

YOUNG WORKERS

TOOLKIT



PART 1

Young Workers Guide

PART 2

Labour Council Guide



INTRODUCTION

The guide and digital platform will serve as useful tools for any young worker who is entering a unionized environment. It is our hope that this guide will help to nurture young workers who want to be active participants in their local, unit, affiliate, and/or regional labour councils but are unsure of what concrete steps can be taken to reach that goal.

PART 1:

YOUNG WORKERS GUIDE

STEP

1

FIND YOUR UNION & LABOUR COUNCIL

Are you a young worker who is passionate about creating a better workplace and a better society for yourself and your co-workers? If so, you have come to the right place! Familiarize yourself with the Ontario Federation of Labour's (OFL) Young Workers Toolkit!

STEP**1****FIND YOUR UNION &
LABOUR COUNCIL**

The first step to organizing with other young workers is to connect with your local labour council. Labour councils are where local unions meet to discuss common issues and organize actions to fight for a more just society at the local level.

**FIND THE WEBSITE FOR YOUR
LOCAL LABOUR COUNCIL**



[HTTPS://OFL.CA/ABOUT/LABOURCOUNCILS](https://ofl.ca/about/labourcouncils) 🔍

STEP

1

FIND YOUR UNION &
LABOUR COUNCIL

Once you have found your local labour council, locate their contact information on their website.

Send an email to their executive introducing yourself as a young worker in their local area who wants to get involved in the labour council. You can use this email/phone call template below to introduce yourself:

“Hello, my name is _____, and I am a young worker at (insert your workplace if you are currently doing waged work) who would like to get involved at our local labour council. Does the (insert labour council name) local or central young workers committee that I could join? When is the labour council meeting next? Is it possible for me to attend? Are there any appropriate resources you could direct me to that would help me get more involved in the labour council and my local union?”

(if you do not know if you are in a union, ask in this email if the labour council is aware of a union local that represents your workplace).

I am looking forward to meeting you all!

*In solidarity,
(insert name)*



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STEP 2 ON THE SHOP FLOOR

Great work connecting yourself with your local labour council. Now that you have connected to your local labour council, Once you have met up with your local labour council, ask them if there is a union local that represents your workplace. If you do not have a union, ask your local labour council about joining or creating a Young Workers Work Group so that yourself and other non unionized young workers can get connected to the labour movement.

STEP 2 ON THE SHOP FLOOR

If you do have a union:

*Locate your mandated **union bulletin board** at your workplace. It should be in a visible place nailed to the wall. Often it is in the breakroom or other areas where workers congregate at your workplace. If you work remotely, your union board will likely exist digitally on your union's website.*

On the board there will be your union executive's contact information and all upcoming general membership meetings, committee meetings, and unit meetings times will be listed. Take note of all of these and be sure to attend as many meetings as you can!

Start to identify workplace leaders such as your union local's president, shop stewards (representatives of the union in each department/area of your workplace), committee chairs and other members of the union's executive. Not all workplace leaders are executive members, some are rank and file activists who are heavily involved in the union and have the respect of their co-workers. If you notice anyone who is participating in union activities, introduce yourself to them.



STEP 2 ON THE SHOP FLOOR

Offer to support your union's work with any applicable skills you may have.

-  *Are you skilled with digital tools? Are you always happy to talk to people?*
-  *Are you good at keeping data well organized? Do you enjoy event planning?*
-  *Any applicable skills will be a welcomed addition to your union!*

**You can reach out to your union leadership by using the following email/phone call template:*

“Hello, my name is _____ and I am a young worker who wants to be an active participant in my local. I can offer _____ skills that I believe could strengthen our union. Please let me know when we are having our next general membership meeting and what other ways I can get involved!”

Ask workplace leaders if there is any new member orientation if explicitly offered in your Collective Agreement that can be taken on company time. A Collective Agreement (CA) is the agreement between the union and the employer that outlines wages, hours of work, working conditions, benefits, and all other aspects of the workplace). If there is no paid orientation offered, reach out to your shop steward or a seasoned worker to give you an informal introduction to your union and workplace. ”



*In solidarity,
(insert name)*

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STEP 3 ATTENDING YOUR FIRST MEETING

Now that you have connected to your local labour council and your union, using available resources, identify general membership meeting times and committee meeting times that may be of interest to you and mark in your calendar.

Ask an identified workplace leader/activist if you can attend the meeting with them to help show you the ropes of union activism.

STEP 3 ATTENDING YOUR FIRST MEETING



At your first meeting:

At your first meeting, review rules of order prior to attending your first meeting. While you may have a lot to say, there is a formalized structure for conversation and debate during a union meeting. When entering the meeting, sign attendance records, get a copy of minutes from the last meeting and the current meeting's agenda (may be a physical or digital copy). If they don't recognize a new face, feel free to introduce yourself to everyone!

