

Lower dues for non-union members: survey

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More than half of Canadians believe non-union members should not be forced to pay full union dues, a recent survey has found.

About 54% of respondents liked the idea of lower union dues for non-union members, compared with 39% who did not, a survey conducted by Nanos Research for employment resource organization Canadian LabourWatch Association found. Of the 1,000 working Canadians surveyed by Nanos, about one quarter were current union members. The lower dues would be charged specifically to cover the cost of collective bargaining, and exclude charges for activities such as strikes and political campaigns.

"In the United States, nonmembers who are unionized do not pay the same level of dues as a union member," John Mortimer, president of LabourWatch said. "The fraction is about 25% for what a non-member will pay in comparison to a member."

In 1946, a landmark arbitration handed down by Supreme Court Justice Ivan Rand granted unions the right to collect full dues from all workers at unionized companies, regardless of their union membership status. The reasoning was these workers 'benefited' from the union's collectively bargained agreement. Workers under the Canadian Auto Workers Union - the country's largest private sector union -- pay two hours and twenty minutes worth of their full-time salary per month in union dues.

The survey found 81% of respondents opposed union dues being used to support political parties, while only 16% believed this was an acceptable practice. Sixty percent of current or former union members surveyed believed their union dues were well spent compared with 30% that were not satisfied and 10% that were unsure.

When unionized employees were asked how they became a union member, 89% said it was required as part of their job compared with 8% who voluntarily joined the union.

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