



Canadian Labour Congress
Congrès du travail du Canada



Labour Movement Priorities for the Federal Government

February 2016



Top Priorities

Retirement Security—expanding CPP	1
EI.....	2
Domestic Violence at Work	3
Climate Change	4
Electoral Reform	5
New Health Accords	6
Mental Health	7
Ban on Asbestos	8
TPP	9

Other Priorities

Human Rights & Equity Issues.....	10
Labour Legislation, Employment Standards & Health and Safety	12
Skills Training	15
Social, Economic & Trade Policy	16
Foreign Aid	19

Retirement Security—expanding CPP

Convene federal-provincial negotiations on expansion of the CPP/QPP.

A Liberal Party election commitment. The labour movement will insist on a concrete proposal for significantly increasing benefits, with a target date for commencing phase-in.

Initially, federal tax expenditures will rise alongside higher contributions by less than \$1 billion annually, but higher CPP/QPP benefits will slow the long-term increase in Guaranteed Income Supplement costs.

The Premiers' Conference in June is a priority target for lobbying.

Repeal scheduled increase in the OAS, GIS and Allowance or Allowance for the Survivor eligibility age.

Requires legislative amendments to the *Old Age Security Act*. No cost would be incurred until 2023, when scheduled increases in the eligibility age commence.

Increase GIS benefits for poorest seniors.

A Liberal campaign commitment. A 10% increase in GIS benefits for single low-income seniors will cost \$720 million in 2016-17, rising \$40 million annually after that.



EI

Reverse the 2012 changes to Employment Insurance program and eliminate current 910-hour eligibility hurdle for new entrants and re-entrants.

The Liberal campaign committed to repealing the 2012 changes creating tiered claimant categories, and changing the definition of suitable employment and reasonable job search efforts. A Liberal government will also reduce the EI benefit waiting period to one week from two.

The Liberals have not indicated what would replace the 910-hour hurdle; labour should press for a single 360-hour entrance requirement for all.

Unions have urged the government to implement a uniform, national entrance requirement of 360 hours worked for EI benefits, to increase the benefit level from 55% to 60% of insurable earnings, and to base benefit and duration calculations on a 30-hour work week.

The Liberals have made an unspecified commitment to improve service and staffing; the labour movement could urge an immediate allocation of \$100 million in 2016-17 to the EI program in order to improve processing times.

The Liberal Party has made no commitment to review the EI appeals process under the Social Security Tribunal, but the labour movement could call on the government to undertake this review.

Follow through with Liberal campaign commitments regarding EI special benefits.

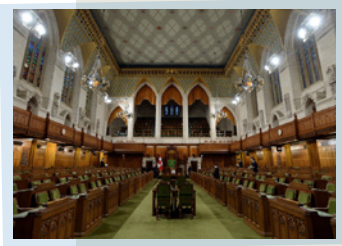
Extend the EI Compassionate Care Benefits from six weeks to six months of benefits and permit benefits to be shared and taken in blocks over a year-long period.

Allow parents to take EI Parental Benefits in chunks over an 18-month period, or combine with maternity benefits to take up to 18 months of leave.

Domestic Violence at Work

- Implement civil society's Blueprint for Canada's National Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Girls, and establish a roundtable of federal employers, unions, and experts to amend the Canadian Occupational Health and Safety Regulations to classify domestic violence as a form of workplace violence.**

This roundtable would also be responsible for working with provincial and territorial governments to ensure domestic violence is recognized as a form of workplace violence in health and safety legislation outside of the federal sphere. The roundtable would also be tasked with implementing the findings and recommendations following the Domestic Violence at Work Survey.



Climate Change

- Convene a First Ministers conference—a follow-up to COP21 to agree to national emissions-reduction targets and a framework for mitigating climate change**

Labour movement priorities are introducing a national carbon-pricing scheme in the form of a cap and trade system, and developing just transition commitments, labour adjustment mechanisms, and income support programs to help workers and families affected by climate change and climate change policy.

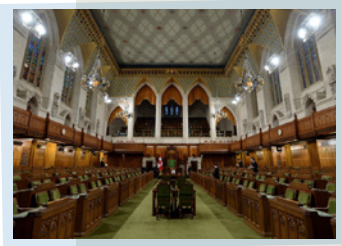
- Under the auspices of either a Commons or Senate standing committee, commence study of comprehensive just transition plan for the Canadian labour force in the context of a shift to a low-carbon economy.**

A Parliamentary study would be tasked with gathering relevant data, eliciting stakeholder and expert testimony, and meeting with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments before making recommendations to the Government of Canada.

