

Statement



National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

December 6, 2014

On December 6, 2014, Unifor recognizes the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. We remember all women who have died as a result of gender-based violence. We remember the 14 women who were singled out and murdered on this day 25 years ago – 14 engineering students murdered solely because they were women: Geneviève Bergeron, Hélène Colgan, Nathalie Croteau, Barbara Daigneault, Anne-Marie Edward, Maud Haviernick, Maryse Laganière, Maryse Leclair, Anne-Marie Lemay, Sonia Pelletier, Michèle Richard, Annie St-Arneault, Annie Turcotte and Barbara Klucznik-Widajewicz.

And this December 6 - we recognize that although much has changed, violence against women still permeates our society. As people gather in communities across Canada to remember those who have died as a result of gender-based violence and to reflect on those still living with the daily reality of violence in their lives, Unifor recommits to taking concrete action to eliminate violence against all women and girls.

As a result of sustained, committed efforts towards changing attitudes within our workplaces and our communities, our union has made many positive changes at the bargaining table in the 25 years since 1989. We have negotiated anti-harassment policies, complaint procedures, right to refuse work based on harassment, harassment prevention training, and the ground-breaking, internationally-recognized Women's Advocate program. All have assisted women experiencing gender based violence in their lives. But as a union, we know that violence against women cannot be resolved at the bargaining table alone. Our efforts will continue to extend beyond the workplace and we will challenge ourselves to do more.

On December 6, 2013, Unifor, in collaboration with the Canadian Labour Congress and Western University's Centre for Research to End violence Against Women and Girls, jointly launched a nationwide survey titled 'Domestic Violence at Work: Can Work be Safe When Home Isn't?'. Unifor pledges to use this research and recommendations to help inform our strategies around bargaining language to support those dealing with domestic violence, including negotiating the Women's Advocate program. We will use these findings to advocate for progressive legislative change and in challenging governments, particularly around our call for a national action plan on violence against women, which must include an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. We must hold governments of all levels to account on the issue of violence, particularly as it relates to missing and murdered aboriginal women. Federal action is needed, but without it, other action can still be taken locally.

At Unifor's 2014 Canadian Council, two key recommendations on violence against women from Unifor National President Jerry Dias were supported, debated and unanimously adopted by over 1200 delegates¹. We do this because we believe in a world based on principles of equality and social justice.

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We do this because we believe it is our collective responsibility to work towards eradicating gender-based violence. We do this because we are united in our determination to ensure our workplaces, our communities and our nation are safe for all women and girls.

ⁱ Recommendation on Violence Against Women and the 25th Anniversary of the Massacre on December 6:

I recommend that we increase our efforts to eliminate violence against women. We must continue to negotiate the workplace supports for women in abusive relationships including our Violence Against Women language and the Women's Advocate program in all bargaining units. I call on all locals to use the release of the workplace survey on December 6 and the recommendations that will accompany the release, to press all levels of government to support a national action plan to end gender based violence.

Recommendation to support a National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women:

I recommend that the Canadian Council affirm and support the all of Unifor Regional Councils to support the demand of the Native Women's Association of Canada for a National Inquiry into the missing and murdered Aboriginal women and girls and that Aboriginal women be included in the design, decision-making process, and the implementation of this inquiry.