



**IN THIS ISSUE:**

QUEBEC REPORT

>> PAGE 2

NEW OFFICERS ELECTED

>> PAGE 3

LOCAL UNION TASK FORCE

>> PAGE 6

VOLUME 4, NO.17

[WWW.UNIFOR.ORG](http://WWW.UNIFOR.ORG)

AUGUST 25, 2016



# uniFORUM



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spoke at Unifor's second Convention, saying his government and Unifor share a commitment to good jobs for working people and social justice.

## Trudeau a 'partner with workers'

In an unprecedented address to Unifor's Convention, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pledged to work with the labour movement to reverse the damage of the previous Conservative government and to build a better Canada.

"My government is pleased to be a solid partner with workers," Trudeau told an overflow crowd at the Ottawa Shaw Centre.

"The labour movement believes in justice, compassion, and the growth and success of Canada's middle class. And on that, our government shares common ground with you."

Trudeau was elected Prime Minister last fall, ending 10 years of Conservative rule in Ottawa. Unifor along with other unions and progressive groups played an active role in the federal election, encouraging members to vote out the Conservatives.

>> Continued on page7

## Notley speaks of hope

Alberta Premier Rachel Notley brought a message of hope and community spirit to convention.

"I'm very grateful indeed for the strong support Unifor has offered the New Democratic Party of Alberta, every step of the way," she said. "We've worked together in the

>> Continued on page2

## Unifor revived Canada's labour movement: Dias

Unifor has given working people back their voice in the politics of the nation, Unifor National President Jerry Dias said as he opened Unifor's second Convention.

"It is our time, our time to go to the next stage in building this incredible union," he told the 1,800 delegates in Ottawa.

When Unifor was founded three years ago, the

Canadian labour movement was at its lowest point since the Second World War.

"We gave our all to push for change and we left not one ounce of energy or heart in reserve," he said.

While citing the defeat of the Conservatives federally and provincially as victories, he warned that poor economic conditions

>>Continued on page 7

## More convention coverage

There's more convention coverage online and on social media. Be sure to check it out.

All the stories in this newsletter and more are on the Unifor website, visit [unifor.org](http://unifor.org), where you will also find a PDF of this newsletter for sharing with others.

Watch all the Convention speeches and special videos on our live stream. View the online archive [uniforlive.ca](http://uniforlive.ca). Check out photos from Convention at [FB.com/UniforCanada](https://www.facebook.com/UniforCanada)

All Convention videos are public to share with members. Watch it at your next local meeting, go to [youtube.com/UniforCanada](https://www.youtube.com/UniforCanada)



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

Reach us at:

### Uniforum

Unifor Communications  
205 Placer Court, Fifth Floor  
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 3H9

1-800-268-5763

[communications@unifor.org](mailto:communications@unifor.org)

[www.unifor.org](http://www.unifor.org)

# Gagné calls members to action on Unifor's campaigns

While the achievements are many and deserve to be highlighted, there is no shortage of challenges ahead. That was one of the main conclusions shared by Quebec Director Renaud Gagné with the delegation at the Unifor Convention.

In reviewing the various struggles being waged on behalf of members in Quebec, Gagné notably mentioned labour disputes such as the strike by Local 1209 members at Delastek, which is still ongoing after over 16 months.

"Our efforts to break the deadlock unfortunately failed and the conflict remains unresolved. We are considering other pressure

tactics, since it is clear that this employer is not willing to settle."

Gagné called on delegates to continue efforts to encourage rank-and-file members to participate in lobbying campaigns, including campaigns on health and safety, in favour of the \$15 minimum wage, against the TPP, and for the maintenance of Canada's healthcare system.

On climate change, Gagné called for transition measures that minimize the impact on jobs.

"Let's continue to build our union by remaining inclusive, by getting involved in our



Quebec Director Renaud Gagné called members to action.

communities, by securing better working conditions and safer workplaces, by reducing social inequality, by fighting for greater social justice - in short, by doing our job as union members," Gagné said.