Electoral Reform

- Initiate a Parliamentary review of Canada's current electoral system and explore alternative models that reflect the principles of fairness, equality, representativeness, and accountability.**

The labour movement will develop a common position, developed through research and guided by a working group of affiliates. Once the position is adopted, labour will engage government.



New Health Accords

Initiate discussions with Council of the Federation to negotiate new Health Accord and long-term health funding formula.

Liberal Party election commitment. The labour movement could push for targeting 25% of the federal funding share, the development of a national pharmacare program, and a national seniors strategy to address the health needs of an aging population.

Federal Support to Provinces and Territories

Negotiate new accords (including on the CHT and CST) with provincial and territorial governments to ensure transfer payments keep pace with the rising cost of health care, social services, income assistance, and post-secondary education. Ensure equalization formulas meet the commitment in the Constitution to fund the essential public services required to promote equal opportunities necessary for the well-being of all Canadians.

Mental Health



Details to come.

Details to come.



Banning Asbestos

- Ban the use, import, and export of asbestos, and implement a just transition plan through the EI program to assist the retraining, re-employment, and adjustment of displaced workers and their families.**

The call for a full and final ban on asbestos will become part of the 2016 events to mark the April 28 National Day of Mourning for workers killed and injured on the job.

Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP)



Canada should not sign the TPP before a full review of its impact and a proper debate of its merits have been conducted.

The Liberal Party signaled its support in principle for the TPP during the election campaign, but committed to an extensive Parliamentary debate.

With the release of the full text of the agreement, Canadians need time to assess the deal and express themselves.



Human Rights & Equity Issues



Reinstate the mandatory long-form census for 2016.

Cost: savings of \$22 million, since the long-form census is less expensive than the National Household Survey. Could be implemented by Order in Council or Ministerial instructions to Statistics Canada.



Restore Interim Federal Health Program services for refugee claimants to comply with 2014 Federal Court decision.

Could be implemented by Order in Council, and would cost less than \$25 million, not including savings on further litigation costs.



Establish an inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

Could be implemented by Order in Council.



Restore mandate of Status of Women Canada to fund advocacy, equity, and access to justice.

Would require Ministerial instructions.



Repeal the *Anti-Terrorism Act, 2015 (Bill C-51)* and the flawed aspects of the *Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act (Bill C-24)*.



Make the Disability Tax Credit refundable.

As many as 750,000 working-age Canadians may qualify for the Disability Tax Credit, yet fail to benefit from it because their income is too low. The approximate net federal cost of a refundable Disability Tax Credit would be \$1 billion.

Implement all 94 recommendations of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission.

A Liberal Party campaign commitment.

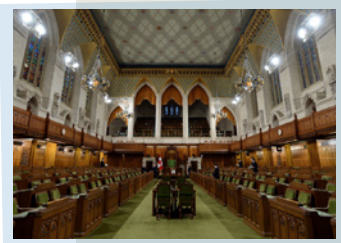
Restore funding for the Court Challenges Program.

The program received funding of \$5.5 million when it was abolished in 2006.

Reinstate the 5-Year Canada's Action Plan Against Racism (CAPAR) to comply with the requirements of the UN World Conference Against Racism.

Introduce legislation adding gender identity protections to the Criminal Code and the *Canadian Human Rights Act*.

This would effectively reintroduce the NDP's Bill C-279 as a government bill.



Labour Legislation, Employment Standards, & Health and Safety



Repeal Bill C-377 and Bill C-525.

Would require legislation amending the *Income Tax Act*. Beginning in 2016, repealing C-377 will entail savings to the Canada Revenue Agency in start-up costs of \$2.6 million in 2016-17/2017-18, and estimated annual costs thereafter of \$1.5 million, over and above litigation costs.

Repealing C-525 would require amending three separate statutes. Restoring card check authority to the two labour boards will achieve savings from reversing a five-fold increase in Board-ordered votes.



Initiate a comprehensive review of federal public service labour relations.

An overhaul of federal public service labour relations is needed to conform to the *Charter of Rights* and reflect values of fairness and equality. An overhaul would include:

- Reversing Bill C-4's changes to federal essential services, dispute resolution process, and arbitration selection factors;
- Acting on the commitment to repeal Bill C-4's changes to the definition of danger in the *Canada Labour Code*, ensure that workers can refuse unsafe work, and hire more federal health and safety inspectors;
- Repealing Bill C-59's unilateral changes to federal sick leave system, committing instead to negotiate any changes; and
- Restoring progress on advancing pay equity in the federal public sector and repealing the *Public Sector Equitable Compensation Act*.



Implement the recommendations of the 2006 Arthurs Commission examining reforms to Part III of the *Canada Labour Code*.

