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# uniforum



Alberta NDP Leader and Premier -elect Rachel Notley got a rousing reception at Unifor's Prairie Council.

## High hopes at Prairie Council

Meeting in Edmonton a week before the Alberta provincial election that saw the NDP sweep to power, the mood at Prairie Regional Council was exciting and full of possibility.

Alberta NDP Leader Rachel Notley, now premier of the province, kicked

>>Continued on page3

## Refining adds stability

Upgrading and refining adds jobs and stability to the often cyclical energy sector, a recent panel on the sector co-hosted by Unifor heard.

"Energy can be an incredible driver of jobs and prosperity, but only if we are strategic and deliberate in maximizing the spin-off linkages from

energy production into the supply, machinery, service, refining, and manufacturing industries," said Unifor Economist Jim Stanford, one of the panellists.

Unifor co-hosted the April 22 panel in Edmonton with the Parkland Institute, as well as a similar event in Sarnia May 5. Both sessions looked at opportunities for creating more jobs in energy-related industries by promoting more domestic content at all stages of the energy value chain.

Alberta Federation

>>Continued on page3

## Unifor's first Pride Conference

Full of joy and humour, delegates at Unifor's first Pride conference gathered recently in Port Elgin.

"The Conference brings together LGBTQ members so we can get to know one another, build our community - and support each other in our work to ensure our union is inclusive

>>Continued on page3

## #unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

[@bajabreeze2355](#)

More tanker traffic on the BC Coast, less Coast Guard, sign the petition say stop the cuts. [unifor.org/en/take-action...](http://unifor.org/en/take-action...) #Unifor #Cdnpoli

[@efeh](#)

#unifor family #education & conference ctr seems right place to be this #Mayday with all my #OFL #sisters in #PortElgin #SolidarityForever

## In brief

### Locals 324-12/16, Community Living

More than 100 members of Unifor Locals 324-12 and 324-16 at Community Living in Dryden and Sioux Lookout in Northern Ontario ratified new two-year contracts with the agency.

Community Living Dryden-Sioux Lookout provides support for people with developmental disabilities.

In addition to a \$1 an hour wage increase over two years, the contracts provide \$2,000 cash payouts for all full-time workers, \$1,500 for part-timers and \$800 for casual staff. Top pay reaches \$27.96 per hour by Sept. 1, 2016. **U**

### Local 2002, Porter

About 75 Porter Airlines ramp attendants and 125 customer service representatives, members of Local 2002, ratified their first collective agreements.

The three-year contracts includes union recognition, defined work hours, new job postings process, shifts and vacation by seniority, grievance processes, health and dental benefits for part-time employees and additional vacation. **U**

## Photo spotlight

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Unifor joined the Steelworkers and other unions at a rally at the Ontario Ministry of Labour calling for a just solution to the Crown beer cans strike.



Unifor activists volunteered at the recent Easter Seals telethon.

## High Liner employees keep DB pension

High Liner Foods tabled concessions from the start of bargaining talks in November 2014, but 178 members at Local 1944 ratified an agreement in April that saw wage increases and kept their defined benefit pension.

"The defined benefit pension was so important for us to keep," said Marilyn Crook, President of Local

1944. "Being able to retire with a decent wage was well worth fighting for and lets us all breathe a bit easier knowing it's going to be there for us."

High Liner Foods is a highly-profitable multinational food company, supplying frozen fish and seafood to giants such as Burger King, M&M Meat Shops and directly

to grocery stores. Unifor members work in 33 skilled trades in the Lunenburg, Nova Scotia processing facility.

"We managed to keep the DB pension plan by making it cost-prohibitive for the company to do otherwise," said Carla Bryden, National Representative. "The group was strong and persistent and that's what ultimately won the day." **U**

## Domtar workers reach deals

More than 550 Unifor members in the Dryden-based Domtar Pulp Mill and Woodlands operations have ratified new collective agreements in overwhelmingly positive votes held late last night of 80 and 97 per cent in favour.

