Unifor launches federal election campaign

Unifor’s federal election campaign is well underway right across the country. Regional campaign coordinators have been contacting local unions,

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Delegates to Unifor’s recent “We Will Vote” conference for young workers took time to canvas for NDP candidate Linda McQuaig.

Canadian Council soon

Unifor’s second Canadian Council takes place later this month in Montreal, a chance to take stock of where the union has been the last year, and where it is going in 2016.

“In Unifor’s first two years, we have established ourselves as a strong and progressive voice for workers,” said Unifor National President Jerry Dias. “Working people will need that voice in the coming year, with the federal election, anti-labour laws across Canada, pension issues and so much more.”

Dias will give the Council’s opening address. Quebec Director Renaud Gagné will also make an address. Secretary-Treasurer Peter Kennedy will give a financial update, and regional directors will present their reports.

Keynote speakers include retired general Romeo

Young workers conference held

Approximately 70 young Unifor members from across Canada attended a ‘We Will Vote’ conference in Toronto to discuss election organizing strategies, youth mobilization in the upcoming federal election, and issues such as good jobs, affordable

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#unifor

Here’s a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@GabRossM

Such great energy in a room after a long day of getting ready for #elxn42! Thanks @UniforTheUnion, it was a blast. #IWillVote2015

@RPulvermacher

We need a government that works for us uniforvotes.ca

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Unifor and Domtar boost trades training

Unifor, industry, and the university in Kamloops have partnered to better prepare students for job opportunities in the skilled trades.

A memorandum of understanding was signed July 28 between Unifor 10-B, Domtar, and Thompson Rivers University to enhance the quality of trades training in the region.

“Unifor is committed to collaborating with communities for access to good jobs,” said Scott Doherty, Executive Assistant to Unifor’s National President.

The goals of the agreement are to support TRU trades training programs, “Foundation Programs”, and to train and, where possible, hire students from TRU into Domtar’s Kamloops mill where they can begin a career in trades as Unifor 10-B members.

“We’re very excited to be a part of this process,” said Unifor 10-B President Charlie Fraser.

Details of the agreement include mill access for students and instructors, job shadowing and work experience and other unique learning opportunities allowing students to acquire hours toward a trade.

Domtar and Unifor 10-B will provide bursaries/scholarships. Domtar will provide in-kind surplus equipment donations.

Photo spotlight

Submit your photos to communications@unifor.org

Unifor saves jobs at Winnipeg Parmalat

While it is a positive step that the Ontario government is moving ahead with pensions for the two-thirds of Ontarians with no workplace pension, it is disappointing that there will be so many exemptions to the new provincial plan, Unifor says.

This new Ontario pension should model the successful Canada Pension Plan.”

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne recently announced that the Ontario Registered Pension Plan, promised in last year’s provincial election, will be phased in over several years, and will exclude employers with minimal pension plans.

“For those with no workplace pension at all, this is a positive step, but it could be so much more,” Fortier said.

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ORPP needs to mirror CPP

The threshold for the minimum income for the plan to kick in has not been set. Fortier said the plan needs to include low-income workers, who face the most difficult time in retirement.

Fortier said that with a federal election in two months, there was no need to rush on plans for the ORPP. Both the NDP and the Liberals support and enhanced CPP, which would eliminate the need for an Ontario plan.
Did you know?

Polls have shown that most 18- to 35-year-olds vote for a party other than the Conservatives. But in the last federal election, nearly two out of every three youth did not vote.
Harper government has no mandate for TPP talks

Canadian trade negotiators have no mandate to accept terms in Trans Pacific Partnership negotiations that would damage vital Canadian industries, says Jerry Dias, National President of Unifor.

“These talks have occurred completely in secret. Business leaders may know what’s on the table, but Canadians don’t. And now a federal election has been called, Canadian officials have absolutely no mandate to negotiate away our industries and jobs,” said Dias.

Dias called on Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Development officials to release details of concessions they have made in the negotiations, so that Canadians can have full understanding of what is at stake going into the upcoming election.

Most discussion of the TPP in Canada to date has revolved around the fate of agricultural marketing programs in the dairy and poultry industries (which would suffer dramatic damage if demands to abolish Canada’s marketing rules were accepted).

But there are many other industries which would also experience major dislocation under a deal - including the auto sector, machinery, and other manufacturing.

Unifor represents about 40,000 members working in the auto assembly and auto parts industries.

Because the TPP would grant tariff-free access to the North American market to vehicles from Japan, it would hurt sales for Canadian-made vehicles and parts. Canada already has a $5 billion auto trade deficit with Japan.

Unifor report lists Harper’s economic failures

A new report written by Unifor economists Jim Stanford and Jordan Brennan concludes that Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s economic record has been the worst of any Canadian leader since WWII.

The report, which compared Harper’s economic record using 16 indicators, found that Harper performed the worst on seven of them, and on five more is second-last.

“This poor economic record cannot be blamed on the 2008-2009 recession, as Canada’s economy has ranked well within the lower half of all OECD countries,” Stanford said.

“This report destroys the myth that the Conservatives are ‘good economic managers’ – they are in fact very poor ones,” Stanford said.

Stanford and Brennan compare annual data from Statistics Canada and other publicly available sources regarding 16 key conventionally used indicators of economic progress and well-being, including work, production and incomes distribution and debt.

On August 5, Stanford participated in a Twitter Q&A and answered questions on the report using the hashtag #HarperEconomy.

The complete economic report is available at unifor.org.

Picking up after the devastating earthquake in Nepal

The Unifor Social Justice Fund provides support on the ground to agencies in cases of sudden disasters.

On April 25, 2015, a 7.9 magnitude earthquake shook the bustling capital of Kathmandu, Nepal. The powerful earthquake killed thousands with tens of thousands more badly injured.

On May 12, a second earthquake – this time a 7.3 magnitude – shook Nepal, in the Himalayan foothills between Kathmandu and Mount Everest. More than 8,500 people died, another 22,000 people were injured and 2.8 million people were left homeless.

The SJF, along with thousands of additional monies from Unifor locals and individual members, contributed $60,000 to Oxfam Canada, which had an emergency team on the ground shortly after the first earthquake.

Relief efforts kicked into action, mitigating further tragedy and helping survivors rebuild their lives.

Oxfam’s emergency team in Nepal reached more than 367,000 women, men and children in seven of the worst hit districts.

Aided by the contributions of the SJF, Unifor locals and members, Oxfam Canada was able to provide a total of 45,300 emergency hygiene kits with items such as blankets, soap, underwear and toiletries, clean water for 30,000 people, 4,470 latrines plus handwashing sites, 32,800 shelter kits and food baskets to 27,000 households.

For more information, visit: unifor.org/sjf