Unifor launches TPP campaign

Unifor launched one of its largest national campaigns at the recent Prairie Council, with a simple message to the federal government: Trade the TPP.

“The Trans-Pacific Partnership isn’t really even a trade deal. It’s a corporate rights deal,” Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

Dias pointed to the TPP’s Investor-State Dispute Settlement system, which would give companies the right to sue the government if it passes laws that hurt their profits - even if those laws are in the public interest.

“Unifor believes in trade that improves the lives of working Canadians, protects public services and enhances each country’s ability to promote its culture and pass laws in the interests of its own citizens,” Dias said. “The

Federal government review of Broadcast Act welcome

A planned review of the Broadcast Act be the federal government is welcomed, if it is done right, Unifor National President Jerry Dias says.

“The goal of this evaluation must be to encourage the development of home-grown content that not only tells Canadian stories to capture the Canadian audience, but also intrigues the rest of the world to get to know us,” Dias said in his regular column in the Huffington Post recently.

“It is no easy task, but surely it can be done.”

Heritage Minister Mélanie Joly has said that “everything is on the table” in this review, which starts with an online questionnaire at canada.pch.gc.ca, and

Unifor active in Prairies

Unifor needs to support and encourage the emerging generation of Aboriginal activists, including several who were elected recently to the Manitoba legislature, Western Director Joie Warnock told Unifor’s Prairie Council meeting.

“Now is the time for Canadians to act to end the inequality. To rise up as a society and demand an end

Gabrielle Scrimshaw inspired delegates to the recent Prairie Regional Council meeting with a talk about her journey overcoming difficult odds coming from a reserve in Northern Saskatchewan. Aboriginal issues were a large topic of discussion at the meeting.
Unifor’s TPP campaign was launched at Prairie Council on April 30, and will ramp up over the coming months as the federal government holds public consultations across the country on the deal’s climate action plan.”

Fortier told the MPs and Alliances members that Unifor supports the goals of Ontario’s climate change program but the union is calling for constructive changes to Bill 72, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act.

“We want cap and trade to work,” said Fortier. “However we believe that its success depends on our ability to demonstrate to Ontario workers that they will not be left behind as economic and environmental change transforms our province.”

Fortier and Fred Wilson, Unifor Director of Strategic Planning, earlier delivered that message to the committee looking into the bill.

“We’re asking MPs to think about these workers,” said Wilson.

Unifor joins the broad-based group of workers who are committed to fighting for a just transition and other proposals that are needed to ensure a greater role for union and worker rights in the federal government’s climate change action plan, said Fortier.

“Unifor is making sure that workers part of the dialogue,” said Dias.

“The first such review of the industry since the Mulroney government overhauled the Broadcast Act 25 years ago – long before anyone had heard of digital streaming or online services such as Netflix. Dias said July ought to be commended for tackling the laws around Canadian broadcasting, which originated in a simpler era before the digital age, Dias went on to warn that “if we lose trade” between 12 Pacific-rim nations: Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, the United States of America and Vietnam.

Negotiations were completed in October 2015, during the last federal election. Kiehne said that Canada was late to join the negotiations in 2012, after 15 rounds of talks had already taken place.

“That put us in a position of weakness at the negotiations, and the results of that weakness can be seen in the threat the TPP poses to many sectors of our economy,” Kiehne said.

Unifor activists across Canada will be mobilized to make sure politicians at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels know the threats posed by the TPP, Kiehne said.

A dedicated web page was set up at unifor.org/ppp as part of the campaign.

There are already several documents on the site, along with more coming – along with sector-by-sector analyses of the TPP’s impact on Canada’s major industries, including dairy, auto, health care, the media and more.

Unifor’s trade policy paper, Imagining A Fair Trade Future, outlines 12 essential elements of a fair trade deal.

Unifor holds its second Convention from August 22 to 26 at the Shaw Centre in Ottawa. 

Until then, watch this space in your national newsletter for updates on what is planned, and for pending deadlines.

