



VOLUME 3, NO. 3

WWW.UNIFOR.ORG

FEBRUARY 12, 2015



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Local 1980 bargaining team members Marco Baroogh, Aaron Cheung and Hecheng Wang celebrate their new contract at Autoliv with National Representative Kim Power.

Union rights upheld

Two recent Supreme Court decisions have upheld basic union and collective bargaining rights in Canada, while rejecting legislation that sought to limit collective bargaining and legal job action.

In the most recent decision, on January 30, the Court ruled that Saskatchewan Premier

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Solidarity saves pension

Despite an aggressive employer determined to cut their wages and eliminate their pension plan, the members of Unifor Local 1980 at Autoliv Electronics held firm and saved their pension with just minutes to go before a recent strike deadline.

"This contract also puts

us in a strong position going into future talks," said Aaron Cheung, the vice-president of the local and a member of the bargaining team.

That's because every change to the Income Tax Act has meant renegotiating some aspect of the pension plan for the 100 members of Local 1980 - the last employees at the Markham auto parts plant to have a defined benefit pension. But with this contract, any future tax act changes are automatically incorporated into the pension.

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School bus locals make their case

The request for proposals (RFP) process for handing out school bus contracts drives down wages and worsens already challenging working conditions, a Unifor delegation recently told an Ontario panel reviewing the issue.

"For workers, the RFP model encourages a

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#unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@souptogo

"We need to do our homework, we need to decide what kind of country we want going forward" #iwillvote2015 @JerryPDias

@cathyacrowe

@VIA_Rail @niforTheUnion Here I am again. Thanks for your good service.

In brief

Local 229, Fort William Clinic

Unifor Local 229 members at the Fort William Family Health Centre in Tunder Bay, Ontario, ratified a new two-year contract in December.

The deal provides wage increases of 1.5 per cent annually, as well as improvements in bereavement leave, statutory holidays and language for letters on personnel files.

Members will also enjoy increases to their retirement bonus and uniform allowance, as well as a Paid Education Leave increase. **U**

Local 324-17, Hoshizaki House

Unifor Local 324-17 members at the Hoshizaki House Dryden District Crisis Shelter in Dryden have ratified their first contract since joining Unifor last February.

The settlement provides wage increases of 2.5 and two per cent for the 16 members, with the third year increase tied to funding.

The deal includes 120 hours of paid sick leave per year; a \$175-per-month employer contribution to an employee pension plan; employer-paid benefits; full recognition of seniority for postings, bumping, layoffs and recall; and improved language on other issues. **U**

Photo spotlight

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PHOTO BY DAVID DECKER

Unifor members and supporters in Bay Roberts, Newfoundland, rallied January 23 against Northern Shrimp quota cuts



PHOTO BY SHANNON DEVINE

Delegates came out February 6-7 to the Unifor and CLC election meetings in Toronto and Edmonton.

Arbitrator to decide on NS health

Arbitrator Jim Dorsey must balance a bad law (Bill 1) that calls on him to divide health care workers into four unions (Unifor, CUPE, NSGEU, NSNU) while

considering labour law principles he outlined in an interim decision in January.

Unifor has pushed from the beginning for an approach that involved collaborative bargaining. "Our goal from the beginning was to find a solution that enabled Unifor members to remain proud Unifor members," said Atlantic Regional Director

Lana Payne, noting that the past year has been one of great uncertainty for health care workers in the province.

"This legislation pitted worker against worker and union against union."

Unifor has continued to have dialogue with the other unions.

Dorsey's decision is expected February 20. **U**

Unifor truckers make gains

Members of four Unifor locals across Ontario and Quebec, after bargaining as a team, have ratified a new three-year collective agreement that includes pay increases and improvements to scheduling to help ensure a more stable workweek.

"Sitting at the table with our Ontario locals made all the difference," said Francis Paquette, a member of the Unifor bargaining team and a unit chair with Local 1044 in Quebec City.

The new contract was ratified January 31 by the 220 members of Unifor

Locals 1090 and 27 in Ajax and London, Ontario and Locals 698 and 1044 in Montreal and Quebec City who work at Jack Cooper (JP2), a commercial trucking firm specializing in transporting automobiles.

The drivers are paid through a combination of a piece rate for loading the automobiles onto their trucks, and mileage. By bargaining as a group, all four locals got substantial increases to both.

The piece rate is increasing by seven per cent in the first year of the

contract, and 2.5 per cent in each of the following two years. As well, the mileage rate is increasing 2 cents per mile to 54.95 cents by the third year of the contract.

Unifor Local 1090 President Steve Batchelor said the improvements come at a time when non-Unifor car-haulers are accepting deals with concessions or pay freezes.

"Unifor has shown this sector that we can be the voice of workers in the car hauling industry," Batchelor said. **U**

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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"That took away one of their best bargaining chips," Cheung said. The local also negotiated a 2 per cent increase to the pension.

The deal came minutes before a strike deadline, and was later ratified. The members had earlier given their bargaining team a 100 per cent strike mandate.

"The company never expected such a strong mandate," said Marco Baroogh, financial secretary.

Also unexpected was a show of support from the plant's 600 production workers, who asked for buttons to wear in solidarity.

"That really turned the tide," Baroogh said.

There were also wage increases of 2.5, 2.5 and 3 per cent. 

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lowering of wages, declining work standards and, in some cases, job loss for school bus drivers," Unifor said in its submission to the three-person panel.

"Competing for low-cost school bus contracts has created a situation of low morale and high turnover in an industry that prides itself on safety and reliability."

Unifor's submission was made February 6 by National Representative Len Poirier, along with Unifor Local 4268 President Debbie Montgomery and Local 4266 President Andre Desjardins and Angelo DiCaro from the Research Department.