Still the most comprehensive and authoritative set of recommendations for reforming employment standards under the Code, many of which have never been acted upon.

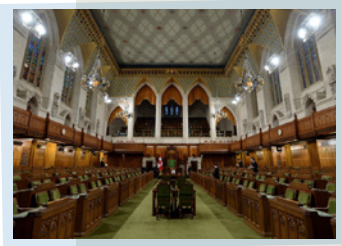
Ratify ILO Convention No. 98: Right to Organize & Collective Bargaining.
No. 98 is the only core ILO convention that Canada hasn't adopted, and involves no cost. The government could table convention no. 98 in the House of Commons and signal the government's intention to ratify.

Reinstate a fair wages policy for federal procurement.
The Liberal Party made the campaign commitment not to restore the *Fair Wages and Hours of Labour Act*, but to re-establish wage floors on government-procured projects. The labour movement could push for living wage requirements for contractors on public procurement projects.

Work with provincial and territorial governments, Crown prosecutors, judicial educators, and law enforcement agencies to promote the criminal negligence provisions of the criminal code allowing prosecution of senior management when workers are killed on the job.

Advance labour and human rights internationally.
The labour movement calls on the new government to:

- immediately fulfill Canada's legal responsibilities under the Canada-Colombia Free Trade Agreement to conduct a meaningful and in-depth review of the human rights violations in that country.
- urge Canadian-based companies involved in the import or investment of garment products from Bangladesh to join the Accord for Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh.



Labour Legislation, Employment Standards, & Health and Safety

- Reform the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and International Mobility Program. Commit to establish a pathway to permanent residency for new migrants.**

The new government should engage migrant workers groups, settlement organizations, and provincial and territorial governments to develop laws and mechanisms to prevent the violation of migrant workers' rights. It should immediately grant amnesty and cease deporting temporary migrant workers under the "four-in-four" rule.

- Anti-Scab Law**
Add a provision to the *Federal Labour Code* to make it illegal to use replacement workers during a labour conflict.

- Reform copyright laws to ensure all cultural workers receive fair compensation for their work.**

Liberals are committed to reviewing the *Copyright Act* and have pledged to "implement fair and balanced copyright modernization laws that ensures content creators are fairly compensated for their work, while also protecting consumer rights".

The CLC could make it a priority to ensure audio-visual artists have the same rights as audio artists when the *Copyright Act* comes up for review. The CLC could also include the *Beijing Treaty* among the international agreements that labour wants Canada to sign.

Skills Training

Implement Liberal Party campaign commitments in skills training and workforce development.

- Invest \$500 million more each year in training EI-eligible individuals through the provincial and territorial Labour Market Development Agreements.
- Invest an additional \$200 million in training programs through the Labour Market Agreements led by the provinces and territories.
- Invest \$50 million to renew and expand funding to the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy.
- Invest \$25 million each year for training facilities, delivered in partnership with unions, for example in home care health care services.

Implement Liberal Party campaign commitments concerning youth employment.

The Liberal government must act on the commitment to invest \$300 million annually in the Youth Employment Strategy, create at least 40,000 youth jobs a year, and develop or expand Pre-Apprenticeship Training Programs to assist young workers to enter the trades in all sectors. Over and above expanding the Canada Summer Jobs program and directly creating youth green jobs, the government could set youth unemployment targets.

Establish a federal multi-stakeholder labour-market policy advisory board.

Could be accomplished through Order in Council. Start-up and ongoing costs would be minimal.



Social, Economic & Trade Policy

- Review and renegotiate the CETA in light of its problematic features regarding notably investor state provisions and its built-in privatization agenda.**

- Establish a more rapid and effective trade remedy system that is transparent and accessible to unions whose members are affected by illegally dumped and subsidized imports.**

- Reform the *Investment Canada Act* to ensure that the review of significant foreign investments and takeovers in Canada is open, transparent, and rules-based, and that the criteria used for the net benefit test are clearly defined and enforceable.**

- Bring together cultural industry unions and stakeholders to develop an action plan to protect Canadian and Quebec cultural industries, encourage investment and the development of domestic content, and promote the arts and artists in Canada.**

- Restore the Labour-Sponsored Venture Capital Corporations tax credit.**

- Instruct Canada Post Corporation (CPC) to rescind plans to eliminate home postal delivery services and reopen rural post offices to restore postal services to rural communities.**

As sole shareholder, the Government of Canada could simply instruct CPC management to develop a business plan including home delivery. CPC could also be instructed to develop a business case for introducing postal banking services.

Launch discussions with provinces and territories to establish a national framework for affordable, accessible, inclusive, high-quality child care and early learning.

