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Delegates to Unifor's recent British Columbia Council meeting discussed ways they can help defeat the Harper Government in the October 19 federal election.

Labour and youth votes key in election

The labour and youth votes will be key to defeating the Harper Government, and it's up to Unifor members to get out and help make sure that happens, BC Regional Council heard recently.

Unifor Political Action Director Roland Kiehne said particular effort must be made to reduce the percentage of union members who vote Conservative, now at 27 per cent, to about 20 per cent.

"If we can do that, Harper has no pathway to victory," Kiehne said.

Kiehne said polling data has shown that without strong support from union members, the NDP would not have won this year's Alberta election. The same, he said, will be true across Canada.

Peter Julian, the NDP candidate for New Westminster-Burnaby,

BC Council meets

Unifor's third BC Council opened with a celebration of past efforts and calls for continued action—both in the workplace and on the election trail defeating the Harper Government.

"We have the confidence in our members that they are going to vote out this bad government, because they know, and we know, how much it has hurt

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Municipal councils reject TPP's threat to auto jobs

Across Ontario, municipal councils are voting to urge the federal government to reject any Trans-Pacific Partnership deal that threatens up to 25,000 jobs in the Canadian auto parts industry.

"The Harper Government is rushing to sign a deal before the federal election, even if it means signing away good Canadian jobs,"

Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

TPP talks resumed this week, in hopes of reaching a deal by month's end.

In a recent election debate, Prime Minister Stephen Harper admitted the auto industry is not likely to be happy with the TPP.

"It's a stunning admission," Dias said.

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Truckers welcome resignation

Container Trucking Commissioner Andy Smith's surprise resignation creates many opportunities in the industry, Unifor says, adding it is eager to get to work with the next commissioner after Smith proved unwilling to enforce the B.C. government's plan for truck driver rates of pay.

"Drivers from many companies are still owed thousands of dollars. The industry can't function properly without appropriate oversight," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

Chief among the container truckers' concerns are outstanding payments promised to the drivers at the end of a March 2014 strike in Vancouver. Despite drivers returning to work, most companies have balked at the wage increase and Smith initially refused to implement the new rates.



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Defending gaming workers' pensions

The Ontario Lottery and Gaming (OLG) Corporation has locked out almost 1,000 workers at three casinos across the province in a dispute over pensions.

"When casinos opened in Ontario, we were promised that good jobs in the gaming industry would be protected," Katha Fortier, Ontario Regional Director, told Unifor activists at a September 11 rally outside OLG's head offices in Toronto.

Waving signs saying "protect our pensions", approximately 50 Unifor members protested the OLG's so-called "modernization" agenda, which will see Ontario casinos sold to private owners while excluding



Unifor activists came out recently to support good pensions at Ontario Lottery and Gaming.

pensions from the Collective Bargaining Agreements.

But, as Assistant Deb Tveit pointed out, "The new agreements to sell the casinos don't have pensions in them."

Workers at casinos in

Brantford, Sudbury and Woodbine were locked out September 19.

Unifor President Jerry Dias plans to meet with Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynn to address the issue of pensions.

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workers," Unifor Western Regional Director Joie Warnock said.

Political strategist Kathleen Monk also tackled the job ahead for Unifor members in the federal election in her remarks. She said that despite major gaffes by the Conservative campaign, nothing could be taken for granted as the first-past-the-post system still creates several scenarios for Harper to be re-elected Prime Minister with even fewer votes than in 2011.

But Unifor's Director of Membership Mobilization and Political Action Rolly Kiehne used polling to demonstrate that union members, especially in BC, have the power to block



Unifor National President Jerry Dias urged BC Council delegates to get involved in the election.

Harper's re-election.

National President Jerry Dias talked about "wealth-care" policies implemented over the years by the Harper Government.

"It is our role as a progressive organization to make sure this election is about equality," he said.

Throughout the weekend, Unifor delegates also debated other important issues that affect British Columbians.

Delegates passed

a resolution to resist austerity measures in BC, and resolved to work in solidarity with the BC Federation of Labour to fight back against attacks on collective bargaining and public services.

To mark a 20-cent increase to BC's low minimum wage on September 15, delegates also resolved to ramp up the provincial campaign for a \$15 minimum wage.



BC Council delegates show their support for daycare, healthcare and other issues during the current election.

>> Continued from "Labour vote key..." on page 1

said both the Orange Wave in Quebec and the NDP victory in Alberta were also due in part to a jump in voter turnout, and encouraged Unifor members to talk to neighbours, young people and to low income workers about voting.

