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unIFORum



Unifor members took part in local election preparation meetings in Kitchener, Ontario.

Election planning kicks off

Unifor leaders, activists and staff from BC, the Prairies, Ontario and the Atlantic came together to start planning for what will become the union's strategy for the federal election later this year.

"As a union, we are going to take the time needed

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NS Health decision backs Unifor

A decision by a Nova Scotia arbitrator on the Nova Scotia government's health care restructuring legislation supports Unifor's position to allow for the existing health care unions to create provincewide collective bargaining agents.

James Dorsey issued his decision on Bill 1 on January

19, following a December arbitration involving Unifor and the other three major health care unions in the province.

"Unifor members were active and vocal about their opposition to Bill 1," said Atlantic Regional Director Lana Payne. "Unifor is committed to working with the other unions and Mr. Dorsey to create a collaborative amalgamated bargaining structure that meets the needs of our members, and protects their constitutional rights."

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BC reviews trucker concerns

After meeting with Unifor and other truck driver representatives, BC Transportation Minister Todd Stone has committed to taking another look at the regulations introduced for the Container Trucking Act.

"There has been a lot of progress towards standardizing the sector

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#unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@queerthoughts

#Unifor declares support for Sudbury by-election NDP candidate, @NDPSuzanne

@CandiceSchell

Sitting in a #Unifor caucus discussing all the reasons why we hate Stephen Harper. There are so many! #stopharper

In brief

Local 557-0, Wellington Wood

Members of Local 557-0 at Wellington Wood Products in Mount Forest, Ont., have ratified a new two-year collective agreement with wage increases in both years.

There is a \$200 signing bonus and an increase to safety footwear provisions. Language on piece work was cleared up, and a few changes were made to some job classifications.

The standalone local also voted to join Local 1917. 

Local 302, Strathmere Lodge

Unifor Local 302 members recently ratified a new collective agreement with the County of Middlesex's Strathmere Lodge in Strathroy, Ontario.

The new contract included an improved meal allowance, paramedical coverage, orthodontic dental coverage to \$1750, vacation improvements to seven weeks after 31 years, and an increase in shift and weekend premiums by five cents per hour in 2016 and 2017.

Wage increases over the three-year term are 1.3 per cent, 1.5 per cent and 1.5 per cent. 

Photo spotlight

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PHOTO BY LISA WALDNER

Local federal election preparation meetings are planned for across Canada, like this one in Winnipeg.



PHOTO BY BRENDA MASON

Unifor Local 780G donated to the strike appeal for Local 2000 members on strike at the Cowichan News Leader Pictorial for almost two months over two-tier wages.

Hotline to protect temp foreign workers

A confidential hotline has been created to help temporary foreign workers get answers about their rights, both under the federal program and at work.

"Temporary foreign workers have rights just like Canadian workers, and we intend to ensure that they are enforced across the country," said Wally

Ewanicke, an organizer with Unifor, adding the hotline tells workers about their rights such as rates of pay, overtime, and immigration requirements.

The hotline is an initiative of the Temporary Foreign Workers Association, a group started by Migrante and Unifor. The toll-free number is 1-888-366-0194.

In many sectors of the economy, employers have taken advantage of language barriers and other challenges to exploit foreign workers.

"If they are good enough to work in Canada, they are good enough to stay," said Marco Luciano of Migrante, an alliance of Filipino organizations. 

Featured campaign: As Safe As Our Cargo

On January 21, Unifor sent a second letter to federal Minister of Public Safety Steven Blaney, along with a petition signed by hundreds of armoured car workers and Unifor members, calling on the federal government "to develop a comprehensive regulatory framework for the armoured car industry, establish minimum standards on employee training, vehicle specifications, crew complements and safety equipment." 



Security guards rallied at Steven Blaney's office last May.

TO PROMOTE A CAMPAIGN IN YOUR LOCAL OR REGION, CONTACT COMMUNICATIONS@UNIFOR.ORG

UNIFOR COMMUNICATIONS: SARAH BLACKSTOCK, SHANNON DEVINE, KATIE ARNUP, STUART LAIDLAW, IAN BOYKO, SHELLEY BURGOYNE, MARIE-ANDREE L'HEUREUX, SARAH LESNIEWSKI, AND ANNE MARIE VINCENT

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Dorsey's decision also meets the objectives of the government's health care reforms and the requirements of the Health Authorities Act, Payne pointed out.

While Dorsey concluded that there is still a lot of work to be done to create a structure for multi-union bargaining agents, his approval of the proposal opens the door the government closed in October.

Dorsey found that the creation of a "Nova Scotia Health Care Amalgamated Union" would resolve many of the problems posed by the legislation.

The status of Practical Nurses was left to hearings starting February 2. 

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work for truckers and their clients," said Jerry Dias, National President of Unifor. "But without the implementation of the wage rates signed off by Premier Clark last spring, that progress threatens to come to a halt."

Stone and federal Transportation Minister Lisa Raitt met with Unifor and other driver representatives at the Port Metro Vancouver head offices January 15 in an attempt to find an agreement that would keep the ports open.

Container truckers shut down Port Metro Vancouver for nearly four weeks in March 2014 as a result of undercutting by trucking companies and long wait times at the Port.



Truckers shut down the Port of Vancouver last March.