"We're proud that these agreements meet all elements of Unifor's Eastern Canada pulp and paper pattern," said Jerry Dias, National President of

Unifor. Unifor established the Eastern Canada Pulp and Paper pattern last year when it reached an agreement with Resolute Forest Products.

"Our members at Domtar not only resisted all concession demands once again, but they also achieved key improvements," said Stephen Boon, Unifor National Representative.

Key elements of the deals: 2 per cent annual

wage increases; \$1,000 signing bonus; 75 cent per hour pay increase for trades; improved dental and health; \$40 boot allowance increase; \$90 more in vision coverage; 3 cent per hour employer paid education leave 9.3 per cent increase in employer woodlands pension contributions, 25 per cent increase in retirement bridging; and a new Woodlands overtime banking option. **U**

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

>> Continued from  
"Refining adds  
stability" on page 1

of Labour President Gil McGowan, who has been at the forefront over the years of promoting value-added industries in the sector, said every refining or upgrading job adds another 4.5 jobs in the wider community. As well, the Unifor activist said, such jobs are much less prone to layoffs.

Parkland Institute Executive Director Ricardo Acuña, another panelist, said that while traditionally most of Alberta's bitumen has been refined in the province, the percentage will soon be less than half.

"It is critical ... that Albertans have these conversations to ensure that the development of our energy resources is done in our long-term interest." 

>> Continued from  
"Unifor's first Pride  
Conference" on page 1

and a powerful champion of LGBTQ issues," said Desiree Gill, of Local 111 a conference organizer.

The conference, which was themed LGBTQ Health Matters, explored the ways in which the health and well-being of LGBTQ people is affected by discrimination, ignorance, homophobia, transphobia – and austerity.

"This conference isn't just about what's wrong. It's also about what we're doing to create better lives for ourselves and our communities," said Benoit Lapointe, a member of Local 2002 and another conference organizer.

Stressing the role that unions have played in the struggle for LGBTQ rights,



Benoit Lapointe of Local 2002 and Desiree Gill of Local 111 helped coordinate Unifor's Pride Conference

Anna Willats, who delivered the keynote address, said, "Unions were pivotal to winning same-sex benefits and have helped make this country less homophobic."

Willats also remarked that we live in a time where an attitude of "What's in it for me?" prevails. "If that attitude had been dominant in earlier decades, we would never have had such significant gains as we have had for LGBTQ rights."

Unifor National President Jerry Dias also addressed the conference. "I am your

ally," he said. "And the union we are building is one that is about solidarity, and about working together to change this country – for everyone."

Dias noted that many of Unifor's LGBTQ members have fought tremendous battles in their workplaces, in their communities, and even in their union. "Frankly, some of you have fought battles that make some of the fights I've led look like a walk in the park. You have so much to give our union and our movement." 

>> Continued from  
"High hopes at Prairie  
Council" on page 1

off the Council with a commitment to creating, supporting and expanding energy jobs in the province.

"It's time for change with new ideas – the idea that the wealthiest among us contribute just a little bit more," she said.

The meeting brought together 150 local union leaders, activists and staff from across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to discuss upgrading in the resource sector, building a more inclusive labour movement, the necessity of getting politically active, how to campaign on common values, recognizing and strengthening the rights of

workers with disabilities, working to improve health and safety and more.

Western Regional Director Joie Warnock urged delegates, many of them active in the Alberta election, to now turn their efforts to the coming federal election.

"So many people in this province look at Ottawa and they see a stale, mean-spirited government that is out of touch with their needs," she said. "Our job in the federal election isn't to tell people with some conservative sympathies they're wrong," she said.

"Our job is to demonstrate that there is a better way. That Stephen Harper is the wrong Prime Minister for a caring Canada where good jobs are a priority." 

## Kitimat workers need support

This is a financial appeal on behalf of the 127 members of Local 2300 on strike at the District of Kitimat, a municipality of Kitimat, BC.