To learn more about Unifor Quebec please visit [uniforquebec.org](http://uniforquebec.org)

>> Continued from "Notley speaks of hope..." on page 1

election campaign, and we are continuing to work together now."

The leader of Alberta's first New Democrat government thanked the union for its role in ending more than 44 years of conservative rule.

The premier also praised members of Fort McMurray Local 707A for their resilience and commitment to the community after the forest fires that ravaged parts of the community.

She reviewed the long list of gains for working people that her government has already implemented, including a plan to become the first province to reach a \$15 minimum wage. She also emphasized the NDP government's unwavering



Alberta NDP Premier Rachel Notley said her government is standing up for working people, not the elites.

commitment to equity, from a gender-equal cabinet to a relationship with First Nations that is rooted in respect.

Notley said her government has a strategy to reduce inequality while rejecting the austerity policies of the tired

conservative government.

Her government has already begun phasing out coal and capping emissions in the oilsands.

Notley gave special recognition to Unifor member Angela Adams, a member of the province's climate change panel.



# Strong team for the future

With an overwhelming vote of confidence, a strong team of national officers was acclaimed to lead Unifor for the next three years. As well, Renaud Gagné, elected at Quebec Regional Council, was affirmed by the membership as one of the three national officers of Unifor.

Current leaders stood for re-election, with the exception of Peter Kennedy, who is retiring, and Katha Fortier who was named Assistant to the President.

While Kennedy provided his last report as Secretary-Treasurer, he extended

heartfelt thanks to the union family including staff, fellow officers and retirees.

"I want to acknowledge and thank you for the hard work you do, day in and day out for our great union," said Kennedy.

New to the top position of Secretary-Treasurer is Bob Orr, who has worked closely with and assisted Peter Kennedy and his predecessor Jim O'Neil. Orr told the packed room that he was humbled by the Convention's confidence.

"Peter Kennedy leaves big shoes to fill, but I am ready and energized to work with our amazing team. I won't let you down," said Orr.

Lana Payne and Joie Warnock were re-elected as Atlantic and Western Regional Directors, respectively. Joining the



Bob Orr, left, was elected National-Secretary-Treasurer, succeeding Peter Kennedy, who is retiring..

team as Ontario Regional Director is another strong activist woman, Naureen Rizvi, previously Toronto Area Director and Director of Telecommunications.

"Over the last three years,

I have had the privilege to work with you and witness your unwavering determination to make Unifor a union we can be proud of," said Rizvi.

## Regional Directors reflect on incredible work of members



Regional Directors Joie Warnock (Western Canada), Lana Payne (Atlantic) are joined by Assistant to the President Kath Fortier and the newly elected Ontario Regional Director Naureen Rizvi.

Unifor has accomplished far more in three years than we could have imagined, the regional directors for Western Canada, Ontario and the Atlantic told convention, crediting much of the success to the decisions made at Unifor's founding to give the new union strong regional voices.

"We had a plan to fight back," said Lana Payne, Atlantic Regional Director. "We used our influence and power - including our influence with employers - to push back. And we won!"

In the Atlantic, Unifor helped beat back unprecedented anti-worker laws over the last three

years, including Bill 1 in Nova Scotia and Bill 24 in New Brunswick (both directed at stripping away collective bargaining rights) while fighting an austerity budget in Newfoundland and Labrador and making child care a provincial issue in Nova Scotia.

Western Director Joie Warnock said Unifor is committed to ensuring the Notley government in Alberta fulfils its campaign promise to support workers while fostering a strong local economy. She also outlined struggles the union is tackling in her region.

"Our members at Local 2301 in Kitimat are locked in a battle with global mining giant Rio Tinto who refuses to afford our members basic

respect in the workplace, including access to a washroom at their job site."

In Ontario, far-right conservative Tim Hudak was defeated. Labour Law reform is underway, there's a strong \$15 minimum wage campaign, support for long-term care and health workers and more.

Outgoing Ontario Director Katha Fortier noted that the strength of the union is in its membership.

"Our leaders and activists are the backbone of all we do," said Fortier. "Together we will do great things!"

Telecommunications and Toronto area Director Naureen Rizvi was elected to replace Fortier, now an Assistant to the President.



