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The influence of organized labour in the future

Throughout Canadian history, the workplace has seen great improvement: introducing workplace safety, wage regulations, employee's benefits, employment insurance, etc. However, the fight for worker’s rights is still ongoing, as the workforce landscape continues to change. Positions have shifted from industrial and manufacturing to more retail and service jobs, which made up 11.5% of all employment in Canada in 2011[1.]. With this drastic shift in the jobs is a change in the structure; with little to no organization, or unification of workers.

The nature of these new positions makes organizing difficult; hours are unstable, pay is typically minimum wage, and younger workers know very little about their rights in the workplace. Today, the 9-5 day and worker’s benefits are almost forgotten. Organized labour, typically associated with joining unions, needs to adapt to this new job market and fight for the needs of workers.

While "*64% of all Canadians have an account on a major social media network*"[2.], accessibility is key in order to attract any attention. Thus, social media presence is absolutely necessary in order to stay relevant to a younger, more tech-savvy, generation. Developing a direct and open line of communication with young workers will create trust and encourage participation in organized labour. With concerns over fake information spreading on the internet, addressing these misconceptions about work-related issues can improve the standard of what is acceptable in the workplace. Consistently updating information and providing reliable sources will help foster a productive environment for generating new workplace regulations.

Various social justice movements have taken over social media platforms with the intent of informing and engaging the public. The digital age sees the rise of e-petitions, gaining electronic signatures for different causes. For example, Alfie and Gwendy Williams successfully used digital petitions to ban the use of shock collars to train cats and dogs[3.]. The simplicity of this process makes it more accessible in the fast-paced lifestyle of today, encouraging more participation from youth. Bringing about change will require more work than simply signing an online petition, but using it as a tool will help gain momentum and reach more people. With information transferring across the globe in a matter of seconds, we must take advantage of these resources, start conservations, and challenge the status quo.

In the past, unions were the ones who mainly facilitated negotiations with employers, but in this new era of the workplace, there is too much ground to cover. The workforce is now incredibly diverse in the job positions available and the worker lifestyle. Designating a representative is difficult; needing to encompass a large number of unique perspectives. Giving a voice to the people ensures that all opinions are heard and all interests, taken into consideration. Previously thought of as an impossible task, with the ease of social media there are many different opinions to be included in discussions. Choosing social media as a platform to organize and educate each other on workplace rights and regulations, removes the physical limitation of having to attend a meeting. When any meeting would need to take place, staying updated through a simple Tweet or Facebook post is easy.

New technology has shaped a different workplace, with the decline of industrial positions and rise of the commercial sector. Organized labour, whether unionized or not, must adapt to the new workplace era. While unions have been the primary front for negotiations to occur, this must evolve to fit the needs of the workforce. Engaging and involving youth in the fight for worker’s rights will provide the foundation for workers to bring about the change that they wish to see.

1. *Work Life: Youth Voices - Youth and Unions Need to Work Together. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Gabriel Bako. May 2014.* [*https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/work-life-youth-voices-youth-and-unions-need-work-together*](https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/commentary/work-life-youth-voices-youth-and-unions-need-work-together)
2. *Canadian Social Media Stats (updated 2018). Sherpa Marketing. Hannah Clark. January 2018.* [*https://www.sherpamarketing.ca/canadian-social-media-stats-updated-2018-471*](https://www.sherpamarketing.ca/canadian-social-media-stats-updated-2018-471)
3. *Digital Democracy: Canadians can now sway public policy through e-petitions. CBC news. Kathleen Harris. December 2015.* [*https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/parliament-petition-digital-democracy-1.3355662*](https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/parliament-petition-digital-democracy-1.3355662)