If you have a topic you want to discuss, consult with a local with local leader (president, recording secretary, etc.) to inquire when is the appropriate time in the agenda to speak to that issue. Observe and listen closely to what issues are being discussed in the meeting. During the meeting, you can expect to hear reports on topics such as correspondences, president's reports, finance reports, servicing staff or "rep" report, and various committee reports, unfinished business, and more.

If there is a YW report take note of the presenter and at the end of the meeting reach out to that individual at the end of the meeting. Ask them how you can get involved in their committee! There will likely be a section on new business and good & welfare which are more open for general discussions that are not explicitly confined to local business. Some of these can include upcoming municipal, provincial and federal elections, how to support workers in your community, local and international progressive campaigns of relevance, etc.

Take note of speakers and introduce yourself to as many folks as possible once the meeting has ended. Ask the chair of the meeting if there is any identifiable union swag you can have and if there are any informal socials to attend after the meeting is finished

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STEP

4

BECOMING

A RANK & FILE ACTIVIST

Great job going to your first union meeting! Your next step is to become a rank and file activist at your local! First, ask your union's executive if you can join your labour council as an official delegate for your local/unit. You will likely need to be elected/appointed to this position at a local membership meeting.

STEP 4 BECOMING A RANK & FILE ACTIVIST

Next, work to identify any campaigns taking place within your affiliate, labour council, or in the broader labour movement. Reach out to campaign organizers to offer your help! Below is an email/phone call template you can use:



*Hello,
my name is _____. I am a member of our union local _____. I am connecting with you to offer my support for the _____ campaign our local is running. I would like to offer my time to support this important initiative our union is taking on. Please let me know how I can best help build this campaign.*

In solidarity,



Next, you can get involved in this campaign by talking to your co-workers on the shop floor. Ask them what issues THEY are concerned about at your workplace. We all have the impulse to tell everyone what we think could be better. However, your co-workers will only get involved if its about an issue they know impacts them. All workplaces have problems, its just a matter of finding out what they are. Your co-workers should be the ones who identify the issues they are concerned about at work. Good organizers listen more than they talk!

STEP 4 BECOMING A RANK & FILE ACTIVIST

Your co-workers could be concerned about any one of a number of issues. They could be worried about low pay, inconsistent hours, potential layoffs, safety, working conditions, benefits, or something as simple as where the nearest washroom is to your worksite.

Once you have identified the issue your co worker is concerned about, show them how working with their co workers for change is the only way this issue can be resolved. Remind them that all of your co-workers are much stronger when confronting the employer together than they could ever be on their own. Whenever possible, connect solving the issue a worker is concerned about with an ongoing campaign your union/labour council is running.

FINALLY, BECOME AWARE OF BROADER ISSUES AFFECTING THE LABOUR MOVEMENT. BELOW ARE JUST A FEW OF THE MANY PROGRESSIVE NEWS SOURCES IN CANADA:



<https://canadianlabour.ca/publications/>



<https://ofl.ca/news/>



<https://rabble.ca>



<https://briarpatchmagazine.com/>



<https://canadiandimension.com/>



<https://www.realchangenews.com/>



<https://www.rankandfile.ca/>



<https://breachmedia.ca/sites/rabble.ca/>



<https://ricochetmedia/en>



<https://springmag.ca/>

STEP 4 BECOMING A RANK & FILE ACTIVIST

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You don't have to do it all...

It's important to remember that you are just one person, with a limited capacity. Don't burn yourself out! You cannot help others if you are overworked and exhausted. You don't have to do it all. The labour movement was not built in a day. Organize as much as you can but make sure to take time for yourself to relax and unwind.



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5 LEAVING THE NEST

Now that you've put in the work it's time to take the next step! You may want to consider being a shop steward or committee chair.

Identify upcoming elections for positions that may be relevant to your interests. See if there are any openings for election positions. Research what educational and training resources your affiliate has to offer. If there is an upcoming convention (CLC, OFL, National Affiliate) inquire if there is a YW delegate spot available.

Get involved in community actions that can help create linkages between the labour movement and broader progressive struggles (environmental movement, lgbtq2+ movement, anti-racism, progressive political parties etc.). The labour movement at its best has been at the forefront of linking class struggle to other struggles for equality.

Good work getting involved as a rank-and-file activist in the labour movement. Use the tools above to help transform your workplace and the economy into a place that provides a better life for all of us!

PART 2:

YOUNG WORKERS GUIDE

STEP

1

IDENTIFY PRESENT YOUNG

ACTIVISTS

First and foremost, Labour Council leaders should make a concerted effort to identify any young worker activists who may already have delegate status and attend council meetings. Typically, a large portion of Labour Council delegates and executive officers tend to be made up of older comrades and it should be relatively straightforward to spot any younger folks who may be present in the room (“You’ll know it when you see it!”).

STEP

1

IDENTIFY PRESENT YOUNG ACTIVISTS LABOUR COUNCIL

All elected officers should make a concerted effort to introduce themselves to any delegates who may be young workers and make a kind-hearted offer to show them “the ropes” as a means to help acclimate them to Labour Council business. It is important to understand that many young workers do not have an extensive background in organized labour settings and a particular focus should be placed on making them feel as welcome as possible during all formal and informal meetings, activities, and actions.

