Election planning kicks off

Unifor leaders, activists and staff from BC, the Prairies, Ontario and the Atlantic came together to start planning for what will become the union’s strategy for the federal election later this year.

“As a union, we are going to take the time needed

Unifor members took part in local election preparation meetings in Kitchener, Ontario.

NS Health decision backs Unifor

A decision by a Nova Scotia arbitrator on the Nova Scotia government’s health care restructuring legislation supports Unifor’s position to allow for the existing health care unions to create provincewide collective bargaining agents.

James Dorsey issued his decision on Bill 1 on January 19, following a December arbitration involving Unifor and the other three major health care unions in the province.

“Unifor members were active and vocal about their opposition to Bill 1,” said Atlantic Regional Director Lana Payne. “Unifor is committed to working with the other unions and Mr. Dorsey to create a collaborative amalgamated bargaining structure that meets the needs of our members, and protects their constitutional rights.”

BC reviews trucker concerns

After meeting with Unifor and other truck driver representatives, BC Transportation Minister Todd Stone has committed to taking another look at the regulations introduced for the Container Trucking Act.

“There has been a lot of progress towards standardizing the sector

Here’s a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@queerthoughts

#Unifor declares support for Sudbury by-election NDP candidate, @NDPSuzanne

@CandiceSchell

Sitting in a #Unifor caucus discussing all the reasons why we hate Stephen Harper. There are so many! #stopharper
In brief

Local 557-0, Wellington Wood

Members of Local 557-0 at Wellington Wood Products in Mount Forest, Ont., have ratified a new two-year collective agreement with wage increases in both years.

There is a $200 signing bonus and an increase to safety footwear provisions. Language on piece work was cleared up, and a few changes were made to some job classifications.

The standalone local also voted to join Local 1917. [1]

Local 302, Strathmere Lodge

Unifor Local 302 members recently ratified a new collective agreement with the County of Middlesex’s Strathmere Lodge in Strathroy, Ontario.

The new contract included an improved meal allowance, paramedical coverage, orthodontic dental coverage to $1750, vacation improvements to seven weeks after 31 years, and an increase in shift and weekend premiums by five cents per hour in 2016 and 2017.

Wage increases over the three-year term are 1.3 per cent, 1.5 per cent and 1.5 per cent. [1]

Photo spotlight

Submit your photos to communications@unifor.org

Featured campaign: As Safe As Our Cargo

On January 21, Unifor sent a second letter to federal Minister of Public Safety Steven Blaney, along with a petition signed by hundreds of armoured car workers and Unifor members, calling on the federal government “to develop a comprehensive regulatory framework for the armoured car industry, establish minimum standards on employee training, vehicle specifications, crew complements and safety equipment.” [1]

Hotline to protect temp foreign workers

A confidential hotline has been created to help temporary foreign workers get answers about their rights, both under the federal program and at work.

“Temporary foreign workers have rights just like Canadian workers, and we intend to ensure that they are enforced across the country,” said Wally Ewanicke, an organizer with Unifor, adding the hotline tells workers about their rights such as rates of pay, overtime, and immigration requirements.

The hotline is an initiative of the Temporary Foreign Workers Association, a group started by Migrante and Unifor. The toll-free number is 1-888-366-0194.

In many sectors of the economy, employers have taken advantage of language barriers and other challenges to exploit foreign workers.

“If they are good enough to work in Canada, they are good enough to stay,” said Marco Luciano of Migrante, an alliance of Filipino organizations. [1]

UNIFOR COMMUNICATIONS: SARAH BLACKSTOCK, SHANNON DEVINE, KATIE ARNUP, STUART LAIDLAW, IAN BOYKO, SHELLEY BURGOYNE, MARIE-ANDREE L’HEUREUX, SARAH LESNIEWSKI, AND ANNE MARIE VINCENT
Dorsey’s decision also meets the objectives of the government’s health care reforms and the requirements of the Health Authorities Act, Payne pointed out. While Dorsey concluded that there is still a lot of work to be done to create a structure for multi-union bargaining agents, his approval of the proposal opens the door the government closed in October.

Dorsey found that the creation of a “Nova Scotia Health Care Amalgamated Union” would resolve many of the problems posed by the legislation.

The status of Practical Nurses was left to hearings starting February 2.

