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Unifor has a strong presence at the Labour Day parade in Toronto, and across Canada.

Unifor celebrates Labour Day

Unifor members across Canada celebrated Labour Day, enjoying parades, picnics, free concerts and more as they collectively resolved to help ensure the country has a new government next month.

"This is a historic Labour Day," Unifor National

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SJF helping Rana Plaza survivors

The Unifor Social Justice Fund has partnered with disability rights and development organization Handicap International to help survivors of the Rana Plaza collapse in Bangladesh get rehabilitation support, as well as specialized medical services and devices.

On April 29, 2013, the eight-storey Rana Plaza factory building in Savar, Bangladesh collapsed during the workday, killing 1,129 people, with 2,438 people rescued alive and hundreds more unaccounted for. The majority of the victims were women, with 75 per cent under 28 years old.

Of the 499 survivors with disabilities, 109 moved back to their rural hometown, putting them out of reach of most rehabilitation and livelihood support centres.

Handicap International

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Women get ready for the federal election

Every year, the women's conference is the best attended conference of any union conference, and there's little doubt why.

The Unifor's Women's Conference was an exciting and inspiring few days that brought together more than

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#unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@pastaandsalsa

Celebrated #LabourDay by sending a msg to @FlyYOW asking for a fair deal for @UniforTheUnion Local 1688

@HarbaljitKahlon


Canada's labour movement gave my immigrant father a voice. Thanks @UniforTheUnion & Happy #LabourDay all!

In brief

Local 302, Oxford Services

Members of Unifor Local 302 at Domestic Abuse Services Oxford have ratified a new collective agreement that achieves the final target rate in their pay equity plan.

They received an immediate 0.5 per cent wage increase, plus 10-per cent increases in is April 2016 and 2017. The remaining pay equity owing was paid out in July.

Residential support workers and child and youth workers received additional wage increases. 

Local 4606, Crothall

Eighty members of Unifor Local 4606 at Crothall Social Services have ratified a new collective agreement that includes wage increases of 9.8 per cent over three years, plus a two per cent retroactive payment.

The new contract also includes language improvements, increases to shift premiums, improvements to the medical services plan and an additional holiday.


The contract means the members avoid a complex process of determining essential services. 

Photo spotlight: Labour Day 2015

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Retirees marched in Port Elgin as their annual conference got underway.



Unifor members in Windsor made their views known on the issues.



Unifor was out in strength for the parade and picnic in Halifax.



Vancouver's Labour Day celebrations in Burnaby were a family affair.

Bell Aliant contracting out to India

Workers at Bell Aliant are concerned at the increasing number of jobs being contracted out to workers in India as Bell Aliant adopts more of Bell Canada's outsourcing practices.

"There were public assurances by the company and by the government at the time of the Bell Canada acquisition that jobs in Atlantic Canada would be protected," said David Gates, chair of the Unifor Atlantic Communication Locals and president of Unifor Local 2289.


"Our members work and

live and service customers in Atlantic Canada. Seeing jobs move to India is very disconcerting. There's no one who provides the kind of committed, quality service like our workers here in Atlantic Canada."

Bell Aliant told employees that part of the work at the assignment centre will go to Indian multinational Wipro this fall, affecting employees in Mount Pearl, NL, Charlottetown, PEI, Moncton, NB, and Kentville, NS. Workers worry how far the outsourcing will go.

"When this acquisition

transpired last year, our members were understandably concerned about how committed Bell Canada would be to Atlantic Canada. Contracting out our members' work and not replacing workers when they retire does not build trust or confidence that good jobs will be maintained here in the Atlantic," said Rick Rose, Unifor National Representative.

Building management and warehousing have also been contracted out. 


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

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"Rana Plaza" on page1

works alongside people with disabilities and vulnerable populations, responding to their essential needs, improving their living conditions by making necessary changes, while promoting respect for their dignity and fundamental human rights.

Handicap International also works to build local disability networks and organizations so that services are sustained.

The group first worked to locate Rana Plaza survivors to assess their needs and map resources in the regions where they live.

It then sought out physical rehabilitation and fitted survivors with any necessary assistive devices to increase mobility. 

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"Women's Conference" on page1

300 women from across the union. Participants discussed building women's activism, collective bargaining, the role of women in the union and in electoral politics. The conference, themed Women's Voices, Women's Power, took place in Port Elgin, Ontario.

"With more than half the delegates attending a women's conference for the first time, the energy was high," said Unifor Women's Director Lisa Kelly.

"Women know that the system isn't working for them and they want change. Participants were excited to go back to their workplaces, communities and ballot boxes and start working for that change."



There was a strong turnout for the Women's Conference.

The conference included presentations by the three regional directors, as well as a panel on women and collective bargaining and the federal election as well as a series of interactive workshops which focussed on learning about issues and skills-building.

