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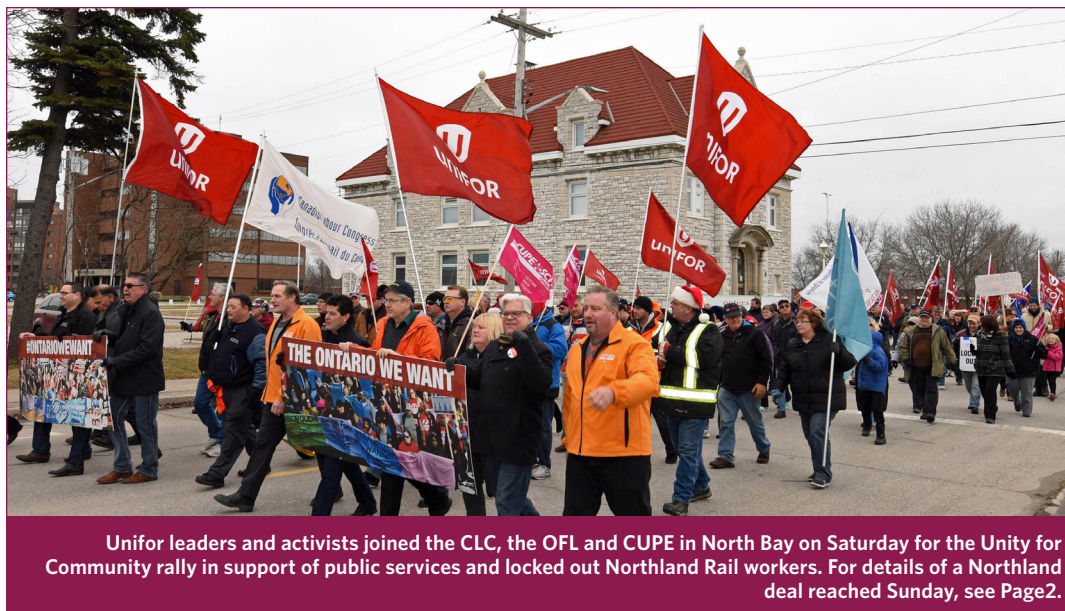


VOLUME 3, NO. 25

WWW.UNIFOR.ORG

DECEMBER 17, 2015

uniforum



Unifor leaders and activists joined the CLC, the OFL and CUPE in North Bay on Saturday for the Unity for Community rally in support of public services and locked out Northland Rail workers. For details of a Northland deal reached Sunday, see Page2.

Precarious work dominates ORC

The need to update labour laws and employment standards to meet the needs of today's increasingly precarious workplaces dominated much of the discussion at the recent Ontario Regional Council.

Unifor Economist Jim Stanford said poor job growth has only made things worse. With few jobs available, workers are too often forced to choose between unemployment and precarious jobs with little prospect for building a decent life for their families.

"Job creation should be a priority, so workers don't feel compelled to take these kinds of jobs," he said.

Unifor is calling for changes to the Employment Standards Act, including stable scheduling and more opportunities for full-time work, access to benefits for part-timers, a pro-active

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Precarious work lobby

Workers from across Ontario were at Queen's Park recently to meet with members of the Legislature to garner their support labour law and employment standards changes to address the increasingly precarious nature of work today.

"Contract work, irregular hours, holding down two or three part-time jobs to

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Unifor supporting food banks across Canada

Unifor is donating \$135,000 to 46 food banks across Canada, and is calling on its members and others to donate, as well.

"The needs of many Canadians are real all year round, but are most acute at this time of year," Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

"Whatever your beliefs, and however you celebrate

the holidays, the inequities of our society are most apparent during the holiday season. That's why Canadians dig deep at this time of year to donate to food banks."

The donations, ranging from \$1,500 to \$8,000, will go to food banks from Victoria to St. John's and in every province in between – and will

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Ratifications

Northland, Local 103

Unifor members from James Bay to North Bay, Ontario, working at Ontario Northland Railway have ratified new collective agreements, a month after 200 of the 350 members were locked out.

Ontario Northland locked out Unifor shop employees on November 14 as it tried unsuccessfully to force concessions on that would allow the contracting out of much of the work performed by the workers and the elimination of the skilled trades program.

The agreement provides immediate wage increases for skilled trades, with improvements of 2 per cent on January 1st of 2016, 2017 and 2018. Unifor represents clerical, on-board service, stores, shops and Cochrane Station Inn at various locations across Northern Ontario.



Uniforum is published every two weeks by Unifor, Canada's largest union in the private sector.

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Auditor General's report puts much-needed attention on school buses

Unifor school bus driver's locals are encouraged by many of the recommendations issued recently by the Ontario Auditor-General focusing on improvements to service quality, ensuring government accountability and better tracking the impact of driver turnover on safety.

Unifor Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier says the Auditor General's report on school transportation services raises important questions about service quality delivered under the current Request-for-Proposal (RFP), competitive-bidding, system – questions the union has raised as part of its provincial campaign, entitled

Steering Clear: Avoiding the RFP Trap.

"In some instances, the Auditor-General has found that insufficient attention is being paid to the quality of service for school transit services and too much attention on low prices," Fortier said.

Unifor Local 4268 President and school bus driver Debbie Montgomery faults the lowest-cost-wins approach to contract bidding on weaker safety standards, poverty-level wages, high turnover and low morale that workers in this industry continue to experience.

"The RFP system has caused a great deal of hardship on drivers,"



Debbie Montgomery.

Montgomery said.

The auditor also rebuked the Ministry of Education for not verifying whether a previously issued school bus driver "wage enhancement" was ever spent for its intended purpose.

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make ends meet – this is increasingly the reality for workers today, particularly young people," said Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier, who will lead the delegation of 40 workers.

