Unifor gathers in Ottawa at Convention 2016 to celebrate 3 years of achievements

More than 1,800 Unifor members representing Locals from across the country registered for the second Unifor Convention, held at the Shaw Centre in downtown Ottawa August 22 to 26, 2016. In addition to electing the union’s national leadership team, delegates also discussed and debated a variety of resolutions and adopted the collective bargaining program.

It was only three short years ago that Unifor was created at our founding convention on Labour Day weekend in 2013. Unifor has since then had a remarkable record of achievement and gains for working people, as a result of the tremendous amount of work in building a stronger, more effective union. Since founding Unifor we have changed the political landscape in Canada significantly, including the defeat of the Harper and Hudak Conservatives and the election of progressive governments such as the Notley NDP in Alberta; Wynne in Ontario and Trudeau federally as well as reinvigorating the labour movement at the CLC and provincial federations.

The convention was inspiring and touching - ranging from a festive contingent in the Ottawa Pride parade; a fierce demand for justice for Indigenous people and immediate action on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations with a rally on Parliament Hill and a solemn welcome to two Syrian refugee families arriving in Canada and sponsored by Unifor.

Unifor has been critical in shifting the public debate and moving forward to strengthen and enhance our public health care system and our public pensions while ensuring a more sustainable, just and inclusive society for our children and grandchildren.

“Raising Standards, Raising Hope’, - Unifor’s collective bargaining program was adopted by convention delegates to provide an action plan for the union’s bargaining activities over the next three years, as we face key issues such as precarious work; new hire programs and two-tier schemes; equity and human rights challenges and retirement security and pensions or health and safety issues. Our bargaining goals will remain firmly connected to a strong vibrant culture of political activism and community engagement.

The ‘Stronger Public Health Care – It’s Time’ resolution calling for sufficient and stable federal funding to support and renew Canada’s public Medicare system was unanimously adopted after brief debate on the first day of business. Delegates also supported the Health Accord post card campaign and pledged to continue to advocate and mobilize in workplaces and

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communities to hold both levels of government accountable for re-negotiating a new Health Accord.

Delegates and observers heard from several keynote speakers including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Alberta Premier Rachel Notley, among other national and international leaders. The convention also honoured the decades of struggle and effort of the retiring Secretary Treasurer Peter Kennedy.

National President Jerry Dias and Regional Directors Lana Payne and Joie Warnock were acclaimed while Bob Orr was elected by acclamation as Secretary-Treasurer. Naureen Rizvi was acclaimed as Ontario Regional Director as Katha Fortier stepped down from the position and was subsequently appointed as Assistant to the National President. The Unifor Health Care Council met in advance of convention.

Local 8300 members at HJ McFarland Home ratify settlement

Members of Local 8300 working at the Prince Edward County-run home for the aged voted strongly in favour of ratification by 85% for a new collective agreement at H.J. McFarland Memorial Home for the Aged.

Highlights of the renewal agreement include new language providing for joint investigation for workplace harassment and bullying; full time union leave and commemoration of the National Day of Mourning. Stronger language was also achieved for Health and Safety; EAP program access for all employees; infectious disease language; grievance procedure, and vacation bidding.

Members will also benefit from adding niece and nephew under the bereavement provision; dental coverage for major restorative to $1,500; an increase to $1.00 per hour in weekend premium; an increase to $155 for both full time and part time in uniform/shoe allowance as well as $300 per insured person per year for registered massage therapy. The settlement also provided for annual wage increases of 1.5%, 1.8% and 1.8% over the three year term.

Rocking with the Ontario Health Coalition for a Minimum Care standard

The Ontario Health Coalition’s giant 10-foot tall rocking chair brought the message of the urgent need to bring in a 4-hour per day minimum care standard and improve access to long-term care to 17 communities this summer. Unifor activists proudly rocked with community activists as the rocking chair visited long-term care homes represented by Unifor in Exeter, Amherstburg, Tillsonburg and St. Thomas.

Another successful Unifor Women’s Conference

This year’s Unifor Women’s Conference theme, Strong Women, Strong Unions, captures the conference’s focus on strengthening the participation of women in their workplaces and their locals. The Conference is an annual opportunity to come together, build skills, exchange knowledge and strategize for the future. Can you count the number of delegates from the health care sector?
Jennifer Crip ton, a member of Unifor Local 302 and paramedic at both Elgin Medavie and Middlesex-London stopped by at the Unifor Local 302 office in London to express her gratitude for the substantial support from Unifor as she begins the trek to Nicaragua. The ambulance that is being donated will bear with pride a large decal announcing the proud sponsorship by members of Unifor who contributed so generously to her campaign. Her example of international solidarity is truly inspiring to all.

