Unifor to push new NB Liberals

Unifor will push the newly elected Liberal government in New Brunswick to act on priority issues.

“The Liberals have said they are willing to work with the labour movement on key issues, including protecting and advancing workers’ rights – but they have been very vague,” said Lana Payne, Unifor Atlantic Regional Director.

“Unifor will be working with the NB Federation of Labour to push the new government to take real action.”

Prior to the election, the union released the results of a six-question survey and found that while there were some positive platform pledges, none of the parties went far enough in their commitments on key economic and social issues.

Unifor’s report card on the New Brunswick election was low, with only two respondents out of 1,000 rating the platform as excellent.

Move from two-tier welcome

A push by the United Auto Workers to end two-tier wages in American auto plants is a welcome move that should help Unifor improve wages and working conditions in the Canadian auto industry, Unifor National President Jerry Dias says.

“This is a positive step move from two-tier wages in American auto plants is a welcome move that should help Unifor improve wages and working conditions in the Canadian auto industry, Unifor National President Jerry Dias says.

Wynne to speak at Jobs Summit

Unifor’s Good Jobs Summit will feature an address from Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne next month.

“We’re committed to ensuring that Ontario is North America’s leader for talent, skills and training. Smart investments and strategic partnerships are key to creating good jobs and opportunities for all Ontarians.”

Lana Payne, Unifor Atlantic Regional Director.

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Here’s a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@traceyram

@JerryPDias @UniforTheUnion knows #goodjobs are possible - Time to have the conversation @GoodJobsEmplois

@Unifor88Kim

Students, labour + business(oh my)! @jessmccormick, @hassan_yussuff + Elyse Allan on #GoodJobs panel! #cfsfcee #canlab
Unifor journalist honored

Unifor member and Toronto Star journalist Jim Rankin was honored recently by the Urban Alliance on Race Relations (UARR) for his ground-breaking work for the paper looking into police relations with visible minorities.

Rankin was quick to credit his co-workers for their work, and his paper for putting resources behind important social justice stories during a difficult time for the industry.

“It’s a terrific honour, although it should be shared with the many talented colleagues I have worked with over the years to produce a number of investigations and special projects,” he said.

Rankin was one of two journalists to receive the Ashok Chandwani Media Award at the UARR’s 39th Anniversary Awards Dinner on September 18 in Toronto.

Rankin was nominated for his body of work at the Star, including stories on carding and racial profiling.

Rankin is an eight-time nominee for the National Newspaper Award (NNA), Canada’s highest journalism honour. In 2002, he led a team of reporters, editors and researchers involved in a Michener Award-winning investigative series into race, policing and crime in Toronto. Rankin has won three NNAs and a Canadian Association of Journalists award with the Star.

A native of North Bay, ON, Rankin was also recently given a star on his hometown’s Walk of Fame. He and his wife, Star reporter Michelle Shephard, have also volunteered their time travel to Africa to train reporters there.

rail talks open

Unifor has formally opened negotiations with the country’s two largest rail companies, with National President Jerry Dias saying workers must share in the industry’s growth.

“We will be looking to ensure our members share in the improvements that they had a part in creating,” said Dias, who opened both sets of negotiations.

The rail talks began with CP Rail in Calgary on Sept. 18, followed the next day with CN Rail in Montreal.

Unifor represents more than 12,000 rail workers across Canada.

coles seeks NDP nod

Dave Coles, former Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union National President and long-time environmentalist, has thrown his name into the hat, seeking the NDP nomination in the newly-created Vancouver North Island - Powell River riding.

The nomination is expected in late November.

Dave Coles was National President of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, and in that position helped negotiate the merger with the Canadian Auto Workers to create Unifor.

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Did you know?

Approximately one-third of all Canadians are considered “precariously” employed, and 20 per cent of jobs today are considered part-time – compared with 12 per cent in 1976. As well, contract jobs have increased 80 per cent since 1997 – triple the rate of growth of permanent jobs.

Unifor is dedicated to helping young workers.

Students, workers, government, employers, unions, policy makers, researchers and non-governmental organizations to discuss the economy and ways to create sustainable employment opportunities – particularly for young people.

The Summit takes place October 3-5 at the Mattamy Athletic Centre (formerly Maple Leaf Gardens), and is expected to attract more than 1,000 people. Wynne speaks Oct. 4

“Government has an essential role to play in putting the necessary programs and tools in place so that all parties can work to create good jobs – business, government and labour,” said Unifor National President Jerry Dias, who will also speak at the summit.

“We’re thrilled that Premier Kathleen Wynne recognizes the importance of this project.”

Among the other speakers will be CNN commentator Van Jones; GE President and CEO Elyse Allan; Ryerson University President Sheldon Levy; former Mayor of Toronto David Miller; Unifor Economist Jim Stanford; Globe and Mail columnist Preet Banerjee; Canadian Labour Congress President Hassan Yussuff and Canadian Federation of Students chairperson Jessica McCormick.

Ryerson will host a research symposium October 3 from 9 am to 12:30 pm.

For more information, or to register, go to goodjobssummit.ca

Unifor revealed party responses on issues that an advisory team of Unifor leaders thought were important to the province’s future and Unifor members: fracking, forestry, passenger rail, women’s reproductive rights, child care and labour rights.

“We are also very concerned about women’s lack of reproductive freedom in New Brunswick,” said Payne. “One of the new government’s first decisions must be to remove legislative restrictions on abortion.”

To read the complete Report Card, with responses from the Liberals, the NDP and the Progressive Conservatives, visit www.unifor.org.

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Unifor calls for government action on Rana Plaza

More than 16 months have passed since 1,134 workers were killed and more than 2,500 were injured in the collapse of Rana Plaza, a garment factory in Bangladesh. Unifor, along with 50 human rights and social justice organizations, has released an open letter calling on the Canadian government to publicly urge companies who source apparel from factories in Bangladesh to contribute to a trust fund for the victims and their families.

To date, only half of the $40 million needed to provide for families facing abject poverty has been raised and only one Canadian company, Loblaw, has contributed to the fund.

“The main thing we can do as individuals is to be more aware of the products we buy,” said Randy Kitt, President of Unifor Local 79M and a member of the union’s delegation to Bangladesh. “Tell companies with your dollars and your choices that workers’ rights are not optional and that people have to come before profits.”

For more information and to take action, visit www.maquilasolidarity.org

Health and Safety conference tackles new approaches

Unifor’s first biennial Health and Safety conference took place August 22-24 at the Unifor Family Education Centre in Port Elgin.

Nearly 150 worker compensation and health and safety representatives from across Canada participated in the meeting.

The theme for this year’s conference – Partners in Prevention, No Half-Measures – put the focus on shifting the balance of power in the workplace. An emphasis was put on making connections with fellow representatives in other parts of the country and giving attendees the tools to be better advocates.

Keynote speaker Todd Conklin from Los Alamos Labs shared his work on human performance and debunking “behavior-based safety” (BBS).

According to Conklin, the BBS model blames the worker rather than responding to different variables in each workplace. He suggested that workplace accidents simply bring out the flaws in the existing health and safety regime.

Participants responded well to the approaches presented by Conklin and a good dialogue followed his remarks.

The next national conference will take place in 2016, with several regional conferences taking place in 2015.