Buckley new OFL president

Longtime labour activist and Unifor National Representative Chris Buckley is the new president of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

“There is no greater honour than to serve as president of your Ontario Federation of Labour,” Buckley said after accepting the new position on November 24.

Buckley replaces outgoing OFL president Sid Ryan, who Buckley honoured in his acceptance speech for his commitment to improving the lives of the province’s working people and their families.

Also elected were Secretary-Treasurer Patty Coates from the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation and Ahmad Gaied from United Food and Commercial Workers. Both ran on a slate with Buckley and were endorsed by Unifor.
In Brief

Freelancers start petition

Freelance workers, as independent contractors and as a group of workers in precarious conditions, face great challenges when it comes to legal protection, recognition, compensation and rights over their work.

The Ontario government is currently undergoing a review of Employment Standards and Ontario Labour Relations Act through the Changing Workplaces Commission.

The CFU is calling on the Ontario government to implement all 43 recommendations submitted by Unifor, to improve minimum standards for independent contractors and freelance workers and has begun an online petition at canadianfreelanceunion.ca/petition.

Climate panel achieves right balance

Alberta’s climate change panel tabled its report November 22 with recommendations that, once implemented, will make a significant difference in Alberta’s greenhouse gas emissions and provide real solutions for affected industries and communities.

“Premier Rachel Notley has a balanced blueprint for action,” said Jerry Dias, Unifor’s National President. “Our children and our grandchildren need a fair economy and a livable planet. This plan ensures that Alberta can have both.”

The report delivers a thoughtful review of the employment implications of climate action. The panel describes job growth areas—such as transit and renewable energy—and for sectors with negative growth, it recommends using carbon-pricing revenue for training and transition programs.

“Training and transitions for workers will be critical to the success of Alberta’s climate action plan,” said Joie Warnock, Unifor’s Western Director.

Angela Adams, Unifor’s Education Director and Local 707A member, was appointed to the panel. Adams says protecting jobs and funding transition programs is a priority.

“The climate plan represents a great balance between being ambitious about targets and being responsible to those who could be affected in the short term,” said Adams.

>> Continued from “Quebec Council meets” on page 1

He congratulated all the Unifor activists who have taken part in the mobilization activities organized in recent weeks.

During the Council, Jean Simoneau, a member of the executive of Local 184, was elected to the position of secretary-treasurer of the Quebec Council. Lucie Pratt, a member of Local 522, was elected chair of the Francization Committee, while Claude Lahaie of Local 98 and Richard Labossière of Local 2889 were elected members of this committee.

More 30 members of Local 1209, who have been embroiled in a dispute with their employer Delastek since April 1st, were treated to a warm welcome by the delegation. A fundraiser for the workers’ families raised several thousand dollars.

Members of Local 1209 in a dispute with Delastek since April 1, received a warm welcome at Quebec Council, were a fundraiser raised thousands of dollars for their families.
Buckley pledged to address the major issues facing labour today, including the gender wage gap, issues around precarious work, the changing jobs market, youth unemployment, and to be a strong voice in the Ontario government’s ongoing review of labour laws in the province.

“We know the business groups will be pushing back, and Queen’s Park will feel the pressure,” Buckley said. “We need to make sure that labour pushes back even harder.”

In addressing the OFL convention, both Coates and Gaied joined Buckley in committing to addressing precarious work and standing up for working people.

“Let’s focus on what’s important to all workers, union and non-union,” said Gaied, a grocery store worker. “Together we are stronger.”

Coates, an educational assistant and president of the Barrie and District Labour Council, drew on her experience negotiating with the province and representing all workers through her labour council to call for a united house of labour.

“As a united labour movement, we can make a difference,” she said.

Manitoba moves welcomed on childcare and jobs

The Manitoba government’s recent throne speech commitment to childcare spaces and good jobs is welcomed news for working Manitobans, Unifor says.

“Manitoba’s NDP government has a good record of job creation and strengthening social programs,” said Joie Warnock, Unifor’s Western Director. “Today’s Throne Speech reflects the values and priorities of Manitobans.”

Highlights of the speech, which sets the direction for the next sitting of the Manitoba Legislature, include a $10-billion plan for strategic infrastructure projects, 12,000 new childcare spaces, and a renewed commitment to a public inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women.

The Greg Selinger NDP government has also signaled that front-line services will continue to be a priority.

The government has promised to support a new facility for Manitobans living with cancer as well as expanding the Women’s Health Clinic.

“Manitobans want a government that builds our great public institutions and focuses on how we take care of each other and help everyone succeed,” said Warnock.
SJF in Colombia – advocating for strong oil worker unions

Colombia is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be a trade union activist or even belong to a trade union. Each year, dozens of trade union leaders are murdered or disappear, while many more face death threats, violence, judicial persecution and legal repression.

It is in this context Unifor’s Social Justice Fund supports the efforts of PASO (Proyecto de Accompamamiento y Solidaridad Internacional), an international agency working with the national petroleum union of Colombia USO (Union Sindical Obrera) in Colombia’s eastern plains.

The area is home to a large and diverse indigenous population and residents have little access to education and inadequate housing. This creates a large pool of unskilled labour in need of the jobs provided by oil companies.

PASO provides protective accompaniment (visible support and witnesses to threatened activists) and advocacy, education and communications support to USO, which has been under attack as it tries to organize oil workers.

PASO engages Colombian and international authorities, and regularly works with the Canadian embassy and U.S. officials and NGOs in the area. It also accompanies USO representatives into the field to speak to workers at three large, multinational oil companies – Canadian-owned Pacific Rubiales Energy, Quifa and Cano Sur.

In 2011, Pacific Rubiales fired most of the 3,000 workers who joined USO, forcing them to leave the area under threat of violence and legal repression. USO organizers have since returned to the area, and an exiled labour leader has also been able to return.