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EDITOR’S NOTE

Welcome to the “Fight Back” edition. We hope you enjoy this third edition of Unifor’s quarterly magazine. The intent with the magazine is to take a deeper dive into the issues facing workers and how the union is responding.

For up to the minute news and information about events, bargaining, political campaigns and more, check out our unifor.org website. To automatically get links to the very latest Unifor news, follow @Unifortheunion on Twitter and Unifor Canada on Facebook.

This is your union and we want to share your stories, victories and how your activism is fighting back to defend rights, advance social justice and improve the lives of workers. Email your story ideas to communication@unifor.org and remember to stay active, be political and make a difference because we are Unifor!

Tell us your story!

Your activism and solidarity actions could fill the pages of the next magazine.

communications@unifor.org

Closing the gender wage gap must be treated as a human rights priority.

It requires real change, not just a few cents.

unifor.org/closethegap
NAFTA Talks Showcase Unifor’s Political Strength

Recently, I’ve been asked why Unifor is so engaged politically—in international trade deals such as NAFTA and the new TPP, in policy issues and campaigns at both the provincial and federal levels, and in the battle for workers to democratically decide their own union. My answer is that political activism is at the core of our union’s mandate. It’s who we are.

Our union chooses to engage in the fight to protect the rights and interests of workers in Canada and around the world, no matter who the opponent. Now, some say that it would be easier not to get involved, to keep our head down and our mouth shut. It may be easier but it wouldn’t be right and it won’t help to create a more socially justice world.

This is also why our union will continue to be a progressive force.

Unifor has been and will continue to be a vocal presence during every round of the NAFTA talks demanding a fix to the fundamental flaws. NAFTA has been a failure, and it must work for all workers, so we are advocating for stronger labour rights and the protection of good paying manufacturing jobs. Time and time again, we brought our key issues to the politicians, the negotiators, and the media and our voice is being heard.

In Washington we criticized so-called “right-to-work” states for union busting. In Mexico we slammed both the government and the “yellow unions” for suppressing basic rights and keeping wages down. In Montreal we called out the government for undercutting Canada’s negotiating power by signing the new Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) while NAFTA was still being negotiated. Now our opposition to the CPTPP will move to the political front as we continue our fight to ensure that the current deal is never ratified.

This year we will also undertake key political battles in elections in Ontario, New Brunswick and Quebec. We have witnessed the results of the shift to conservatism, both internationally and here at home, as the rise of right-wing populism has led to the claw-back of gains achieved by working people. This is why more than ever Unifor members continue the on-the-ground activism to elect candidates and governments with progressive values.

It is because of our belief in those same values that Unifor made the difficult decision to disaffiliate from the Canadian Labour Congress. I do not want to paint all American unions with the same brush; many respect the autonomy of their Canadian membership. My quarrel is with those unions that place locals into trusteeship to quell dissent and seize Canadian assets and property to be liquidated with proceeds sent to American headquarters. This is what the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) did to our current members in Vancouver. The threat is clear. After repeated calls to the CLC to take action were ignored, Unifor took a stand against this injustice.

We cannot mistake solidarity with complicity. There is no doubt it would have been easier to take no action but as a politically active union we must hold ourselves and fellow unionists accountable. To this end we will continue to mobilize, to campaign, to rally, and to engage politically as we continue to fight for our beliefs and to build a better society for all.

Jerry Dias
National President

“It would have been easier to take no action but as a politically active union we must hold ourselves and fellow unionists accountable.”
Collective Activism Works

Since the formation of Unifor in 2013, the need for labour activism has increased to meet the dynamics of a changing country and world.

We’ve proven since Unifor was formed that we are ready to fight at the bargaining table and in the social arena. Ready to fight locally to shape the future of our communities, and internationally with our allies. Unifor strongly believes in international solidarity and we stand together with international labour bodies in support of workers’ rights and social justice.

“We fight to influence governments to enhance equity and human rights.”

Much of our activity is focused on bargaining collective agreements, fighting for job improvements and protecting workers from the unfair actions of corporations.

We remain active in the political arena, focused on fighting for fair trade deals.

Our union has been the leading voice in calling for fair trade and increasing labour standards globally. We are active in election campaigns, fighting to elect parties whose agendas will include progress for working class Canadians. We fight to influence governments to enhance equity and human rights. We advocate for pharmacare. We fight for laws that include protecting pensions and move workers to the front of the line in cases of bankruptcy. Our fight protects the interest of all Canadians to have a free and democratic voice in their union.