"The legal framework around work in Ontario has not kept up with this fundamental shift."

Labour Minister Kevin Flynn thanked Unifor for its submission.

"We know what's wrong. We look at our own kids and we see what's wrong," Flynn said. "What we're looking for is solutions."

Workers from such workplaces as grocery, retail, manufacturing, social services, school busing, media, aerospace, healthcare,



Ontario Labour Minister Kevin Flynn met with a delegation of Unifor members.

telecommunications, and freelancers, took part in the delegation.

Unifor's 156-page submission to the Ontario government's Changing Workplace Review makes 43 recommendations, including scheduling rules and more opportunities for full-time work, making employers responsible for temp agencies, access to benefits, a modernizing

union certification and first contract rules and ways for non-union workers to act collectively.

Unifor's submission argues that improving the working conditions and economic situation of workers can have a strong positive impact on the economy as a whole.

Unifor's full submission is available at unifor.org/WorkplaceChanges.

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approach to enforcing standards, and making employers responsible for the actions of temp agencies.

"Right now, if there's a problem, employers just say it's the agency's fault. They should not be able to say that," Stanford said.

Unifor is also calling for electronic voting on union certification, certification votes in neutral locations, and first contract arbitration, plus improved union and job security when contracted services are flipped. Stanford said many employers flip contracts to cut costs by denying workers a decent living.

"This is one of the most horrible and exploitive

techniques that employers use these days," he said.

Ontario Labour Minister Kevin Flynn said Ontario's laws around work have not been updated in 20 years.

"The laws we wrote back then simply don't apply to the realities of today's workplace," Flynn told council.

"We need to properly protect those who need protection, and we need to make sure that employers know what the standards are."

As well, Unifor National President Jerry Dias, who was part of a labour delegation to the Paris climate change talks, said Unifor will play a vital role in such discussions.

"If there is going to be a transition, then we are going to be part of the discussion



Unifor Economist Jim Stanford outlined Unifor's proposed labour law changes to address precarious work.

to make sure that none of our members are left behind," Dias said.

And Unifor Local 200 member Tracey Ramsey, newly elected an NDP MPP, pledged to stand up for

workers in her role as NDP trade critic, and thanked Unifor members for their help during the election – calling out volunteers Terry Weymouth and Jodi Nesbitt.

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supporting food banks across
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be distributed between now and Christmas.

The funds come from both Unifor and the Unifor Social Justice fund.

"The Social Justice Fund's international work tends to get a lot of attention, but it also does a lot of work to help those in need in Canada, as this effort shows," said Mohamad Alsadi, Director of Unifor's Human Rights and International Department.

"Cash donations help food banks fill in the blanks to their all-important food donations, to make sure the families using the food banks can have a balanced diet," Alsadi said.

Both Dias and Alsadi called on Unifor locals and members, and all

Canadians, to donate to food banks and toy drives in their communities.

"Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of people of need. Please give generously," Dias said.

Members and locals are also encouraged to donate to local toy drives, and the Operation Christmas Cheer.

Operation Christmas Cheer is a union-run annual campaign to provide food and toy donations to the families of striking and locked out workers across Canada.

Two lockouts of Unifor members will receive donations this year: 240 Local 1688 members who have been locked out by Coventry Connections taxi dispatcher, and 135 members of Local 4266 locked out at Gardaworld armoured cars.

Unifor activists mark Dec. 6 Day of Remembrance

We all have a role in stopping violence against women and challenging inequality, feminist activist and community leader Angela Robertson said on the eve of the December 6 National Day of Remembrance and Action.

Robertson spoke at Ontario Regional Council the day before the 26th anniversary of 14 women being murdered at Montreal's École Polytechnique because of their gender.

"To be 26 years later and to know that we are still demanding change, I have a mixture of sadness to speak today," she said. "Now is the time we must renew our

commitment to action to end this silent war against women."

Within days of Robertson's address and the day after the Day of Remembrance, Ottawa launched the first phase of a promised national inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women.

Unifor has been a strong advocate for such an inquiry, which Robertson echoed in her address.

"Not all of your work, or just one union's work, can tackle violence against women. It is our collective responsibility."

Across Canada, Unifor activists attended vigils marking December 6.

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IN THIS ISSUE Ontario Regional Council addresses precarious work and the need for update labour law and employment standard changes, climate change and more. Unifor donates to foodbanks across Canada, while school buses get an auditor general's attention. December 6, the 26th anniversary of École Polytechnique is remembered across Canada.

Unifor welcomes progress achieved in Paris climate change agreement

The progress made at the COP21 climate talks are an important step towards limiting climate change.

Unifor's delegation in Paris says Canada played the role of a leader during the talks.

"We're thrilled with the progress made this week, and we're proud of the role that Canadians played to push the agenda forward," said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President.

"We're ready to get to work to help ensure that Canada meets its domestic goals and looks after workers in the process."

The Unifor delegation led by Jerry Dias included Ken

Smith, President of Unifor Local 707A, representing Suncor workers in the Alberta Oilsands.

Unifor's delegation was part of 35 Canadian trade unionists coordinated by the Canadian Labour Congress and the International Trade Union Congress (ITUC).

"Just Transition"—the process of funding and retraining workers affected by changes in carbon intensive industries—was the top priority for the labour delegation. Unifor representatives met with Canadian negotiators and policy-makers several times during the talks.



Unifor leaders and activists were among the CLC delegation to the Paris climate change talks..

The government representatives largely agreed with Canadian labour delegates and promised to push to include Just Transition in the final agreement.

At one of the discussion forums held during the week, Smith received

a standing ovation for his contribution about transitions for workers.

"We can't leave anyone behind," he said. "My members' jobs feed their families, so any climate plan that they buy into must include fair and adequate alternatives for them."