Send-off at Local 302 for ambulance bound for Nicaragua

Members at Marshall Gowland Manor win pay equity adjustments

Unifor Local 302 members at Marshall Gowland Manor in Sarnia were acknowledged for the true value of their work when a pay equity review was recently completed. With the Local signing off on the memorandum, classifications such as the RPN and Quality Improvement Coordinator (a position also requiring RPN qualifications) will see an adjustment of $1.07 bringing their top rate of $29.17 retroactive back to April 1, 2014.

Extendicare negotiations move to workplace action and conciliation

Negotiations for renewal collective agreements for 10 Extendicare Nursing Homes in Ontario ended on as the bargaining committee could not accept Extendicare’s insulting wage offer.

Unifor Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier compared the fortunes of the company with the fate of its workers, saying “Extendicare is profitable; it’s unconscionable that its executives have been so richly compensated while wages for the frontline workers have fallen behind inflation.”

“It’s time to recognize the contribution our members make towards caring for society’s most vulnerable; it’s that care that results in the employer’s increasing profit,” said National Rep Kelly-Anne Orr.

Members working for Extendicare were updated at Bargaining Update Meetings that Unifor had applied for conciliation scheduled for September 9th and remains committed to negotiating a fair agreement with Extendicare. Dignity4Residents Fairness4Caregivers campaign materials including lanyards and wristbands have been distributed by local unions. Unifor remains committed to negotiating a fair agreement with Extendicare.

Lisa Tucker, Local 302 Vice President is pictured with Carol Haskett, a former CAW committee member at Cedarwood Village now residing at Revera Dover Cliffs in Port Dover. Carol is a strong supporter of the Dignity campaign in the home.
Health Accord campaign features prominently in Kitchener area

Unifor Local 1106 in the Kitchener-Waterloo area has been especially active this summer in promoting awareness and support for a re-negotiated Health Accord through the Unifor postcard campaign. Their efforts were bolstered by the presence of regional campaign coordinator, Nancy Brissett - one of four regional coordinators released to work full-time on the campaign.

The Local has promoted the Health Accord campaign with BBQs at Grand River Hospital (both KW and Freeport sites), Sunbeam Centre and Trinity Village. Future BBQs are planned for other 1106 workplaces as well as a presence at the area Labour Day picnic sponsored by the Waterloo Regional Labour Council.

For more information about the events at Unifor Local 1106, please visit their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/unifor1106

Union members protest long-term care facility cuts in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia

Members of CUPE and UNIFOR rallied for an end to cuts in long-term care facilities outside MLA and Minister of Transportation Geoff MacLellan’s Glace Bay office. The rally was one of several rallies held across the province by CUPE and Unifor members. Long-term care facilities have begun to cut services and staff after the Province implemented a one per cent budget cut to more than 100 long-term care sites as announced in the 2016 Nova Scotia budget.

Carrie Nash, a Unifor Local 4600 member was quoted in the local media stating, “We work as a whole team in our building. We went from two cooks to one, so that will make for longer wait times for the residents,” she said. “In our housekeeping department, we went from three and a half housekeepers to two and we are a large facility so now we will only have one housekeeper on each side, so the care will probably deteriorate quickly”. Sister Nash works as a continuing care assistant (CCA) at Victoria Haven Nursing in Glace Bay where kitchen and maintenance staff received layoff notices last week.

“We love our residents and we hate to see them suffer this way at this stage in their life,” Nash said in describing the situation as sad among the residents and staff. Unifor has also started a petition to stop the cuts to long-term care which is available in all Unifor offices across Nova Scotia.

A Warm Welcome to Unifor to:

- 25 members at Family Health Services Cape Breton, Sydney
- 11 RN members at Vision 74 Inc Nursing Home, Sarnia
- 54 members at Landmark Village, Sarnia
- 69 members formerly represented by CLAC at Chatham Retirement Resort, Chatham
- 22 members at Housing Help Centre for Hamilton Wentworth, Hamilton

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