



INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS AFL-CIO & CLC

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IFPTE Executive Council Diversity Committee
April 23, 2020

IFPTE Statement on Anti-Asian Racism

The International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), AFL-CIO & CLC, representing upwards of 90,000 workers across Canada and the United States, stands in solidarity with Asians against the rise in anti-Asian racism. With thousands of IFPTE members working in healthcare, energy, and government across both countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, IFPTE calls upon its membership, local affiliates, and the public to stand in solidarity with the Asian community during this difficult time.

COVID-19 is a global health crisis which has already claimed the lives of far too many and altered our lives in unprecedented ways with devastating economic and social repercussions. During this period of crisis, Asians and anyone perceived to be of Chinese descent are not only struggling with the shared fear of contracting the virus, they are also confronted with racism, xenophobia, and outright violence while they continue to be disproportionately impacted by the social and economic effects of the pandemic.

A number of individuals holding public office, including President Donald Trump, have unacceptably aggravated the racism and xenophobia against Asians by labelling COVID-19 as the “Chinese virus” or “Wuhan virus”.¹ Their racist and irresponsible actions clearly stand as a continuation of their anti-immigrant, anti-worker policies and agendas.

Despite the irrationality and counterproductiveness of practicing racism and xenophobia during a time of global crisis, in a span of one week alone during March, Asian Americans reported more than 600 cases of anti-Asian targeting across the United States while online Anti-Asian hostility and hate speech surged, including incitement of violent acts against Asians.² Similarly, Canada has seen a rise in attacks against the Chinese community and against anyone who looks Chinese, including a stabbing of a Korean man in Montreal last month, leaving entire communities fearful of leaving their homes.³

IFPTE denounces the rise in anti-Asian racism and stands in solidarity with our members and with all people of Asian descent. This is a time for compassion, tolerance and kindness. It is incumbent upon everyone, especially those who perceive themselves as unaffected by racism, to separate COVID-19 from any particular group or place; to recognize and call out stigma; to do everything possible to unite in order to heal; and to recognize that an injury to one group is an injury to all; IFPTE does not tolerate any harassment, racism, discriminatory remarks, or acts of violence against anyone, especially during this time when we need global and local cooperation and mutual aid.

Furthermore, IFPTE makes the following commitments and recommendations:

1. IFPTE joins the Asian Pacific American Labour Alliance and the Ontario Federation of Labour and other unions and labour organizations in demanding that all employers have procedures in place to deal with discrimination in the workplace, especially in their COVID-19 response plan, and that our governments’ policy responses to include all workers, including immigrant and migrant workers. IFPTE joins these groups as well as the Canadian Labour Congress and the Labor Coalition for Community Action, which includes the A. Philip Randolph Institute, the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the Coalition of Labor Union Women, the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, and Pride at Work, in highlighting the need to protect all of our frontline workers, as they bear the the brunt from the global pandemic.

¹ In 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) introduced guidelines to stop the practice of identifying places or regions in association with viral diseases in order to reduce the stigma and negative impacts directed towards regions or their people. See WHO (2015, May 8), [WHO issues best practices for naming new human infectious diseases](#) [Press Release].

² Olivera, N. (2020, March 27). [Asian-Americans Report Nearly 700 Racist Attacks in a Week. From Being Spat On and Screamed At to Full-On Physical Assaults](#). *New York Daily News*.

³ Hinkson, K. (2020, March 18). [Montreal’s Korean Consulate Issues Safety Warning After Man Stabbed](#). *CBC*.

2. IFPTE encourages its members who encounter racism, workplace harassment, or discrimination in any form to contact their local representatives, and calls upon IFPTE elected leaders, members and allies to speak out against racist, hostile, and aggressive behaviour.
3. IFPTE calls upon every member to become a true ally - someone who actively supports racialized groups facing challenges - by showing solidarity with Asians and other racialized workers.
4. IFPTE urges its members, allies and the general public to educate themselves about how to manage their health as well as to self-educate about any of their own prejudices and biases, especially those that may have led them to assume that all Asians have the virus.
5. IFPTE will continue to support and uplift the work of the Asian Canadian Labour Alliance, Asian Pacific American Labour Alliance, and other racial justice organizations who are organizing on the ground to shed light on injustices, advocating for change.

IFPTE also recognizes that the current health crisis highlights the dire need for improving the social safety net, which often leaves behind those with the highest need. The people of Canada and the United States deserve legislation designed to help the most vulnerable in our society. As with other crises in our history, racialized, Indigenous, and immigrant communities are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, and government response plans are inadequately meeting the needs of the most marginalized and impoverished.

Thus far, the public health and economic policy response to this pandemic has excluded workers from receiving needed emergency benefits and support on the basis of their immigration status. In the U.S., the *Families First Coronavirus Response Act* includes provisions that deny healthcare and economic assistance, including necessary testing and nutrition assistance, to many immigrant workers. In Canada, workers with precarious immigration status are facing insurmountable obstacles to qualify for the employment and income benefits of the *COVID-19 Emergency Response Act*. Immigrant workers – including many IFPTE members – are at the frontline of the fight against the virus, with thousands of them working in agriculture, service and public health industries, to name a few. Our governments’ responses must include immigrant workers, temporary guest workers, undocumented workers, and all workers irrespective of their immigration status. Proper income support, paid sick leave from work, and access to healthcare are minimum provisions that all workers and their families need right now.

More info on IFPTE’s COVID-19 response can be found on our website:
<http://www.ifpte.org/news/details/IFPTE-Responds-to-2019-Novel-Coronavirus-COVID-19>.

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