Regional Directors praise progressive policy gains

During their respective reports, Unifor’s three regional directors laid out the work done nationwide to build the union and shift the politics of the country. Member mobilization in

Unifor campaign calls for People’s Trade agenda

Unifor’s most ambitious campaign yet – to change the way Canada approaches and negotiates international trade deals – is now underway after the project was endorsed at Canadian Council.

“Free trade agreements have been a gift to corporations,” National President Jerry Dias told Canadian Council. “They’ve been a thorn in our side for nearly 30 years.”

Dias arrived at Canadian Council from Washington, where he was on hand to offer advice to Canadian negotiators during the first round of talks on a renewed North America Free Trade Agreement.

“NAFTA doesn’t need a twist and a tweak. It needs to be totally rebuilt. We

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Actor, activist, and honorary Unifor member Danny Glover shares a message of international solidarity at Canadian Council asking delegates to engage decisively and in solidarity to establish lasting peace, justice and solidarity for a better world.

Canadian Council a success

Delegates to Unifor’s Canadian Council left Winnipeg with the resolve to push back against the rise of the right and tools in place to build a better world.

“Our union has been the antidote to the cynical conservative politics that hurt Canada for over a decade,” National President Jerry Dias said.

The Council took place one week after violent protests by fascists and other white supremacists in Virginia, putting the rise of the right top of mind for many in attendance.

“We must reach across cultural, geographical, racial differences to seek sustainable freedom and justice in the world,” actor and human rights activist Danny Glover said in his address to council.

Unifor Research Director Bill Murnighan said it’s up to unions to lead the fight against right-wing
New Magazine launched

Unifor launched a new quarterly magazine at Canadian Council, giving expanded coverage to the top issues and campaigns driving Unifor’s activities, as well as more regional news and reports from the union’s national departments.

The magazine, named Uniforum and soon to replace this newsletter, was included in delegate kits, and will be mailed to all subscribers of this newsletter in shortly.

The last newsletter comes out September 14. Subscribe to this free magazine by providing your mailing address online at unifor.org/subscribe.

The magazine allows for more in-depth reporting on stories of interest to members. The magazine will come out every three months in fall, winter, spring and summer. For day-to-day coverage of Unifor’s activities, go to unifor.org/news.

Canadian Council resolutions

Delegates to the 2017 Canadian Council met to discuss and debate resolutions and several recommendations from the National President. The following motions were adopted at the meeting:

National President’s Recommendations
• Equity
• Human Rights
• Pharmacare

Resolutions
1 - The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness
2 - Orange Shirt
5 - Palestinian Self-Determination and the Movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions
6 - Women and Persons with Disabilities being left behind on CPP Expansion
7 - Women and Persons with Disabilities being left behind on CPP Expansion
8 - Safe Access to Reproductive Health Care Services
9 - Safe Access to Reproductive Health Care Services
10 - Inclusive Practices Toolkit at all Unifor Events
11 - Assign an Accessibility Coordinator to all Unifor Events
12 - Gender Pay Equity
19 - Young Worker Education Package

A jam-packed agenda meant that several resolutions and recommendations did not get to the floor to be discussed by delegates. All motions not dealt with by the council are referred to the National Executive Board with the recommendation of the resolutions committee.

Recommendations that were referred are:
• Green Jobs and Sustainable Development
• Technology, Automation and the Future of Work

Resolutions referred:
3 - GM asrTrust
4 - Establishment of Equity Positions on Unifor Local Executive Boards
13 - Alberta Labour Code and Organizing
14 - Driverless Vehicles
15 - Softwood Lumber Fair Trade
16 - Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River
17 - Disparity of Treatment
18 - Stop Outsourcing Jobs in Hospitality
20 - Language Barriers
All recommendations and resolutions are online at unifor.org/canadiancouncil.

