



MARCH 21 - INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

## ONTARIO LABOUR COUNCIL JOINT STATEMENT ON MARCH 21, 2016 — International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination —

Every year, March 21 is celebrated around the world as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It is a day that marks the anniversary of the tragic events of Sharpeville, South Africa, when police opened fire and killed 69 people at a peaceful demonstration against the apartheid “pass laws” in 1960. Six years later, the United Nations General Assembly declared March 21 an annual date for the international community to redouble its efforts to eliminate racism in all its forms.

This year, Ontario’s regional labour councils have come together for the first time to issue a joint public statement for March 21, with the support of the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Ontario Region of the Canadian Labour Congress.

We feel that labour councils and their affiliated union locals have a strong and important role to play in bringing together labour and community groups in every region of Ontario to tackle barriers to equality, human rights, and social justice. Together, we fight for good jobs and sustainable communities that are supported by strong public services and universally accessible social programs.

We recognize that racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and all forms of prejudice, hate and discrimination – whether individual, cultural or systemic – divide our communities and prevent our collective prosperity.

Ontario today has the fastest growing rates of poverty and precariousness out of every province in Canada, but our racialized, Indigenous and newcomer communities are disproportionately affected by rising inequality.

With the recent push to welcome an unprecedented number of refugees and immigrants into our communities, there has been a backlash of racism and Islamophobia that has been fueled by prominent political figures like Stephen Harper and Donald Trump, and many others.

Ontario’s labour councils feel it necessary to respond openly and directly to this undercurrent of hate with the strongest and most unified condemnation possible. Together, we are committed to working to:

- End individual, cultural or systemic racism and discrimination by speaking out and confronting all barriers to the full and equal opportunity for all;
- Promote and protect social justice, human rights, and the environment;
- Demand immediate action to eliminate poverty, end employment precarity and close the wage gap that disproportionately affects women, racialized people and other equity-seeking communities, and prevents the advancement of every worker; and
- Demand public investment in social programs, a \$15 minimum wage, better employment standards and easier access to join a union.

Labour Councils across Ontario are committed to advancing these agendas and providing a space for such discussions.

We also have a unique role to play in supporting refugees to our communities, while being a vigilant opposition to any backlash they might experience.

In recognition of March 21, 2016, we encourage unions and community members to download and display our **#StopHate window signs** and to share them on social media: <http://ofl.ca/index.php/stophate>

We also invite unions and labour councils to read the **CLC Welcome Home Guide** on how to sponsor a refugee, make a donation, volunteer, or take political action in support of refugees: <http://canadianlabour.ca/welcome-home-resource-kit>

Together, we can put an end to racism and inequality, while lifting every worker out of poverty.

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WORKERS UNITED  
TO **#STOPHATE**

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# stop

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