You can work to accomplish this by:



- 1. Offering to sit with Young Worker delegate(s) during council meetings*
- 2. Explaining to Young Worker delegate(s) how meetings are typically conducted prior to their first council meeting*
- 3. Inquiring why and how Young Worker delegate(s) got involved with their local*
- 4. Asking Young Worker delegate(s) about the workplace issues they are most passionate about*
- 5. Inviting Young Worker delegate(s) to attend any Labour Council committee meetings that may be of interest to them*
- 6. Inviting Young Worker delegate(s) to any informal social events associated with your Labour Council (after meeting drinks etc.)*
- 7. Ask Young Worker delegate(s) how Labour Council could best optimise their experience as a delegate*

Once trust-built relationships have been established you can start to inquire if the already present Young Worker delegate(s) would be interested in helping to recruit other young folks to form a Young Workers Committee or working group associated with your labour council. Alternatively, if your executive board has an earmarked position reserved for a young worker representative you can encourage them to stand for that position.

STEP**2****MAKE A CALL OUT
TO AFFILIATES**

If you currently don't have any or very few young workers present at your Labour Council your immediate next step should be to execute an outreach campaign targeted to affiliates, encouraging them to send more young workers as delegates and/or observers to Labour Council meetings, committees, working groups and actions. It will be important to pay a particular focus to any local affiliates that may have a disproportionate amount of Young Workers present in their workplaces. This could include unions that represent service workers, retail workers, post-secondary institution workers, education workers and generally workplaces that have a high number of part-time positions.

A sample outreach strategy could include the following steps:

- 1. Send out a general email blast to all affiliates encouraging them to send Young Workers to local Labour Council meetings by utilizing open delegate positions. Inquire if their local or component has an active YW committee to tap into to achieve this objective.*
- 2. Follow up with a personal call and/or email with affiliates that may have a disproportionate amount of YW present in their workplaces.*
- 3. Make an announcement during Council Meetings encouraging affiliates to utilize open delegate positions to recruit more Young Workers to your labour council.*

4. Be persistent!

STEP 3 MAKE A CALL OUT TO AFFILIATES



Due to understandable capacity issues and the unfortunately low unionization rates among Young Workers within Ontario, it may be difficult to directly recruit Young Workers who are members of an affiliated union and are able to obtain delegate status. If your constitution allows for observers to attend Labour Council meetings there is an opportunity to leverage that particular policy in your favour. Within your community, there are likely a number of activist groups operating whose membership is disproportionately made up of younger folks. These could include, but are not limited to, organizations that advocate for lower tuition rates, greater environmental protections, LGBTQ2S+ rights, indigenous rights, and anti-racism initiatives.

If you have already developed strong relationships with such organizations and their leadership, it is suggested that you communicate your desire to form a young workers' committee or working group and inquire if any of their members would be interested in taking part in such a project.

Understandably, having a committee or working group made up of a majority of individuals who are not delegates, and/or are not unionized may cause some concern among your membership, there can be a variety of mechanisms put in place to protect the democratic integrity of your Labour Council while still supporting non-delegates who want to contribute to the stated objectives and goals of your Labour Council.

Those who don't hold delegate status should be provided with a set of expectations that include:

- 1. An explanation that they are encouraged to participate in Young Worker Committee meetings and to attend Council Meetings but they are not allowed to vote on motions or participate in elections.*
- 2. The assignment of an executive board officer to attend Young Workers committee meetings.*
- 3. If Young Workers committees request financial support or would like to put forward a motion to bring to Council, the assigned executive officer will be responsible for bringing that appeal to the executive board and have the right to filter and/or reject the stated request if it does not adhere to the principals and objectives of your Labour Council.*

STEP 4

FORM YW COMMITTEE OR WORKING GROUP

Form YW CoNow that you have identified a number of young folks who are interested in forming a Young Worker Committee/Working Group you will need to ratify its formation with your Executive Board and Council. You're almost at the finish line!

Based on your particular Labour Council's constitution adhere to the steps outlined with that documentation to formalize the creation of your new Committee or Working Group. Furthermore, it will be important to develop a set of standards or constitution outlining:

- 1. When and how often Committee or Working Group meetings are to be held*
- 2. How chair(s) will be elected*
- 3. Expectations for committee members (particularly those who may not hold delegate status)*

Once this has been accomplished, you can bring forward the proposal to your Executive Board and General Council Meeting for a final vote. Once the Committee or Working Group has been officially formed, it will be important to continue to mentor these young folks and always offer a helping hand as they navigate the Labour Movement for the first time. It is important that we place a special emphasis on developing the capacities of Young Workers who are the leaders of tomorrow. The continued vitality of the Labour Movement is dependent on creating a strong and effective pipeline of young activists who are committed to building a more just and equitable future for all.





Y O U N G W O R K E R S

T  O L K I T