There are many issues that labour should be working together on; unfortunately this is not always the case. We have witnessed international unions spending some energy trying to restrict the rights of their Canadian members.

Unifor is in full support of the Unite Here Local 75 members seeking their autonomy. As a former UAW member I experienced similar conduct by our International in 1985 and was in full support of forming the CAW. Today, I still believe that workers have more control over their working lives and enjoy greater democracy to express themselves as members of a Canadian union.

This doesn’t mean that Unifor is out to liberate everyone from an international union, but it does mean that the principle of workers choosing their own destiny and leaders without fear of reprisal is fundamental. Unifor has always been clear on that—Canadian union members have a right to self-determination and to democratically elect their own representation. An international union has no legal right to strip democratically elected representatives of their position or take over Canadian union offices and impair the ability of Canadians to represent Canadian members.

Our union is the product of more than 80 mergers, which speaks loudly of our commitment to democracy. When some write or speak about this as something that has occurred suddenly, you have to wonder where they have been for the past 35 years.

I want to end by saying that all of the issues I’ve mentioned require activism and mobilization. Something that Unifor excels at. Our rank and file members, leadership, their families, our social partners, union staff and NEB all contribute to the fight. Together we are making a difference in the lives of our members and in our communities, for that I thank you.

Activism matters and solidarity matters. Let’s all continue to strive for a better tomorrow.
Unifor will be Heard During the Quebec Election

When we founded Unifor, our aim was to make a difference. Now, five years later, I believe that we can say that we are well on our way to achieving that goal. But the question we must now ask ourselves is: Can we do better? I believe that the answer to that question is also yes.

Fundamentally, it is the vitality of our local unions that will always make the biggest difference. Our vitality comes from action and engagement, and it is synonymous with members involvement in the union’s work, different activities and structures that all contribute to Unifor’s impact in our members’ communities. As leaders we are committed to keeping rank and file members informed about the union’s work and the demands we defend.

These things are all the more important given that this is an election year in Quebec, with a federal election just around the corner. If our aim is to stand united and influence current and future elected officials, we need to get down to work. And that is precisely what we began to do at the Quebec Council, held in the fall of 2017, during which we organized workshops aimed at compiling a list of our members’ demands in anticipation of the election in Quebec.

With the support of the Political Action Committee, we will form teams of members in about 10 regions. Based on a general platform, these teams will be tasked with building the union’s list of demands according to their regional priorities. The work that will follow will be key, as it will be the role of members and activists at the rank and file level to reach out to the different political parties and candidates in their area.

At the same time, these activities will also foster the participation of local unions across Quebec, since the regional teams will engage with locals over the coming months. This will offer an opportunity for members who are passionate about politics to participate in activities organized by Unifor.

There are several major issues at the centre of this platform, but the most important one by far concerns the improvement of the living and working conditions of the population at large, notably by improving labour standards, strengthening health and safety legislation, enhancing the public pension plan, better provisions in the area of unionization and adding more teeth for anti-scab legislation, along with demanding massive investment in public services and improvements in life-long training. Our demands also touch on other areas, such as the job security, measures to ensure a more just and equal society, environmental protection and better tools for protecting the French language.

This is a wide-ranging platform and it will be adjusted in accordance with the specific concerns expressed by our local unions and members. You can follow us at uniforquebec.org/election2018.

It’s up to all of us to make a difference!
Unifor invests significant time and resources training activists to strengthen our rank-and-file power. One important tactic to affect change is being active in the parliamentary political system.

It has been nearly three years since Premier Rachel Notley swept to power in Alberta. Her government has made terrific progress in beginning to undo decades of neglect for workers’ rights, including the first meaningful renewal of the labour code and employment standards in 30 years.

The Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act gave greater powers to officials who are enforcing employment standards and strengthens options for joining a union. Leave provisions for Albertans who are sick, caring for a family member, or fleeing domestic violence were also strengthened.

Alberta’s new Occupational Health and Safety laws allow workers to identify and take action on hazards seen in workplaces and the changes bring a more robust “right to refuse” to give workers the right to say ‘no, I won’t do that’ because it is dangerous. By empowering workers, this legislation will help save lives.

In British Columbia, NDP Premier John Horgan has also taken bold steps to begin setting the province on a path towards greater income equality. Horgan has convened an expert panel to determine when, not if, B.C. will join Alberta in establishing a $15 minimum hourly wage. Investing in childcare and eliminating fees such as health care premiums implemented by the B.C. Liberals is also high on the government’s agenda.