# Convention 2016





# Unifor's international reach

Unifor's Social Justice Fund (SJF) has helped working people around the world with projects that assist workers to form new unions, address human rights issues in their country and even to find safe haven when war rips their home apart, delegates to Unifor's convention heard.

"We had no water, no electricity, no milk for the children," said Abdulraouf Babatjl, who fled Syria in 2012 with his wife Bana and their daughters.

"It was impossible for us to continue our lives in Aleppo."

The Babatjl family arrived in Canada on August 23, along with the Alomar family, as part of Unifor's effort to help settle Syrian refugees in Canada. Three days later, both families were special guests at the Convention.

It has been almost a year since Unifor committed \$175,000 to bring five Syrian families to Canada, plus \$160,000 with the UNHCR to support 100 families who fled to Jordan. The SJF trained Unifor members to help families settle in Canada.

Around the world, the SJF participates in 95 projects aimed at union building, social justice, women's rights and more. About 20 per cent of its funds are spent in Canada.

"We do it because we



The Alomar family arrived in Canada from Syria on August 23 and were special guests at Convention. They fled Syria in 2012.

recognize our shared humanity," said Mohamad Alsadi, Unifor's Director of Human Rights and International Department.

"These funds, sisters and brothers, are making a difference."

Projects include helping Aboriginal teen girls in British Columbia, support for women in the Democratic Republic

of Congo, donations to women's shelters, support for Rana Plaza survivors, safety for Mexican journalists, help for oil workers in Colombia, Fort McMurray fore relief.

The SJF is funded through arrangements in collective agreements. All locals are encouraged to include the SJF in their contracts.

Go to [unifor.org/sjf](http://unifor.org/sjf).

## Union growth begins with member engagement



The recommendations of the Local Union Task Force aim to help members be more active in the union and community.

After 16 months of meetings, debates and discussions, Unifor launched a major new effort at Convention to continue the growth of the union and its revitalization of the labour movement with adoption of the Local Union

Task Force (LUTF) final report.

"This report cannot sit on a shelf. It must be a living, breathing document," said Atlantic Regional Director Lana Payne as she presented the report with

Assistant to the President Katha Fortier and Western Regional Director Joie Warnock.

"This is your report, this is about the future."

The LUTF process was launched in April 2015 with an eye to continuing to build the labour movement, recognition that Unifor needed to hear from its local unions about the challenges they face and to learn from each of their best practices.

The final report of the task force, adopted unanimously at Unifor's convention, contained 28 recommendations to strengthen the union through increased member engagement.

Among these are:

- Expanded educational resources, including more

technology courses and an expanded Paid Education Leave program

- State of the art communications resources
- Increased collaboration between locals in the same community
- A strong profile in the community
- Stronger ties between generations
- Outreach to locals that did not participate

The task force has been one of Unifor's largest undertakings, with 49 town halls, attracting more than 2,000 members at 350 locals from across Canada.

The action plan includes timelines for implementing the recommendations of the report.

To read the full report and all its recommendations, go to [unifor.org/lutf](http://unifor.org/lutf).

>> Continued from  
"Trudeau `a partner with  
workers..." on page 1

Once in power, the Trudeau government repealed the worst of the Harper government's regressive labour laws and has been much more open to meeting with Unifor and other progressive groups on a regular basis.

"We know that working people are not the enemy. And we know that after a decade of - to be polite about it - neglect, the labour movement deserves fairness from the federal government," Trudeau said.

Unifor National President Jerry Dias said he has already seen a difference in Unifor's relationship with the federal government as doors have opened to regular dialogue.

"Prime Minister Trudeau recognizes that labour has a huge role to play in shaping the economic and social fabric of this country," said Dias. "Unifor is pleased to be part of the dialogue with the Prime Minister and his government."

Trudeau outlined several initiatives his government has undertaken since being elected, including infrastructure funding, money for union-based apprenticeship training, cutting the waiting period for Employment Insurance, signing the International Labour Organization Convention on child labour and lowering the eligibility for Old Age Security back to 65.

