

This dispute is about the governance of the Canadian Labour Congress and its failure to prevent attacks on workers from their U.S.- based unions. The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) has rules in place to ensure workers have democratic rights, and that Canadian members of U.S. unions have clear autonomy. Unfortunately, this is not being followed or respected. Unifor is gravely concerned with U.S.- based unions trampling on the rights of workers and has made the decision to disaffiliate.

For the last year, Unifor has loudly voiced concerns about US-based unions and the heavy-handed tactics these unions have taken to suppress the democratic will of Canadian locals and members. Unifor took these concerns directly to the CLC. To date these calls have been ignored by affiliates of the CLC and there has been no concrete action.

In January of 2017 Unifor was vocal about the trusteeship of Local 113 of the ATU. Our union's opposition at that time and still today is a principled one: Unifor is opposed to any union that threatens, harasses, intimidates, or silences workers for simply asserting their democratic rights and autonomy from U.S. based unions.

When workers turned to the CLC for support, they have been met by silence, despite Article 26 of the CLC constitution that is supposed to protect the rights of workers in Canada who are members of U.S.-based unions.

In addition to the lack of action to defend the democratic rights of workers in Canada, there has been an ineffective application of Article 4 of the CLC constitution. Article 4 outlines a democratic process for workers to change unions, but it is not enforced. Affiliates agreed to it, but, in practice, do not grant workers those rights. Instead, as is currently happening to UNITE HERE Local 75, the U.S.-based union will force trusteeship, appropriate Local resources, and remove Local executives, stewards, and staff if they dissent.

This is unfair, it's undemocratic and it's not putting the needs of workers' rights first. But affiliates of the CLC have the power to change it. The CLC must change to be a true defender of workers' rights, even when it is difficult.

Given all of this and our desire for immediate change to defend workers in Canada from U.S.-based bullies, our union made a decision it will no longer participate in the CLC.

This decision is a principled one. It's about holding others accountable for not putting principles into practice. Unifor's leadership believes strongly that in order to make things better for workers there is a need to advance this issue now in the hopes that there will be a stronger labour movement in Canada.