The group shared with the review panel, chaired by former judge Colin Campbell, their experiences



Unifor Local 4268 President Debbie Montgomery and Local 4266 President Andre Desjardins put the final touches on Unifor's presentation

at the bargaining table, where the RFP process and its heavy downward pressure on costs have made negotiations much more difficult.

Drawing on a report by Unifor at the start of the school year, Unifor's delegation offered several solutions, including taking drivers' compensation out of the bidding process and establishment of a multi-stakeholder office to monitor school bus contracts.

"Although often overlooked, drivers play a key role in the total educational experience for students. Drivers deserve better," Unifor said in its submission.

The review panel will hear contributions from stakeholders across the industry, and release its report in the spring.

Read Unifor's report at: <http://www.unifor.org/en/take-action/campaigns/steering-clear>. 

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"Union rights upheld" on page1

Brad Wall's attempt to strip public sector workers of fundamental rights under "essential services" legislation is unconstitutional.

"The freedom to collectively bargain has been upheld again in the highest court as a fundamental right of all Canadians that cannot be undermined by governments," said Joie Warnock, Unifor's Western Region Director.

"Collective bargaining is the key legal tool that working people have to level the playing field with employers."

In the case Saskatchewan Federation of Labour et al.

v. Her Majesty the Queen, in Right of the Province of Saskatchewan, the Supreme Court has ruled that the Public Service Essential Services Act unduly infringes upon the freedom of association of employees protected under the Canadian Charter of Human Rights.

The Act received international condemnation, including from the independent United Nations organization that oversees basic labour standards. It called on the Wall government to amend the legislation, noting that it didn't meet basic international standards.

"Unions protect and expand peoples' rights at work," said Jerry Dias, Unifor's National President.



The Supreme Court of Canada.

"Canada's constitution clearly enshrines the freedoms provided by unions."

In another recent decision, the court upheld the right of RCMP officers to organize an independent union and bargain a contract.

"Individual employees typically lack the power to bargain and pursue

workplace goals with their powerful employers," the court said in its January 16 decision.

"Only by banding together in collective bargaining associations, thus strengthening their bargaining power with their employer, can they meaningfully pursue their workplace goals." 

New Members

Unifor would like to welcome 33 workers at OLG slots at Georgia Downs, now members of Unifor Local 1090. These members in Barrie, Ontario provide security at the Georgia Downs.

As Canada's largest private sector union, Unifor has members in every major sector of the economy, including 15,600 in hospitality and gaming. 

A break on over-time at CAMI

A new and unique program negotiated by Unifor Local 88 at CAMI Automotive allowing workers there to take their overtime as time off in lieu of payment is proving a big hit with union members – and gaining a lot of attention.

"We've almost booked 50,000 hours in the first six months," Unit Chair Mike Van Boekel recently told the Toronto Star, which wrote a feature article on the program.

Van Boekel says the

program has resulted in a pool of more than 50 new workers, all now members of Local 88, being hired to fill in the gaps when workers take time off in lieu of overtime pay. To manage production needs at the plant, the overtime hours can only be taken in one-week blocks.

But with the CAMI plant producing the very popular Chevrolet Equinox and GMC Terrain vehicles, it doesn't take long for the workers to

rack up a week's worth of overtime. Van Boekel said the heavy production has meant a grueling schedule for plant workers – so much so that many want time off with family more than they want the extra money.

Van Boekel says he has been contacted by workers in other auto plants asking how the program works, and saying they'd like a similar program in their plants. 

CRTC misses the mark

Recent announcements by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) do nothing to close a \$100-million funding gap in local program funding, and may have made the situation even worse.

"Motherhood statements about the importance of local TV news do nothing to address the structural changes confronting our

broadcasters today," said Unifor Media Director Howard Law. "We had hoped to hear an announcement about much-needed local TV funding."

With the \$100-million Local Programming Improvement Fund expiring last summer, Law said CRTC chair Jean-Pierre Blais had an opportunity to tell Canadians and broadcasters how the CRTC will address the shortfall.



Instead, he made it clear no new funding for local programming is to be expected, saying funding for one form of Canadian programming must come at the cost of another.

"He's filling one hole by digging another," Law said.

Unifor Media Council Chair Randy Kitt said it is not enough for Blais to admonish broadcasters for the amount of local programming they produce. He needs to give broadcasters the tools to fill this vital role.

"Local programming helps Canadians understand the communities around them," Kitt said.

To see Unifor's CRTC submission, go to Unifor.org. 

Unifor makes Ontario pension submission

Unifor is calling for the planned Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) to be a universal program with mandatory participation and shared contributions from employers and employees.

"Ontario has the opportunity to create a universal pension plan that will benefit the workers of Ontario, particularly the next generation of young workers," Unifor National

President Jerry Dias said in the submission.

The submission was sent to the budget secretariat of the Ontario Ministry of Finance recently, in the hopes of encouraging the Ontario government to create a universal pension program.

Consultations into the ORPP are currently taking place across Ontario, with numerous Unifor activists

coming out in support of the pension plan.

In its submission, Unifor calls for the ORPP to mirror the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), so it could one day be wrapped into an expanded CPP.

Unifor Pensions and Benefits Director Jo-Ann Hannah said Unifor remains committed to an expanded CPP.

In its submission, Unifor

also called for the Ontario and federal governments to explore ways the self-employed, such as freelancers, can contribute to the ORPP and CPP.

To read Unifor's submission, go to: http://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/brief-statements/unifor_submission_on_the_ontario_retirement_pension_plandl2_0.pdf. 