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September 10, 2013

Sent by mail and fax: 7-(495)-606-0376

To His Excellency
Mr. Vladimir Putin
President of the Russian Federation
23, Ilyinka Street
Moscow, 103132, Russia

Dear President Putin,

As the newly elected President of Canada's largest private sector union, dedicated to workers' rights, I am writing to urge you to work toward repealing recent laws and policies that severely infringe upon the individual and collective rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) citizens of your country. This legislation – including the legislation you recently signed banning so-called “homosexual propaganda” – is deeply offensive to fundamental principles of equality and contradicts rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Russia is a signatory.

As a worker-based organization we stand in solidarity with workers across the globe – and that includes workers who are most vulnerable. We are profoundly disturbed that your government is not only failing to protect its citizens, but is instead actively working to *increase the vulnerability* of LGBT people and their families in your country. Personally, I have been appalled by news stories of members of the Russian LGBT community being harassed, threatened and severely beaten. If your government does not reverse its laws and policies, the situation will only worsen; we are deeply concerned for the safety of the Russian LGBT community.

I am so proud that unions such as ours in Canada have used our collective strength to push for changes in the workplace and in legislation, such that our country has become a global leader on LGBT rights. We have stood side-by-side with our LGBT members in calling for equal marriage and family rights and equal workplace protection and benefits; as a union we have marched in pride rallies and parades for over twenty years, and LGBT union members are part of our leadership team. We have used our resources and our energies to educate Canadian workers on LGBT issues, and I know this has been an important part of making Canada a safer place for lesbians, gays, bisexual and trans people and their families.

Attention is currently focussed on the upcoming Winter Olympic Games. We fully expect Russia to support the Charter of the games, which outlines a clear anti-discrimination policy. But beyond the high-profile nature of the Olympic Games, we are urging your government to respect fundamental worker and citizenship rights on an every day, every workplace, every neighbourhood basis.

We both know that governments have the power to restrict or expand the freedoms, dignity and rights of their citizens. I am appealing to you to stand on the right side of history.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jerry Dias".

Jerry Dias
National President
Unifor
Jd:sc:dbcope343

cc: Ken Georgetti, CLC President, Jyrki Raina, General Secretary, IndustriALL Global Union, Vadim Borisov, CIS Office, Stephen Cotton, ITF General Secretary, Paddy Crumlin, ITF President, Ron Oswald, IUF General Secretary, Philip Jennings, General Secretary, UNI Global Union