Truckers went back to work after a Joint Action Plan was signed with the truckers, the Port, the BC government, and the federal government. But truck drivers say that proposals for pay cuts tabled on December 15 by the BC government threaten to undo the agreement that has kept the Port open since April.

At the January 15 meeting, Unifor made a detailed presentation about the implications of the pay cuts. Stone said he would review the regulations before the new Truck Licencing System is scheduled to be implemented February 1.

“As it stands, the government’s pay schedule takes money out of truckers’ pockets and violates the deal that I watched the Premier sign last spring,” said Paul Johal, President of Unifor’s container truck drivers local and a driver himself. “We simply want what was promised when we ended the 2014 port protests.”

Unifor welcomes new members

Unifor would like like to welcome 10 workers at Kooljet Inc., now members of Local 1859, 38 workers at Smith Induspac Ottawa, now members of Local 4266, and 122 workers at Woodstock General Hospital Trust, now members of Local 636, who have chosen to join Unifor.

The new members at Kooljet Inc., in Tilsonburg, Ontario, design and build specialized refrigeration equipment for cooling and freezing applications.
New appointments

The following staff appointments were made at the start of this year:

**Directors**
- **Anthony Dale** has been appointed Associate Director of the Legal Department, as a result of Lewis Gottheil’s retirement on February 1, working out of the national office, effective immediately.
- **Vinay Sharma**, Director Human Rights Department will be moving to the Health And Safety Department working out of the national office, effective February 1.

**Service**
- **Mohamad Alsadi**, service representative, has been appointed Director of the Human Rights Department, including responsibilities with the International Department, working out of the national office, effective February 1.

**Communications**
- **Sarah Lesniewski** has been appointed to the Communications Department working out of the national office.

**Organizing**
- **Mike Lovric**, Vice-President of Local 444, has been appointed national representative working out of the Windsor office, effective February 1.
- **Aaron Neaves**, service representative will be moving to Organizing and working out of the Chatham office, effective February 1.

**Patronal**
- **Patrick Murray**, Regional Representative with Council 4000, has been appointed national representative in Organizing in Atlantic Canada working out of the Halifax office, effective February 1.
- **Kellee Janzen**, President of Local 2163, has been appointed national representative in Organizing, working out of the London office, effective February 1.

Air Canada contract talks begin

Customer Sales and Service Agents at Air Canada will be seeking economic gains after having made many sacrifices during the turbulent times in the airline industry.

The two sides began bargaining for a new collective agreement on January 26 in Toronto.

“A major contributor to the company achieving financial stability is front line employee dedication and hard work,” said Leslie Dias, Unifor National Representative and lead negotiator.

Front line employees are handling 30 per cent more passengers than they did in 2004, with 30 per cent fewer agents. Despite these challenges, Air Canada’s employees helped the company win Best Airline in North America for five consecutive years.

“Our members are doing a great job under often challenging circumstances. They deserve a reasonable share of the gains the company has made in recent years,” said Cheryl Robinson, President of Unifor Local 2002.

“It shouldn’t only be shareholders who benefit from the airline’s profitability.”

Unifor urges EI change after Target layoff

In light of the recent mass layoff at Target, Unifor is urging federal Minister of Employment Jason Kenney to provide emergency access to Employment Insurance benefits for Target workers who won’t otherwise qualify.

“Many Target workers who have just lost their jobs won’t even qualify for unemployment insurance,” said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

The qualifying threshold is as high as 910 hours over 52 weeks, a difficult threshold for part-time and irregular workers to reach.

“Workers have paid into EI, but when they need it most, they are shocked to find they don’t qualify. Minister Kenney has authority to modify the EI rules for pilot projects and emergency situations, and I urge him to take immediate action for the Target workers,” Dias said.

Emergency EI access for Target workers should be followed by changes to allow all workers in Canada to qualify for EI Benefits after a 360 hours of work in the preceding 52 weeks.

“More than 17,000 people suddenly losing their jobs is nothing short of a catastrophe. The government must take immediate measures to address this disaster unfolding in communities across the country,” Dias said.

“Target has wronged thousands of Canadian workers twice in just three years – first by closing down Zellers stores and throwing Zellers workers out of their jobs, and tearing up collective agreements,” said Christine Connor, President of Unifor Local 414, representing 12,000 retail and services workers.