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provincial politics took the spotlight.
“The fact that the BC election came down to a razor-thin margin really underscores the point that the political action of our union does affect real change,” said Joie Warnock, Western Regional Director.
In both BC and Nova Scotia, the activism of the membership made clear differences in election issues and results at the ballot boxes, humbling two right-wing Liberal governments.
“The premier of Nova Scotia thought that seven pieces of anti-worker legislation, slashed nursing home budgets and an attempt to demonize unionized workers would crush our fighting spirit,” said Lana Payne, Atlantic Regional Director. “Instead, he gave us dozens more reasons to mobilize, to organize and stand up for our union and our rights.”
In Ontario, a coordinated push to advance the rights of all workers is resulting in progressive changes to the Ontario labour laws.

“These changes come as the result of labour’s blood, sweat and tears - following years of organizing, rallying and lobbying,” said Naureen Rizvi, Ontario Regional Director.
She outlined the work that remains to be done, but Unifor members are engaged and ready to see these changes through.
populism.

“If someone is going to stop the populist trend in Canada and elsewhere, the labor movement must lead it,” Murnighan said.

Canadian Labour Congress President Hassan Yussuff echoed that message.

“We will stand up, and we will not tolerate fascism in our country,” Yussuff said.

The packed agenda, under the theme Solidarity for a Better World, included several recommendations for making Canada and the world a more equitable place for working people and their communities, while addressing the urgent needs of equity seeking groups and the environment.

A signature effort launched at the Council was an ambitious new trade campaign, People’s Trade: A New Agenda for Trade Agreements. The campaign will seek to change the way trade deals are negotiated, to put working people and their committees first.

Council of Canadians Honorary Chairperson Maude Barlow reminded delegates that millions do not have access to affordable medicines, putting their health at risk. Delegates voted unanimously to support a campaign to push for a pharmacare program in Canada.

Council concluded with a message from National Secretary-Treasurer Bob Orr to continue the hard work needed to build a more equitable society for all.

Unifor advises Canadian NAFTA negotiators

Unifor is a key advisor as the long awaited talks to renegotiate a new North American Free Trade Agreement are underway. D.C. to continue meetings with lead negotiator Steve Verheul and other members of the Canadian NAFTA team.

“Our union represents members in every key economic sector, and it was these workers who paid the price for the last NAFTA accord,” said National President Jerry Dias.

After attending the opening of Canadian Council, which coincided with the negotiations, Dias returned to Washington D.C. to continue meetings with lead negotiator Steve Verheul and other members of the Canadian NAFTA team.

Unifor will continue to play a key role in future rounds, scheduled to take place in Mexico and Canada in September.

“Thank you for an inspiring Council. Activism matters, and we are Unifor,” Orr said as he closed the meeting.

Jerry Dias meets with lead NAFTA negotiator Steve Verheul
Unifor members put equity first

Unifor has a long history of fighting for justice, and against oppression. Members committed to continue the fight at Canadian Council.

The year long ambitious Equity Audit surveyed local unions to get to know the membership better. Members Kesang Kashi and Christine Maclin carried out interviews with nearly 470 local unions, representing 80 per cent of Unifor’s more than 310,000 members.

Unifor National President Jerry Dias addressed members before the presentation of the Equity Audit. “We focus on equity because it’s about fairness and justice. That’s what unions were built to tackle, in bargaining and in politics.”

The data collected found large gaps in representation for workers of colour, for Indigenous workers, for workers with disabilities, for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) workers and for young workers. On local executive committees, at the bargaining table, and as stewards, equity seeking groups are consistently left behind.

At Canadian Council, delegates voted to take the next step to better represent these members. Unifor will establish an Equity Advisory Panel to build on the findings of the audit and begin the work to close the gaps. Deb Tveit, Assistant to the National President, connected these internal improvements to the political action of the union, saying, “Unifor was built to change this country, and we can’t do it unless we push for equity.”

Additional resolutions were adopted to help improve Unifor’s equity work. These include: improving accessibility at events, combating the gender pay gap, better supporting young workers, and many more.

Read the resolutions at unifor.org/canadiancouncil.