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**To: Unifor Locals and National Representatives**

## Statement On Human Rights Day - December 10, 2014

Human Rights Day commemorates the adoption of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) on December 10, 1948. The landmark document states that human rights are not the preserve of any one nation, or race, or gender but that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

The United Nations slogan this year, [Human Rights 365](#), celebrates the idea that every day is Human Rights Day.

Violations of basic human rights occur with appalling frequency around the world and the suffering and hatred breeds political violence and inhibits economic and societal development. Each of us must hold our governments to account and advance the struggle against injustice, intolerance and extremism everywhere, every day.

Canada was a strong champion of and played a key role in the adoption of the groundbreaking UN Convention against Torture and other forms of Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In December 2002, the United Nations adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture which puts in place national and international inspections of jails and other detention centres to identify and expose the conditions that lead to torture. It is concrete. It is effective. Twelve years later, Canada has not yet ratified the Optional Protocol.

As the multicultural diversity of Canada continues to grow, preventing torture anywhere and everywhere is fundamentally important to Canadians who worry about the safety of family and friends living in other countries where the risk of torture and ill-treatment is very high. Unifor calls on the federal government to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture without any further delay.

Violence and the threat of violence remain the daily reality for far too many women. We at Unifor repeat our call for a national action plan to end violence against women - including a national public inquiry into the deaths and disappearance of First Nations, Métis and Inuit women and girls.

Our country has been strengthened by the contributions of the many refugees who have come here from around the world – by boat, by plane and on foot. Canada must be fair to refugees, respect their basic rights and open doors that have closed. Canada must return to the better parts of our tradition of welcoming refugees.

Unifor is proud of the role we have played in bargaining and campaigning for social programs and legislative equality. We are committed to further strengthening and broadening our commitment to human rights issues. We regularly offer conferences, courses and workshops on equality issues to our members and bargain for programs, in partnership with employers that foster greater respect for the rights of women, workers of colour, persons with disabilities, those in the LGBTQ community and all vulnerable persons in the workplace.

At the same time, we recognize that the road is long and our steps forward are constantly under attack. Unions are an incredibly important vehicle for human rights. We know that without collective rights and collective action, individual rights are fragile and we cannot build or sustain strong, caring communities.

Each December 10, International Human Rights Day is a reminder to all of us that the struggle for equality and dignity is the foundation of social justice and that true solidarity cannot be achieved without recognizing that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

We can all make a difference, individually and collectively each day and every year. Let us respond to the cries of the exploited, and uphold the right to human dignity for all.