

APRIL 2009

# BUILD A NETWORK

## Organize with Labour

### What is Labour Council?

The Labour Council brings unions together at the local or municipal level just as the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC) does nationally or the Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) does provincially.

Each Labour Council is chartered by the Canadian Labour Congress but membership in the Council is not automatic even if a union has already joined the CLC or the OFL. Local union branches make their own decisions on whether to affiliate and send delegates.

OSSTF/FEESO policy mandates all Districts to affiliate with the local Labour Council and to become involved in Labour Council meetings and activities.

### What do Labour Councils do?

Labour Councils play a key role in ensuring different unions and their members come together so labour has a strong voice and collective influence in the community. They are involved in:

- **Advocating for progressive local government:**

This includes working on municipal and trustee elections, lobbying politicians, and organizing campaigns on issues such as water, transit, or education.

- **Working with others in the community:**

Labour Councils support a wide range of progressive causes in the community, such as healthcare coalitions or anti-poverty networks.

- **Building support for the policies and campaigns of organized labour:**

Labour Councils bring national and provincial campaigns endorsed by labour into the community. Recent issues include good jobs and fair wages, child care, public health care, electoral reform, workplace health and safety, pensions and Employment Insurance (EI).

- **Assisting other unions with strike support and organizing campaigns:**

Labour solidarity is critical when other locals are on strike or involved in organizing campaigns.

- **Appointing labour representatives:**

The Labour Council decides on labour representatives to EI Boards of Referees as well as various community-based projects and agencies such as the Social Planning Council, Labour Community Services, and the United Way.

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### What OSSTF/FEESO brings to Labour Council

Our members bring a wide range of knowledge, skills, and leadership experience to help build stronger and more effective Labour Councils. These include:

- solid organizational skills and background in running meetings;
- experience in leading workshops and speaking to groups;
- organized network of members and widespread links throughout the community;
- opportunities to work with youth;
- strong presence in municipal and trustee elections.

### What does participation in Labour Council offer OSSTF/FEESO?

Affiliation to the Labour Council means OSSTF/FEESO members get to join the house of labour and be part of an organized network of activists. This offers us:

- a way to reach out to other members of the union movement and the larger community;
- solidarity during labour disputes;
- support for public education and other campaigns;
- training in labour and social justice issues as well as political organizing skills;
- opportunities to be part of building a strong and more progressive community.

### Your role as a delegate to Labour Council

As a delegate representing your District, your role includes:

- informing delegates from other unions about what is happening in education and the issues affecting our members;
- participating in and offering support to campaigns of the Labour Council as well as provincial and national labour campaigns at the local level;
- taking part in discussions and decisions at Labour Council meetings;
- reporting back to the District about issues affecting other unions or the local community and initiatives of the Labour Council;
- building OSSTF/FEESO support for the work of Labour Council.

Many OSSTF/FEESO members have also been elected to sit as part of their Labour Council Executive where they play a variety of roles in building the Council and leading its work within the labour movement and community.

### Resources

- OSSTF/FEESO. *The Labour Council Delegate*. 2002
- Canadian Labour Congress. *Labour Council Handbook*.