Liberal Party election commitment.

Plan will be administered as part of the Liberal's \$20 billion commitment to social infrastructure over the coming decade. The labour movement's goal will be to ensure public provision and uniform national standards. Replacing the Universal Child Care Benefit with an income-tested Canada Child Benefit would also be a positive step.

Establish a roundtable of stakeholders to develop a national automotive strategy to support investment in the Canadian industry.

Could be implemented by Order in Council, and start-up and ongoing costs would be limited. Ford Canada and other industry firms will lobby the government to act on this.

Act on Liberal commitment to inject at least \$20 billion into infrastructure spending over the next decade.

The labour movement will push to repeal the public-private partnership screen on new infrastructure projects supported by the New Building Canada Fund, replacing it with the requirement that employers on funded projects provide a minimum number of apprenticeship positions. Included in this should be a commitment to provide federal funding for drinking water and sanitation in Indigenous communities.

Privatization.

End the privatization of public services and end the use of federal funds to encourage the privatization of public services at the provincial, territorial and municipal levels.



Social, Economic & Trade Policy

Invest in Canadian cultural institutions and the creation of Canadian content.

A Liberal Campaign Commitment. The Liberal government has pledged that they will restore \$115 million in annual funding cut by the Harper Government to CBC/Radio-Canada and increase funding on top of that by an additional \$35 million a year; increase funding for the NFB and Telefilm by \$25 million a year; and double annual funding for the Canadian Council for the Arts from \$180 million to \$360 million a year. The Congress could also push for the CBC investments to be linked or tied to the development of Canadian production.

The CLC could also push for an increase in the value of the Canadian Film or Video Production Tax Credit (CFVPTC) and Production Services Tax Credit (PSTC), and expand them to include all costs including post-production. The Liberals promised to study a possible expansion.

Create a balanced approach to broadcast regulation to ensure Canadians can produce and enjoy Canadian content.

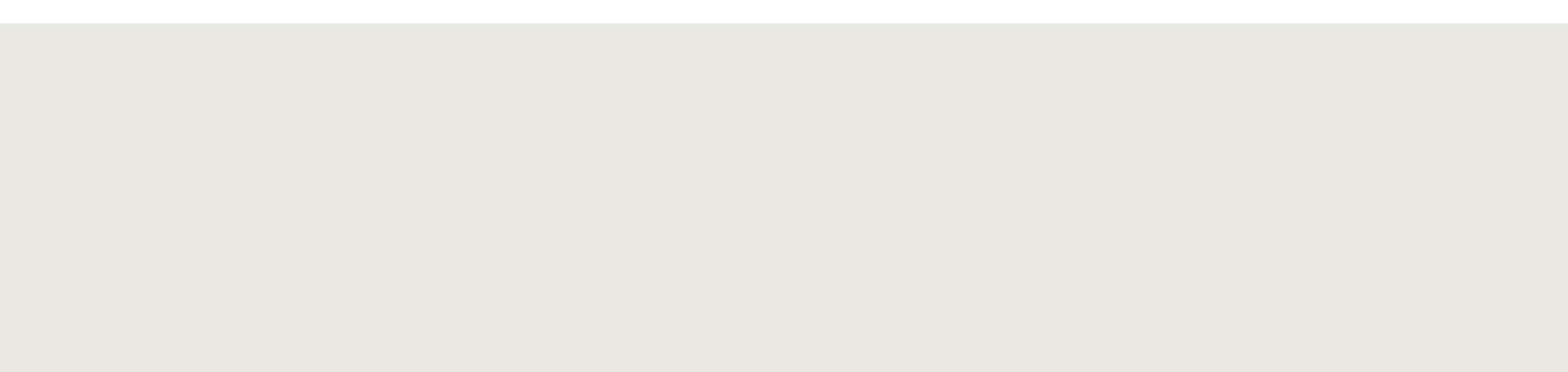
Liberals haven't made firm commitments but have left the door open to addressing the problems caused by the CRTC's Let's Talk TV decisions. Liberals committed to study "over the top" internet broadcasters; immediately start consultations for a review of the *Broadcasting Act*; and review CRTC decisions on Terms of Trade agreements between independent producers and media conglomerates to protect Canadian content. Liberals also promised to maintain the current limits of foreign ownership in the telecommunications and broadcasting industries.

The CLC could make it a priority to ensure "over the top" internet broadcasters contribute to Canadian content funds and to maintain terms of trade agreements to level the playing field between producers and big broadcasters.

Foreign Aid

- Revitalize Canada's foreign aid strategy and review its international development efforts in the context of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.**







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