"Our government is committed to making sure workers are supported



Unifor National President Jerry Dias said he has already seen a difference in access since Justin Trudeau was elected.

throughout their entire careers - during training, while working, and upon retiring," Trudeau said.

"We want to ensure that hardworking, middle class families can get ahead. That they can build a stable,

secure life for themselves, and for their loved ones."

To view an archive of Trudeau's speech to Convention please visit [uniforlive.ca](http://uniforlive.ca). Look for Wednesday morning's archive.

>> Continued from "Unifor  
revived Canada's..." on page 1

could be a breeding ground for the same political fearmongering as in the U.S.

"It could happen here, unless the labour movement stands up to make it clear -immigrants are not the problem and racism and scapegoating have no place here or anywhere."

Unifor has participated in more than a 1,000 rounds of bargaining, with victories in job creation, wage increases, social equality and more Women's Advocate positions.

Currently in the midst of Detroit Three bargaining, Dias said that while the automakers may be powerful, Unifor is tougher.

Dias called for the largest investment in job programs in generations,

improved labour laws, better retirement security, a new Health Accord, and a national child care program. He also warned of the dangers of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

"It's time that workers across our continent call out the TPP for what it is: an anti-worker corporate plan to engineer a global low wage agenda at the expense of our jobs".

Dias called for solidarity with Aboriginal peoples, calling decades of cultural genocide "Canada's national shame." He shone a spotlight on the work of the Social Justice Fund and support provided to Syrian refugees.

"It's time for Unifor to be the force that defines change for a truly progressive Canada," Dias said. "Let's seize that time."

## Auto bargaining opens with Detroit Three

Unifor officially opened negotiations on August 10 and 11 for a new collective agreement with the Detroit Three automakers.

"We had one simple message for each of the Detroit Three: Invest in Canada," Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

Unifor has made investment in Canada the key priority of the talks.

Local Bargaining Committees and the Master Committee will continue to meet with each of the automakers - Fiat Chrysler, Ford and GM - in to September. After Labour Day, a target company will be picked to set the pattern for the industry in Canada.

With pattern bargaining, negotiations focus on one company, to establish a pattern that will model contracts with the other automakers. Once an agreement is reached with the target company, focus shifts to the next company, and then the third.

Unifor's contracts with the Detroit Three expire at 11:59 p.m. on September 19.

Dias called these negotiations "the most important in a generation," saying they will determine the future of the auto industry in Canada.

Follow the talks at [unifor.org/autotalks16](http://unifor.org/autotalks16), or on Twitter with hashtag #Autotalks16.



## Aboriginal issues a major focus of Convention

The challenges facing Canada's Aboriginal communities took centre stage at Unifor's Convention, including emotional addresses to delegates, a march on Parliament Hill and awards given to two outstanding Aboriginal leaders.

Unifor's Neil Reimer Award for social activism was given to Aboriginal child advocate Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and a Gitksan First Nation.

Blackstock called out all Canadians to recognize the underfunding of education and child welfare services

for Aboriginal children.

"It's not that complex. The Canadian government has already done it for all other children, so why can't they do it for First Nations children?"

Blackstock turned the stage over to several children, who introduced a music video they produced, and addressed delegates.

"People can change, and the issues of our past should not determine our future," said 19-year-old Mabel Toman-Harvey of Thessalon First Nation in Northern Ontario.

"Our skin tone is different, but we are all the same on the inside."

Seven-year-old Raiyah

**IN THIS ISSUE** Unifor's second Convention saw many highlights, including addresses from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Alberta NDP Premier Rachel Notley. National President Jerry Dias said Unifor has reinvigorated the entire labour movement. Aboriginal activist Cindy Blackstock turned the stage over to Aboriginal children.



Patel gave a strong appeal for reconciliation.

Unifor gave its Nelson Mandela Award to Senator Murray Sinclair, Manitoba's first Aboriginal judge and chief commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

"Reconciliation will take a long time. We need to be committed to it, and we need to persevere," he said.

After the awards were handed out, delegates marched to Parliament Hill to demand swift action and justice.