

MIGRANT RIGHTS NETWORK

OPEN LETTER: LABOUR COUNCIL PRESIDENTS ACROSS CANADA #UNITEAGAINSTRACISM

Brothers, Sisters and Comrades,

An insurgent right wing is seizing political power at the provincial level across Canada. Their victories have ushered in austerity, cuts, and attacks on workers and communities.

We are at a critical political moment. We are calling on Labour Councils and the Labour movement across Canada to #UniteAgainstRacism.

While workers are united in the desire for decent work and strong social programs for all residents, politicians are using anti-immigrant and racist ideas to pit workers against each other. We saw this in the federal by-election in February, when Maxime Bernier's anti-immigrant party garnered 11% of the vote in Burnaby South. In Alberta many United Conservative Party candidates were found to have close ties to white supremacists. And in Quebec, the Coalition Avenir Quebec campaigned for a 20% reduction in immigration and won a majority. This is Trump's strategy, and the strategy of many other right wing parties globally.

The mainstreaming of racist ideologies has resulted in grave violence. We were horrified at the mass murder of Muslims in Christchurch at a New Zealand mosque. In Canada, since the deadly Quebec City Mosque shooting in 2017, hate crimes have increased 47% and there are now 300 active white supremacist organizations operating in this country -- a 200% increase.

Labour has the opportunity to show leadership and stand strong against racism and xenophobia. We must ensure union members are not divided by racism and lured into voting for a right wing government that will hurt all of us. We must stand united as workers - an injury to one is an injury to all. Our members must see us showing as clearly as possible that we will not be divided.

This year, let's hold high the banner of #UniteAgainstRacism. Through our visual materials, our media statements, and speeches and in member-to-member education from now on and especially on Labour Day, let us insist that:

- All workers are suffering, and feel precarious. But we feel strong when we stand together for decent work; for quality public services; permanent immigration status for all; and for gender, racial, climate and Indigenous justice. Let's build a vision of global solidarity that inspires workers to fight together, not fight each other for scraps. Let's not allow any political party to use racism to divide us for votes.
- Immigrants are not responsible for low wages, or poor services, but rather it's the bosses and their political representatives who exploit us all;
- Far from benefiting unfairly from their work in Canada, migrant workers and refugees are being exploited in substandard working conditions, because regressive immigration and labour laws restrict their agency and leave them open to abuse;
- Migrants and refugees aren't vulnerable, they are organizing and winning rights and justice for all workers;
- Labour is unified in our call for decent work, universal quality services, and permanent resident status for all workers, including migrants. Now is the time to ensure racial and gender justice including Indigenous self-determination; and an end to practices that force people to migrate including war, corporate impunity and climate change.

As allies of migrant worker groups in the Migrant Rights Network (www.migrantrights.ca), we call on Labour Councils across Canada to make #UniteAgainstRacism a key rallying cry now, and the theme of Labour Day 2019. Join actions in communities taking place on June 16, 2019.

Contact info@migrantrights.ca for #UniteAgainstRacism materials, to arrange a popular education training for your members. Endorse this letter at www.migrantrights.ca/LCletter

Together, we will win.

Initial Signatories

Tiffany Balducci, President
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Greg Mady, President
Edmonton and District Labour Council

Kevin Smallwood, President
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