• Registration deadline is July 22.

• Resolutions and Constitutional amendments must be approved by your local union and submitted to the National Secretary-Treasurer by May 22.

• The Convention convenes August 22 and is expected to conclude by noon August 26.

• Industry Councils will be held August 21.

• A new delegates orientation will be held the evening of August 21.

See also unifor.org/events.

Unifor holds its second Convention from August 22 to 26 at the Shaw Centre in Ottawa.

Until then, watch this space in your national newsletter for updates on what is planned, and for pending deadlines.

• Registration deadline is July 22.

• Resolutions and Constitutional amendments must be approved by your local union and submitted to the National Secretary-Treasurer by May 22.

• The Convention convenes August 22 and is expected to conclude by noon August 26.

• Industry Councils will be held August 21.

• A new delegates orientation will be held the evening of August 21.

See also unifor.org/events.

Unifor's TPP campaign was launched at Prairie Council on April 30, and will ramp up over the coming months as the federal government holds public consultations across the country on the deal’s climate action plan.”

Fortier told the MPs and Alliances members that Unifor supports the goals of Ontario’s climate change program but the union is calling for constructive changes to Bill 72, the Climate Change Mitigation and Low-carbon Economy Act.

“We want cap and trade to work,” said Fortier. “However we believe that its success depends on our ability to demonstrate to Ontario workers that they will not be left behind as economic and environmental change transforms our province.”

Fortier and Fred Wilson, Unifor Director of Strategic Planning, earlier delivered that message to the committee looking into the bill.

“We’re asking MPs to think about these workers,” said Wilson.

Unifor joins the broad-based group of workers who are committed to fighting for a just transition and other proposals that are needed to ensure a greater role for union and worker rights in the federal government’s climate change action plan, said Fortier.

“Unifor is making sure that workers part of the dialogue,” said Dias.

“We are changing politics in this country,” said Fortier. “We must be the voice for workers who organize labour in the private sector to change the conversation and support workers rights and unions in their communities.”

Delegates to Prairie Council marched to Regina’s Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada office to show support for protesters demanding that the federal government address the poverty, overcrowded housing, health needs, the suicide crisis and other issues in Aboriginal communities.

Delegates from Prairie Council marched to Regina’s Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada office to show support for protesters demanding that the federal government address the poverty, overcrowded housing, health needs, the suicide crisis and other issues in Aboriginal communities.
Vancouver transit workers deliver strike mandate

More than 4,700 transit operators, skilled trades, SeaBus and support workers in Vancouver have voted 98 per cent in favour of a strike mandate in response to Coast Mountain Bus Company’s contract concession demands.

Unifor Locals 111 and 2200 took the action to protest the company’s refusal to table a fair wage offer and remove concessions. Talks started February 17 and broke off April 6.

“Our drivers work hard and the 98 per cent vote to strike if absolutely necessary is a demand for a reasonable wage offer and decent working conditions,” said Unifor Local 111 president Nathan Woods. “With this strong support we expect the employer to come back to the table with a fair contract offer and drop concessions for our transit operators.”

Woods said an agreement can be achieved while avoiding service disruptions, if CMBC responds appropriately to the members’ clear message.

Joe Elworthy, president of Unifor Local 2200 representing mechanics, Seabus, maintenance and other workers, said the vote indicates members “won’t accept cutbacks to an already strained system.”

“Transit in the Lower Mainland needs a funding boost, not a cut, in order to improve service to hundreds of thousands of daily riders. Concessions by workers will only make things worse,” Elworthy said.

Unifor BC Director Gavin McGarrigle said Coast Mountain is out of step with jurisdictions around the world using transit improvements to stimulate local economies, lower air pollution and clear congested roads.

IN THIS ISSUE

Unifor launches a major national campaign to Trade the TPP. Prairie Council delegates prepare to be even more active in the coming year. Reviewing the Broadcast Act is a good idea, if done right. Discussing cap-and-trade. May 17 is International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia – free posters in French and English inside.