Truckers went back to work after a Joint Action Plan was signed with the truckers, the Port, the BC government, and the federal government. But truck drivers say that proposals for pay cuts tabled on December 15 by the BC government threaten to undo the agreement that has kept the Port open since April.

At the January 15 meeting, Unifor made a detailed presentation about the implications of the pay cuts. Stone

said he would review the regulations before the new Truck Licencing System is scheduled to be implemented February 1.

"As it stands, the government's pay schedule takes money out of truckers' pockets and violates the deal that I watched the Premier sign last spring," said Paul Johal, President of Unifor's container truck drivers local and a driver himself. "We simply want what was promised when we ended the 2014 port protests." 

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to do the outreach to our members, to talk to them about the importance of this federal election," said Jenny Ahn, assistant to the national president at the January 16-17 event in Toronto.

Unifor National President Jerry Dias said the union would rely heavily on workplace and local union representatives to reach members.

There was a presentation of recent polling and focus group research of union and non-union voters by assistant to the Canadian Labour Congress President Danny Mallett, an overview of the so-called 'Fair Elections Act' by national

representative Patty Barrera from the Political Action & Membership Mobilization Department, a lesson on message discipline from expert strategist and communicator Kathleen Monk and an introduction to Leadnow's election plan from Matthew Carroll and Graham Mitchell.

In the afternoon, participants broke into regional groups, looking at priority ridings and developing a series of topics of local importance and tactics to use in the lead up to the election.

Unifor members are encouraged to attend the CLC election preparation conferences taking place right across the country. For more information: canadianlabour.ca/events 

Unifor welcomes new members

Unifor would like like to welcome 10 workers at Kooljet Inc., now members of Local 1859, 38 workers at Smith Induspac Ottawa, now members of Local 4266, and 122 workers at Woodstock General Hospital Trust, now members of Local 636, who have chosen to join Unifor.

The new members at Kooljet Inc, in Tilsonburg, Ontario, design and build specialized refrigeration equipment for cooling and freezing applications.



At Smith Induspac Ottawa in Ottawa, the members manufacture and distribute customized corrugated, wood, plastic, paper and foam protective packaging.

The new members at Woodstock General Hospital Trust in Woodstock, Ontario, work in health care management.

Out of the 305,000 members Unifor represents across Canada, Unifor represents about 88,000 in manufacturing and 28,900 in health care. 

New appointments

The following staff appointments were made at the start of this year:

Directors

Anthony Dale has been appointed Associate Director of the Legal Department, as a result of Lewis Gottheil's retirement on February 1, working out of the national office, effective immediately.

Vinay Sharma, Director Human Rights Department will be moving to the Health And Safety Department

working out of the national office, effective February 1.

Mohamad Alsadi, service representative, has been appointed Director of the Human Rights Department, including responsibilities with the International Department, working out of the national office, effective February 1.

Communications

Sarah Lesniewski has been appointed to the Communications Department working out of

the national office.

Service

Mike Lovric, Vice-President of Local 444, has been appointed national representative working out of the Windsor office, effective February 1.

Organizing

Aaron Neaves, service representative will be moving to Organizing and working out of the Chatham office, effective February 1.

Patrick Murray, Regional Representative with Council 4000, has been appointed national representative in Organizing in Atlantic Canada working out of the Halifax office, effective February 1.

Kellee Janzen, President of Local 2163, has been appointed national representative in Organizing, working out of the London office, effective February 1. 

Air Canada contract talks begin

Customer Sales and Service Agents at Air Canada will be seeking economic gains after having made many sacrifices during the turbulent times in the airline industry.

The two sides began bargaining for a new collective agreement on January 26 in Toronto.

"A major contributor to the company achieving financial stability is front line employee dedication

and hard work," said Leslie Dias, Unifor National Representative and lead negotiator.

Front line employees are handling 30 per cent more passengers than they did in 2004, with 30 per cent fewer agents. Despite these challenges, Air Canada's employees helped the company win Best Airline in North America for five consecutive years.



Air Canada's staff are key to the company's success.

"Our members are doing a great job under often challenging circumstances. They deserve a reasonable share of the gains the company has made in recent years," said Cheryl

Robinson, President of Unifor Local 2002.

"It shouldn't only be shareholders who benefit from the airline's profitability." 

Unifor urges EI change after Target layoff

In light of the recent mass layoff at Target, Unifor is urging federal Minister of Employment Jason Kenney to provide emergency access to Employment Insurance benefits for Target workers who won't otherwise qualify.

"Many Target workers who have just lost their jobs won't even qualify for unemployment insurance," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

The qualifying threshold is as high as 910 hours over 52 weeks, a difficult threshold for part-time and irregular workers to reach.

"Workers have paid into EI, but when they need it most, they are shocked to find they don't qualify. Minister Kenney has authority to modify the EI rules for pilot projects and emergency situations, and I urge him to take immediate action for the Target

workers," Dias said.

Emergency EI access for Target workers should be followed by changes to allow all workers in Canada to qualify for EI Benefits after a 360 hours of work in the preceding 52 weeks.

"More than 17,000 people suddenly losing their jobs is nothing short of a catastrophe. The government must take immediate measures to address this disaster

unfolding in communities across the country," Dias said.

"Target has wronged thousands of Canadian workers twice in just three years - first by closing down Zellers stores and throwing Zellers workers out of their jobs, and tearing up collective agreements," said Christine Connor, President of Unifor Local 414, representing 12,000 retail and services workers. 