The workshop sessions included a range of topics such as childcare, sexual health, social media, women in Quebec, ending violence against women and the women's advocate program, how to start a women's committee and entering politics. 

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"Labour Day" on page1

President Jerry Dias said to members gathered for the Labour Day Parade in Toronto.

"We are six weeks away from changing the politics of Canada. We are marching toward that change."

Dias said the issues that are important to working people – good jobs, decent pensions, health care, the minimum wage and more – are simply not priorities for the Harper Government.

NDP Leader Tom Mulcair told Unifor members in Toronto that an NDP government would work with labour to build a more equitable and just Canada.

"It's our turn, it's our time. Together, let's bring real

change to Ottawa," Mulcair said.

In between speeches, Unifor members and their families in Toronto got their faces painted, played with balloons and sidewalk chalk, blew bubbles, made pipe cleaner art and listened to music from a live band as they prepared for the parade to begin.

In the Vancouver area, Canadian 70s rockers Chilliwack entertained Unifor members and others at a family picnic in Bwurnaby hosted by the B.C. Federation of Labour, the Vancouver & District Labour Council, and New Westminster & District Labour Council.

There was face-painting, games and a bouncy castle, plus roasted corn, juice boxes and free hotdogs and




These children made special signs for Labour Day in Toronto.

veggie dogs.

On the East Coast, parades were held in Halifax, St. John's and several other communities. The Halifax festivities included a rally in the city's Victoria Park, the 16th year the event has been held. A barbeque was held by the Strait Area District Labour Council on Cape Breton.

In Winnipeg, Unifor

members marched in a parade down Portage Avenue, the scene of clashes between police and strikers during the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919.

Unifor retirees, meeting for their annual conference, marched through the streets of Port Elgin, while members in Windsor also came out in force. 

CPP becomes an election issue with NDP announcement

Unifor applauds the NDP decision to back an expansion of the Canada Pension Plan and restore the retirement for the Old Age Security pension to 65, and urges all parties and provinces to get behind the idea.

"Dignity in retirement begins with a secure and sufficient pension," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

"Unifor has consistently

supported expanding the CPP to help more Canadians achieve that goal, and is glad to see the NDP do the same."

In a recent announcement, NDP Leader Tom Mulcair said an NDP government would convene a meeting of Premiers within six months of being elected to work out a timetable to expand the CPP, and would reverse a Harper Government plan to


raise the eligibility age for the OAS pension from 65 to 67.

The Harper Government has consistently rebuffed any effort to expand the CPP, proposing a voluntary plan for Canadians to add to their CPP if they wish.

"Voluntary plans don't help those who need help most. Only a universal and mandatory pension plan can ensure a decent retirement income for

Canadians," Dias said.

Restoring the retirement age for the OAS pension to 65, combined with an enhanced CPP will ensure more Canadians can enjoy their retirement rather than continuing to work, and will open more jobs for Canada's young people, Dias said.

To find out more about Unifor's pension campaign, go to Unifor.org/pensionscampaign. 

Rally held to make healthcare an election issue

Public healthcare is a vital issue to Canadians, and needs to be discussed in the current federal election, Unifor National President Jerry Dias told a rally in Windsor recently.

"Medicare is a glue that binds us together as Canadians," Dias said.

"Every one of us has a personal story about how our health care system was there for us and for our loved ones. And there are

very few among us who do not share concerns and fears about how our parents and grandparents will get the care they need with the dignity they deserve."

Dias pointed out that the Canada Health Accord, which ensures stable funding for healthcare, expires in 2017.

"And without a word of discussion or negotiation, Harper just told the provinces that it's over,"




There was a strong turnout for the rally.

Dias said.

Instead, the Harper Government set the funding levels for the coming years, taking out billions from

healthcare that the Accord would have provided.

Dias called for a strong commitment to a new Health Care Accord. 

Harper's dismal economic record confirmed

This month's dismal Gross Domestic Product report from Statistics Canada confirms what working Canadians have known all along - the Harper Government has failed to meet their economic needs.

"Working people see the weakness in our economy every day in their own struggles to find decent work, in the difficulties their children are having starting

a life and the challenges faced by this country's seniors to live in dignity in retirement," Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

Statistics Canada said the country's GDP fell by an annualized 0.5 per cent, putting Canada into a recession.

"Canada is in a recession today due to the failed economic policies of the Harper Government that

left the Canadian economy vulnerable even before oil prices fell," Unifor Economist Jim Stanford said. "In recent years the economy has shown a longer-run pattern of very weak growth, miserable export and investment performance, and the erosion of many key industries."

"That has left the entire economy on the edge of

recession in the first place, so that bad news in one sector can actually push the whole national economy into negative territory."

A Unifor study by Stanford and fellow Unifor Economist Jordan Brennan found that the Harper Government had the worst economic record since the Second World War.

Go to: uniforvotes.ca/harper_record. 