"We need to increase the voter participation rate, right across this country," he said. "That person-to-person contact can make all

the difference."

Patty Barrera from Unifor's political action department outlined some of the tools members can use in their efforts to help defeat Harper.

"Tell us you want to be involved, and we will get you active, we will get you the tools," she said. "It's all about getting the vote out."

Delegates unanimously passed a resolution calling on Locals to work with the Political Action

Department's regional coordinators to mobilize their members in the election.

"We are not done yet, we must work hard on this for the next 37 days," said Simon Lau, regional election coordinator for the Lower Mainland.

Council of Canadians Youth Vote Campaigner Brigitte DePape said 84 per cent of those aged 18 to 35 want a change in government, and urged

delegates to talk to the young people they know to ensure they get out to vote.

"If we can move that sentiment into action, we truly can be game changers," said DePape.

Delegates also heard from the Anyone But Conservatives veterans group, which said many founding members of the group dedicated to defeating the Harper Government were lifelong Conservative voters.

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"No other country would negotiate a deal that hurts its top import."

The 12-country talks toward a Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) hit a snag in July, in part over a secret U.S.-Japan deal to drastically lower the content limits on auto parts made in the TPP zone.

Lower limits would mean more parts could be imported from such places as China and Thailand, which would be outside the TPP, replacing parts currently made in Canada.

"Watering down the content thresholds on parts and vehicles amounts to opening a huge back door to our market for products made in China and other non-TPP countries," Dias said.

"That is a direct threat to thousands of good Canadian manufacturing jobs - exactly the kinds of jobs we need."

Already, local councils in Ingersoll, Zorra Township and Essex County in Ontario have passed resolutions calling on Canadian negotiators to stand up for Canadian jobs. The issue goes to Windsor city council on October 5.

Unifor Economist Jim Stanford, who has been keeping a close eye on the TPP talks, said lowering thresholds puts up to 26,400 jobs at risk.

Unifor has formed a working group of national staff and local unions to coordinate the union's efforts around the talks.

"Unifor supports balanced and fair trade, but this isn't it," said Dias.

Unifor helps Syrian refugees

Unifor members have been touched by the refugee crisis in Syria, and both the Unifor Social Justice Fund and the national union are partnering with a Canadian settlement organization to fund the resettlement of five Syrian families.

The Social Justice Fund is also making a donation of \$160,000 to the Canadian arm of the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, to provide desperately needed support to Syrian refugees in Jordan.

The union will work with Locals across the country to raise further funds to assist more Syrian refugees, and Unifor National President Jerry Dias is encouraging members and staff to donate to Oxfam.

Donations to Oxfam

from individuals are eligible for matching funds from the federal government. Donations from locals, however, are not eligible for matching funds.

"I cannot get the image of little Alan Kurdi being carried off that beach out of my mind," Dias said at the BC Regional Council.

Oxfam set up a link for Unifor members to make donations: oxfam.ca/unifor.

"We urgently need to reform our immigration system so that is effective, efficient and consistent with Canadian values," said Dias.

"This current crisis is the latest indicator of how far astray we have gone from making a meaningful international contribution to refugee settlement."

IN THIS ISSUE: A new look for Uniforum this week, to accommodate a mailing label on the newsletter, and new envelopes. The next step will be to move away from envelopes altogether. The new design allows for longer stories and a cleaner look. We also have an election poster in this issue, plus stories on BC Council, the TPP, the election and more.

Local Union Task Force meetings resume

Unifor's initiative to revitalize local unions is ramping up again with meetings planned across Canada in the coming months.

The first of the meetings, picking up on meetings held earlier this summer, were held recently in the Maritimes, where members shared their challenges and their successes this past week at four Local Union Task Force meetings.

"The local is the heart of our union and we will only get stronger if we work together and learn from each other," said retired CAW president Ken Lewenza, chair of the task force.

Representatives from

locals in Edmundston, Saint John, Moncton and Halifax spoke about new tactics to increase attendance at union events, to re-think the traditional union meeting and to appeal to young workers and less-engaged members through community events, and responding to member concerns and needs.

"There are some innovative locals in the Maritime provinces, trying new things and building their locals through effective communication with their members," Lewenza said.

The Local Union Task Force is a cross-country tour, with stops in



Local Union Task Force meetings are a chance for members to talk about ways to strengthen locals.

Antigonish and Cape Breton later in the year.

Meetings will also take place in several communities in Ontario in the coming weeks, as well as across the Prairies and in British Columbia.

These meetings are picking up from several sessions earlier this year.

Members are encouraged to fill out the online survey and find dates for upcoming meetings in other cities at www.unifor.org/LUTF.