The strike began on February 28.

After bargaining two months past the expiry of their collective agreement, the workers soundly rejected the employer's final offer.

The employer has contracted out massive amounts of work and more than half of the bargaining unit are precarious workers

with no benefits.

These workers are fighting for harassment protection, health and safety training, benefits and contracting-out protection language that will secure their future.

These workers are in a difficult situation and could use your full support. Locals are asked to provide as much financial support as possible.

Cheques should be made payable to "Unifor Local 2300."

All donations should be mailed to:

Martin McIlwrath,  
Business Agent  
Local 2300  
235 Enterprise Avenue  
Kitimat, BC  
V8C 2C8 

## Some risk in Ontario budget

The Ontario provincial budget tabled recently includes important investments that could lead to a brighter future, but also takes risks that might lead to the lights going out.

“Some of the measures in this budget will help secure a stronger future for Ontarians, while others, namely the privatization of

Hydro One, are remarkably short-sighted,” said Katha Fortier, Unifor Ontario Regional Director.

Unifor welcomed the announcement that the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP) is moving forward and the recognition that Ontario faces a crisis regarding retirement security.

“Given the failure of the Harper Conservatives to reform the CPP, the importance of the ORPP cannot be understated,” said Fortier.

Unifor condemned the privatization of 60 per cent of Hydro One. “This is an asset that is essential to the well-being of the public – and it should remain in

public hands,” said Fortier.

“Today’s budget included much-needed funding for transportation,” noted Fortier. “But we can’t finance our infrastructure needs by selling off public assets.”

“We need to discuss how Ontario will generate the revenue we need to build the province we want.”

## Women’s Advocate program goes international

Unifor is working with the International Transportation Federation to take its ground-breaking Women’s Advocate Program worldwide.

“We are looking forward to learning from each other,” said Unifor Women’s Director Lisa Kelly.

As part of the project, Jodi Evans from ITF Women and Sheela Naikwade, divisional secretary and executive board member of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Union in India, attended Unifor’s recent Women’s Advocate course

in Port Elgin.

Naikwade told the group that in an unprecedented move, women in her union were on the front lines of blocking a bus depot in an effort to prevent privatization of public transit. The action was part of a national road transportation strike that sprung up while she was in Port Elgin.

“Women told me that before the union, I was just a woman conductor,” Naikwade said. “Now, because of Sheela’s support, there’s improvement and



Sheela Naikwade of the Maharashtra State Road Transport Union in India attended Unifor’s recent Women’s Advocate course.

hope.”

Naikwade was elected by an overwhelmingly male membership. Participants in Port Elgin were inspired by the efforts of women in her union and sent messages of

solidarity to the strikers.

Collaboration will continue between Unifor and the ITF on the Women’s Advocate program and women’s equality work.

## EDC loan shocking

Unifor leaders expressed shock and anger at news that Export Development Canada is lending Volkswagen \$526 million to support the expansion of its assembly operations in Mexico.

“It is absolutely incredible that a Canadian government agency is helping to facilitate and accelerate the migration of the continental auto industry to Mexico,

and with no guarantees of any Canadian benefit from the loan whatsoever,” said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President.

EDC claims the loan will help Canadian parts makers win new business with Volkswagen. However, there are no requirements that VW buy anything at all from Canadian firms. They are only committed to participating in a

“matchmaking” process. Even if Canadian-based firms did win a contract from Volkswagen, the work would most likely be sourced from parts plants in Mexico (rather than being made in Canada).

“If the Canadian government is really interested in supporting the auto parts sector, then it should focus on winning new investments and

creating new jobs right here in Canada,” said Dias.

“It is painfully ironic that we recently lost out on a lucrative engine investment in Windsor by Ford, largely because of inadequate government support. Yet we can somehow find \$526 million to help a foreign firm invest in Mexico. Our members are beside themselves with anger.” Dias said