Together we can continue to build an active and effective union by making sure our progressive voice is heard loudly in political debates at all levels of society.

As Ontario’s political fate is about to be determined, the true nature of the Progressive Conservative party has been revealed. The first leader Patrick Brown resigned amid allegations of sexual abuse of young women, then PC party President Rick Dykstra quit following the reveal of sexual harassment complaints that date back to the last election.

As these accusations came to light, there were immediate reports that many in the party were aware of the allegations, yet they continued to pledge support. This shocking, yet sadly not surprising revelation is clearly indicative
ATLANTIC:
Building solidarity and why politics matters

LANA PAYNE
Atlantic Regional Director

I have been giving a lot of thought to solidarity lately, how it gets built and how Unifor local activists and leaders across the region give me hope that we can get it right and build it bigger and stronger.

I have witnessed solidarity at its finest, and I have unfortunately also seen how paper-thin it can be. We can learn from both.

How forestry workers from New Brunswick joined with their sisters and brothers from Nova Scotia facing imposed wage freezes from Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil may seem like a simple gesture of solidarity, but that single act sent the very big message that solidarity is something we build, every single day.

Solidarity is built when we organize and mobilize around the things that matter.

This fall there will be an election in New Brunswick and there is an opportunity to further advance the needs of workers. Already from Unifor’s collective work, we have seen advances. The government has introduced first contract law, proposed regulations to prevent workplace violence, affordable child care, and protected leave for victims of domestic and sexual violence.

The progress must continue. Together we can play a big role in making that happen.

of a culture of misogyny within the ranks of the Ontario PC party.

It is exactly this type of culture that the #MeToo movement has shone a light on. Thanks to the brave women who came forward to share their experiences, a true shift has occurred in the political world.

However, as we move forward we continue to face familiar obstacles in Ontario’s political arena. In terms of policy and agenda the sheep’s clothing was torn from the wolf as the far-right element of the PC Ontario party rally to Doug Ford’s cry. The truth is that regardless of which Conservative name is on the ballot, the party has been revealed for what it is.

Now it is more important than ever to unite to stop the PCs from grasping control. Gains that took years to achieve, including the $15 minimum wage, increased employment standards and free pharmacare for those under 25, could easily be undone with a PC victory.

We must all stand up and take action, find out how at uniforvotes.ca.
The truth about medication costs

+ 3.5 million Canadians can’t afford their medication.

+ Canada has the second most expensive prescription costs in the world

+ About 8.4 million working people and their families have no drug coverage

+ 374,000 Canadians use extra health-care services because their medication is unaffordable

+ If governments introduced universal pharmacare, it would save almost $7 billion a year
It’s time for universal pharmacare

ACT NOW!

If governments introduced universal pharmacare it would save almost $7 billion a year
Shauna Wilcox was reconciling her local union’s bank statement when her phone beeped. Unifor’s National Executive Board (NEB) was calling an emergency meeting to discuss the union’s relationship with the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC).

The acute care worker and secretary-treasurer of Local 4600 in Sydney had been elected to represent health care workers and she attended her second NEB meeting, not knowing her union was about to make headlines across Canada.

For more than a year, Unifor had raised concerns over how the CLC constitution was applied to workers who wanted to change unions, and these concerns had been discussed at length during previous NEB meetings.

“When we reviewed the recent history of disappointments at the CLC, it became obvious that we needed to take action. It wasn’t an easy decision, but we were left without much of a choice if things were going to change,” said Wilcox.

Unifor’s NEB, which is the union’s top decision making body between conventions, voted unanimously to disaffiliate from the CLC. The direction was taken as a result of persistent inaction from the CLC to deal with a problem infecting our movement - it’s about upholding democracy, union autonomy and protecting rights.

“Our union expressed frustration to the CLC and its affiliates about the broken-system in the CLC constitution, more times than I care to count,” said Jerry Dias, National President. “We knew there would be fallout and we knew it would upset friendships, but we had to take a stand.”

Wilcox said she voted in favour of disaffiliation, knowing she would likely be asked to step down as financial secretary for the Cape Breton District Labour Council.

The CLC President ordered all Unifor activists to be removed, deciding to enforce the part of its constitution that requires unions to be nationally affiliated with the CLC before participating in provincial federations and community labour councils. It’s worth noting that the CLC is happy to ignore a similar constitutional requirement for nationally-affiliated unions to be members of provincial federations and labour councils.

The lack of application and consistency in implementing the CLC constitution is why the CLC needs to be fixed.

