequality, I know the workplace rights I have now did not just appear, they were fought for by people who believed in something better. And as the world of work continues to change with technology, that fight is not over. If unions can keep standing up for fairness in new ways, they will continue to make a real difference, not just for their members, but for all of us. We all benefit when workplaces are more equal, whether it is through stronger communities, healthier work environments, or more opportunities for people to succeed. Equality should never be something only available to a few. Thanks to unions, equality is something we can continue to build on together, for future generations of workers just like me.

