Minimum wage hike won’t kill jobs

A study by two Unifor economists found there is no consistent connection between higher minimum wages and employment levels in Canada.

The study, done for the Canadian Centre...

Seaway talks go to arbitration

Five Unifor locals averted a strike along the St. Lawrence Seaway by agreeing to send outstanding issues to binding arbitration.

“We have been meeting night and day the past week to reach a deal, and came to the conclusion that arbitration was the best way to resolve remaining issues,” Unifor National Representative Joel Fournier said.

Details of the issues sent to arbitration and the complete contract will be revealed with the decision of the arbitrator.

Both sides expect to meet with the arbitrator as soon as possible to resolve this matter.

The 460 members of Unifor along the St. Lawrence Seaway from Niagara to Montreal are in Locals 4212 and 4211 in Niagara and Cornwall, health workers choose Unifor

Unifor welcomes the results of a vote at Earls Court Village Nursing Home in London, Ontario where employees, excluding RNs, voted to be represented by Unifor.

“Unifor proudly represents health care
Fortier on youth job panel

Unifor Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier has joined a new initiative to help alleviate youth unemployment in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area (GTHA).

“Tackling youth unemployment is a top priority for Unifor,” Fortier said. “Last month’s Good Jobs Summit showed that we will need many such initiatives to create the good jobs our youth deserve.”

The initiative, led by CivicAction and NPower Canada, aims to establish free training, paid internships, job placement and mentorship for underserved youth in the GTHA for youths interested in becoming IT professionals. Fortier will be a member of its Champions Council.

The first class of 31 students will receive 15 weeks of technical skills training and life skills training. Students who complete the training will move to a seven-week paid internship, followed by career coaching.

A report from CivicAction in September, Escalator: Jobs for Youth Facing Barriers, estimated that 83,000 - or 1 in 10 - youth in the GTHA are both without a job and not participating in education or training.

No changes expected to shipbuilding contract

Unifor fully expects members at Halifax Shipyard to build six Arctic patrol vessels (AOPS) as planned. “We have been assured by the company that everything is full speed ahead. Design work on AOPS continues and a contract is expected to be signed in January for the six AOPS vessels and that the build work in the yard will begin in September 2015,” said Unifor’s Atlantic Regional Director Lana Payne.

“We also fully expect the federal government to live up to its shipbuilding commitments,” she said. The decades-long project to replace Canada’s Naval Combat ships is projected by the Conference Board of Canada to create about 11,500 direct and indirect jobs in the region.

Featured Campaign: Nova Scotia Health

Nova Scotia’s health care system is undergoing radical change, including the provincial government’s decision to move from nine District Health Authorities to one provincial board and one board for the IWK Health Centre in Halifax, and to cut the number of collective agreements to four province-wide bargaining units.

Unifor supports a plan for unions to negotiate at one table for each province-wide bargaining unit. http://www.unifor.org/en/take-action/campaigns

Nova Scotia health workers rallied for their rights last month.
Locals 4319 and 4320 in Montreal and Local 4323 in Iroquois, Ontario.

Unifor had set a strike or lockout deadline for October 31 at 12:15 p.m., but extended the deadline to 5 p.m. on November 3 while negotiations were continuing. The deal averting a strike was reached November 2.

The Seaway announced in April that it had received funding from the federal government to automate the locks along the Seaway, eliminating staff currently working on the locks.

For a closer look at the hands-free lock system, go to: http://www.unifor.org/en/blog/seaway-automation-a-public-safety-concern.

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Ford move shows need for industrial policy

Unifor is disappointed that the Ford Motor Company and the federal and provincial governments were unable to reach an agreement that would have secured more than 1,000 good jobs in Windsor and the long-term stability of the Windsor plant.

Unifor had hoped that months of discussions between Ford, two levels of government and the union would result in significant investment which would have secured the production of a global engine at the Windsor facility.

“The auto industries that are flourishing around the world are ones where there is a deep commitment from government and an understanding of the importance and wisdom of investment – which always pays dividends.”

It is estimated that for every job created in an auto manufacturing facility, another 10 jobs are created elsewhere in the production chain.

“While we are disappointed that this work will be lost to Mexico, we remain optimistic that the tide is changing. Government, industry and labour are increasingly committed to finding ways of securing the strategic investments we need to rebuild our manufacturing base,” stressed Dias.

Unifor candidates win municipal elections

Unifor congratulates the many progressive candidates who were elected in recent weeks in municipal and school board elections in Ontario and Manitoba.

“Unifor is pleased that many excellent candidates were elected and re-elected,” said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President.

In Ontario, Unifor member Paul Pugh was re-elected to city council in Thunder Bay, while Unifor member Mike Devine was newly elected to city council in Cambridge.

Unifor is also looking forward to working with the many progressive councillors who were elected across the province, including Maria Augimeri in Toronto and John Shields in Oshawa.

“Strong, progressive local politicians are essential to our efforts to build prosperous and inclusive communities and economies,” said Katha Fortier, Unifor Ontario Regional Director.

In Manitoba, Unifor member Cindy Turner was elected as a school board trustee in Winnipeg.

“Democracy and community thrive when progressive community members run for political office so that they can contribute to the public good,” said Joie Warnock, Unifor’s Western Director.

Three Quebec forestry regions vote for strike

In a series of local meetings held in Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, Abitibi and on the North Coast in recent weeks, Unifor members voted more than 90 per cent in favour of a strike if necessary at Resolute Forest Products, and in support of efforts to pressure the company, in a lead up to a strike.

“Our members face an unusual situation – negotiations are at an impasse because of government inaction,” said Renaud Gagné, assistant to the Unifor Quebec Director.

Conditions for forestry workers have been worsening since April 2013 when gaps in legislation prevented the union from being recognized as the official bargaining agent of the workers employed in newly created jobs in nearby locations. Unifor has repeatedly asserted that a legal vacuum is depriving workers of the protection of a collective agreement in some areas.

The previous Parti Québécois government publicly committed to resolving the issue a year ago. In December 2012, a parliamentary committee looked into the issue, with parties agreeing that action must be taken. The Liberal government, elected in April of this year, has so far failed to realize any commitments to addressing this ongoing problem.

The union recently presented its concerns about labour rights within the forestry sector at a meeting with Minister of Forest, Wildlife and Parks Laurent Lesard.

“We are now relying on him to act and implement the necessary measures. For our members, the situation is unfair and unacceptable. We shouldn’t forget that it was the government who created this legal vacuum – it is now their responsibility to repair the damage it has created. In the meantime, employers, like Resolute, are taking full advantage,” said Gagné.