

April 2012



## Background

After the Toronto printers' strike of 1872, the Trade Union Act was passed in the Parliament of Canada. In addition to legalizing trade unions, it gave workers the right to strike (Phillips, 2009).

Since their emergence in the first half of the 20th century, trade unions have played a key role in improving the quality of life of Canadians. In addition to securing adequate wages for workers, unions have contributed to pivotal transformations in the national landscape, such as legislation of the eight-hour work day, the five-day work week, workplace health and safety laws, and Medicare (McGowan, 1999). Additionally, unions work to create safe working conditions and advocate for social programs such as Medicare, public education, and pensions (Alberta Federation of Labour, 2009).

## Statistics

Unionization rates are higher among those with a post-secondary education (Uppal, 2011).

A study found that 79 percent of unionized work environments followed health and safety regulations in comparison to 54 percent of non-unionized workplaces (Alberta Federation of Labour, 2009b).

The average Canadian unionized full time worker earns \$20.29 per hour. The average hourly wage for non-unionized workers in Canada is \$17.22 (Alberta Federation of Labour, 2009b).

Women in unionized workplaces earn 89 percent of the wages earned by men, compared to only 71 percent in non-unionized work environments (Alberta Federation of Labour, 2009b).

## Unionization in Canada and Alberta

In recent decades, the percentage of overall and unionized workers in Canada has been on the decline. Rates have dropped from an average of 35.7 percent in 1980-1989 to an average of 30.9 percent in 2000-2006 (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2011).

Declining unionization rates are significant considering findings from a study of inequality trends in OECD countries, which suggests that the most important factor in equality is membership in trade unions (Alberta College of Social Workers, 2010). Consequently, inequality and poverty in Canada have increased significantly over the last 10 years (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2008).

In 2011, Alberta was the least unionized province in the country (Statistics Canada, 2012; CBC 2012).

According to the Alberta Federation of Labour, Alberta's low rate of unionization in Canada is not just the result of the province's 'rugged individualism'. There are numerous legal and economic issues that are responsible for this trend. For instance, Alberta governments have been less receptive to trade unions. This has resulted in labour laws that make it more difficult for present-day unions to form and to conduct business in Alberta, in contrast to other provinces. Another contributing factor is that many Albertans rely on employment from industries such as oil and gas extraction, which have a history of low unionization rates (McGowan, 1999).

Over 98 percent of contract negotiations in Alberta are resolved without strikes (Alberta Federation of Labour, 2009b).

## Edmonton Based Trade Unions

If you are looking to get into the trades, there's almost a union for every trade available. These are just a few of the Edmonton based unions available for those who are interested in getting into the trades.

### **Local 92 Labourers**

Catering specifically to labourers and construction workers in North America, this is a fast growing and progressive union. Located in Edmonton, members (and prospective members) can access job and training opportunities and general information pertaining to the labour and construction field.

#### Contact Info

Location: 10319 106th Street, Edmonton, AB

Website: <http://www.local92.com>

Phone Number: (780) 426-6330

Email: [mail@local92.com](mailto:mail@local92.com)

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### **Edmonton Iron Workers Union Local 720**

Interested in becoming an Iron worker? But not sure where to turn? Edmonton Iron Workers Union Local 720 may have the answers you are looking for. In operation since 1948, Local 720 protects the interests of Iron workers. This union local has a very detailed and informative website, where questions, such as why should workers unionize, as well as the benefits and perks of being a member of Local 720 are answered.

#### Contact info

Location: Main Office, 10512 122 Street Edmonton

Phone Number: (780) 482-0720

Website: <http://www.ironworkers720.com>

### **United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters**

Local 488 initially started in 1904 by a group of 7 plumbers. Today, this union has grown to protect not just plumbers but a variety of other pipe trade workers. They include: pipefitters, steam fitters, instrumentation technicians and welders to name a few.

Location: Pipe Trades Building, 16214 118 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta

Phone: (780)452-7080

Email: [info@local488.ca](mailto:info@local488.ca)

Website: <http://www.local488.ca>

If you are looking for other trade unions in Edmonton, visit YellowPages.ca's Labour Organization page [www.yellowpages.ca/business/00747000.html](http://www.yellowpages.ca/business/00747000.html)



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