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## **What is a People's Trade Agenda?**

Trade agreements, we know, are complex instruments, riddled with thousands of pages of legal text that are inaccessible to most people. Even experts struggle to disentangle the words, phrases, and concepts in these treaties. But despite the complicated jargon, the basic intent of modern free trade deals is primarily to satisfy the interests of businesses, exporters, and private investors. Poverty eradication, environmental sustainability, social and economic equality, the creation of good, stable jobs, and strengthening our local democracy are mostly an afterthought.

This has to change.

Canadians deserve to have a voice in the development of trade policy. We need to set the ground rules for what trade ought to achieve. That's a conversation that goes beyond fiddling with the legal text of a trade deal. It means identifying a new set of terms and principles to guide our trade program. The Trudeau government has talked about a "Progressive Trade Agenda", but so far that program lacks coherence. Canada needs a clearly-defined social mandate that guides its trade policy. And we intend to craft it.

## **Here's how we'll do it**

Over the course of 2018, Unifor will be organizing a series of open meetings in communities all across Canada. In these meetings participants will be talking about trade through their own lived-experience. They'll brainstorm ideas on how to craft a more humane, fair, and development-focused trade framework and how, collectively, we can achieve it.

These "town-hall"-style meetings aren't union meetings. They'll be hosted by Unifor local unions (sometimes co-hosted with community partners), but they are intended to be community gatherings, bringing together as broad a range of civil society as possible. Workers and community organizers, those active on environmental issues, academics and researchers, farmers, students, representatives of indigenous communities, equity rights advocates, small business owners, local politicians, our neighbours and our friends: all are invited to attend and explore the possibilities for a better trade policy.

At these town halls, participants will be given a basic overview of trade and trade policy in Canada. Most importantly, they'll be provided space to engage in a meaningful discussion with others who believe a progressive trade agenda is possible.

The ideas generated at these gatherings will ultimately form a summary report that will include recommendations – a framework for a fair trade mandate developed by citizens. This framework will then be brought to federal politicians and candidates in the lead-up to the important 2019 federal election. Our hope is to build a constructive and respectful political dialogue on trade during the next election – one that sets us down the path of building a fair trade future.