Labour and the Strengthening of Canadian Communities

Following the Toronto Typographical Union strike in 1872, the Trade Unions Act was passed legalizing unions in Canada. Throughout the country's history, labour unions have been able to increase the quality of life for workers and thereby strengthen Canadian communities. These positive effects can be seen through the prominent democratic stability, economic equality and social justice from coast to coast.

Around the world, Canada is known for its strong democratic institutions. This can be correlated with a healthy and free labour movement as seen in other developed nations. Through the representation of local communities, organized labour is able to push for better policy through political action and coalition with other groups. The democratic will of citizens, often in small Canadian communities, is reflected through equitable economic decisions in the political sphere. This promotes confidence in the electorate due to the understanding that they maintain some power, through their vote, to affect future labour legislation. In an opinion piece by Christo Aivalis of The Globe and Mail, he writes: "...organized labour will always have an irreplaceable role in building and preserving a democratic spirit that goes beyond the ballot box." Beyond democratic stability, unionized labour also

contributes to economic equality in Canadian communities (Aivalis, 2018).

Economic development is strongly correlated with high quality of life in the western world. Through equality in Canadian communities, well-paying jobs ensure that the high quality of life is guaranteed and as demands change, the labour unions are there to provide continuous improvement to that standard of living. Labour plays an important role in ensuring equality and equity in regards to their respective members. Unions are able to successfully close income inequalities, for example, those pertaining to visible minorities or gender discrimination. This is accomplished through various efforts, in particular, through job evaluation, which helps create job position standards and base salaries that aim at eliminating bias. The Canadian Union of Public Employees states: Jobs are evaluated by neutral criteria that allow us to measure die wage gap created by systemic discrimination (CUPE, website). Such efforts can strengthen Canadian communities and their citizens in all aspects of life. In fast, the Human Development Index from the United Nations ranks Canada as 12th when including: life expectancy, education and gross national income. (United Nations, 2018)

Finally, organized labour is able to ensure social justice in Canada, thus working to improve individual communities. When representing its members, the union is able to ensure equitable treatment for all. Many visible minorities are able to benefit from legislation that is inclusive and that does not discriminate. In one study the authors write:

> *However, as immigrants gain more experience in and*
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> *knowledge of the Canadian labour market, they may*
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> *become more adept at gaining entry to more jobs and*
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> *occupations, as well as become more informed about the*
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> *labour movement and the benefits of union membership.*
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> *(Verma et al. 2004)*

Many visible minorities immigrating to Canadian communities can therefore start to part c pate in jobs where unions are present. Union policy is also able to defend its

members from many types of unlawful discrimination. Such categories can be found in

Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms. Organized labour can therefore strengthen social justice in our communities from coast to coast.

In conclusion, unions in Canada are able to positively impact the communities in which their members reside. Whether playing a key role in

democratic stability, encouraging economic equality or promoting social justice; unions strengthen Canadian communities. As a healthy movement of organized labour in this country continues, more prosperity is expected for future generations, and in future Canadian communities.