

CANADA TARGETS LACK OF MINIMUM AGE LAWS IN CANADA ON WORLD DAY FOR DECENT WORK

On World Day for Decent Work (October 7th) young worker representatives from labour affiliates demanded that Canada's federal, provincial and territorial Labour Ministers immediately take action to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 138 on Minimum Age - the international standard dealing with the use of children in production services.

Canada has an obligation to ratify this Convention by virtue of its membership in the ILO and its adoption of the ILO "Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work." Today, eleven years later, Canada remains one of 29 countries which have not ratified C138, along with the likes of Afghanistan, India, Iran, Korea, and Myanmar.

The Canadian Government continues to report to the ILO on ongoing discussions with the provinces and territories about C138. The labour movement, and youth across the country, believe that these discussions have gone on for far too long. On this World Day for Decent Work joining workers worldwide in demanding decent work for all, they initiated a minimum age campaign urging the government to take concrete steps toward ratification.

Convention 138 permits the employment of children 15 years and older, reducing the age requirement to 14 years of age under certain conditions. All provinces and territories in Canada permit the employment of children under the age of 14. The province of British Columbia permits the employment of children under the age of 12 while the province of Alberta permits the employment of 12 year olds with written consent of one (1) parent or guardian. Furthermore, most provincial and territorial governments, and the federal government currently rely on a complaints registration process to enforce compliance. This process also needs to change by adopting effective inspections, monitoring and reporting.

The Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), and the labour movement in Canada, firmly believe that Canada and the provinces and territories must pursue a policy to abolish child labour and to progressively raise the minimum age of employment. On World Day for Decent Work, members of the CLC Young Workers Working Group and Young Workers from the provincial and territorial federations of labour were engaged across the country to communicate with their respective Ministers of Labour, directly asking for support to move this crucial ratification forward. The young workers join with workers, trade unions, and many other actors across the country in appealing to help to establish a better foundation for responding to the current economic crisis by protecting those who are the most vulnerable.