



# Community chapters: A new way to build **collective power**

## What is a community chapter?

It's a fact: while the Canadian economy is growing, working people are not gaining the benefits of economic progress we deserve. More and more Canadians are falling behind. Wages are stagnant, personal debt is on the rise, unemployment is not going away and more and more working people are left with precarious and unstable jobs – especially young people.

Traditionally, working people could work together to improve their workplace and standards of living through union membership. But today, many working people do not have access to union representation and benefits, even if they want them. This is due to smaller workplaces, hostile labour laws, powerful employer resistance and the tendency to give more importance to profit over people.

Unifor – Canada's new union – has a new tool to help working people build power, and improve their economic and social conditions, through collective action: community chapters.

Unifor's community chapters are a new form of union membership that aims to reach out to groups of workers that are generally excluded from union membership. Potential groups of people may include workers in workplaces where organizing campaigns have not yet succeeded; workers in precarious jobs; unemployed workers; students and any other group of workers hoping to improve their economic and social conditions.

## Why start a community chapter?

- Because you want to improve the working conditions in your workplace
- Because you are a precarious, contract, freelance or self-employed worker or any other kind of worker that is traditionally excluded from collective bargaining
- Because you are unemployed and know other people in the same situation who want to improve their conditions of work and life
- Because you want to help redefine how people see and understand unions
- Because you think unions should work to defend the rights of all working people
- Because you think we're stronger when we work together

# Applying to create a chapter

Becoming a Unifor community chapter member is much more than just choosing, as an individual, to join the union. It is rooted in a process of building the collective power of working people.

Community chapters may be formed where there is a critical mass of interest among people who are not members but who wish to come together. By uniting under a community chapter, they can form a new structure to work together for economic and social justice in their workplace and community.

The criteria to determine if a group is eligible to create a community chapter include:

**Commonality:** The potential community chapter members must share some common interest that creates the potential for sustained shared activity. This point of commonality can be based in a workplace, a community or an interest.

**Critical mass:** The potential community chapter must show the commitment of a sufficient number of dedicated and active members.

**Action plan:** The potential community chapter must submit a clear strategy for how they will use the collective power of the union to better their conditions and win victories from employers, governments, or other campaign targets.

**Union principles:** The potential community chapter members must support the founding principles of Unifor and adhere to the Unifor Constitution.

## Once a chapter is formed

- Each community chapter will elect its own leadership.
- All community chapters will become associated and work with a Unifor local union in their community. In certain situations, a community chapter may become associated with Unifor at a national level.
- Members joining the union through a community chapter must take an initial commitment to join the union for at least one full year. Each community chapter will establish its own dues, which will return to the chapter for the advancement of its action plan (minimum \$5 per month for non-waged members and minimum \$10 per month for waged members).
- Unifor will work with the community chapter to advance its action plan, to provide a variety of union services and to engage their members in Unifor's broader education, advocacy and campaign activities.

## An exciting new project

Unifor's new community chapters are unique in Canada, and even in the world. The project aims to adapt traditional union organizing efforts to the workforce challenges of today. Our goal is to bring as many people as possible to benefit from the protection and strength of a labour union and to create a new tool for building our communities, our union and our power as working people.

Community chapters are an exciting, new initiative and will be built over time, starting with pilot projects and eventually welcoming many new chapters and members.

### For more information

To get more information or to learn how you can start a community chapter, contact [chapters@unifor.org](mailto:chapters@unifor.org) and visit [www.unifor.org](http://www.unifor.org)