The fact is, the CLC has rules in place in under Article 4 to ensure workers have democratic rights, and that Canadian members of U.S. unions have clear autonomy, but those rules are unevenly enforced. Article 4 of the CLC constitution is supposed to allow workers to choose who represents them, including changing unions. The problem is application and the constitution does not address the aggressive and undemocratic tactics of unions forcing locals into trusteeship for expressing dissent.

Such is the case with UNITE HERE Local 75 in Toronto, where the American parent union removed Canadian elected officers and took over the local, the office and assets in January.

“When a Canadian local of an American union wants to change unions, the response cannot be to seize assets, fire staff and force trusteeship against the will of the members,” said Dias.

It was time to take a stand.

Those who attended Unifor’s founding convention remember it was created to build a better labour movement.

With the full and unequivocal support of Unifor’s top officers, including rank and file members on the NEB, it was time to not just...
Why We Need to Fix the Canadian Labour Congress

Understanding one of the most difficult decisions your union has ever made

Provincial and municipal elections are great opportunities for Unifor members to influence local history and act on the issues that matter.

“The recent B.C. and N.S. elections showed the direct effect that our union can have in provincial politics,” said Roland Kiehne, Director of Political Action. “In 2017 Unifor members played an instrumental role in unseating Christy Clark’s B.C. Liberals and left Stephen McNeil with a precarious, one-seat majority.”

The experience was rewarding for members who worked on local campaigns, and had thousands of conversations to win votes for progressive candidates.

According to Jessica Dauphinee, member of Unifor Local 4606, electoral politics matters. “Politics impacts our daily lives, our jobs and our future and we can make the progressive change that our union fights for.”

Election campaigns offer many roles that members can take on. At every level of a campaign members are needed to hand out flyers, put up signs or knock on doors. It is a fun way to learn and grow as a trade unionist and connect with other activists.

“During every campaign, you build on the work that you’ve done before. In the fair wage campaign currently being organized in B.C., I called on people who volunteered for the first time in the provincial election,” said Krista Lee Munro, member of Unifor Local 111. “We made a difference in choosing the next government, and after the polls closed we continue to build the labour movement together.”

There are several provincial elections in 2018 starting with Ontario in June and then New Brunswick and Quebec.

It’s Election Time

Volunteering makes a difference

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Municipal elections will be held in the fall in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and P.E.I.

Organizing starts today.
To get involved visit uniforvotes.ca today.
Fighting For Fair Wages
Important progress for precarious jobs

Workers in Canada have fought for and won significant gains for decent work this last year and Unifor was at the centre of it.

Just one example of success is the $15 and Fairness campaign in Ontario where Unifor activists played a big part.

Last November workers won a long-overdue series of changes to improve employment standards in Ontario. On January 1, the hourly minimum wage was increased to $14 per hour, and it will go up again to $15 in 2019.

For the more than 20,000 Unifor members working in retail, these improvements are long overdue.

It’s a big win for poorly paid retail workers who work erratic schedules, and are often involuntarily part-time.

But the gains did not happen overnight. Like all improvements for working people, it took a lot of work, persistence and collective action. In January of 2015, when the Ontario Liberal government began reviewing minimum work standards, unions collectively launched a fight back and joined the Fight for $15 & Fairness campaign.

Unifor took part in both the legislative fight for decent work and the $15 campaign. Although changes focused primarily on non-unionized workers, the union was involved because the fight for decent work and good jobs is at the corner-stone of Unifor’s founding purpose. Every person of working age has a right to a good job.

Naureen Rizvi, the Ontario Regional Director, said it was about improving the lives of all workers, and solidarity won the day.

Although celebrations are in order for Ontario workers, there is a glaring minimum wage discrepancy between provinces. Nova Scotia was dead last until it announced a 15 cent hike in February, bringing the minimum hourly rate to $11 per hour. This small change put Saskatchewan workers at the bottom, where the minimum wage is $10.96, the lowest in Canada.

But there are hopeful signs for low-wage workers elsewhere. Albertans will make $15 per hour starting on October 1, 2018. British Columbians are stuck at $11.35 now, but it jumps to $12.65 starting June 1, 2018, and yearly increases were announced in February that will bring the minimum wage to $15.20 by 2021.

Coinciding with political action work, Unifor has also made gains at the bargaining table. In 2015, for instance, the union successfully negotiated an automatic pay adjustment in the event of an increase to the provincial minimum wage. This happened at Servantage, a building cleaning service in B.C., and at several grocery stores that Unifor represents in Ontario. Part-time workers were also guaranteed an increase in the number of hours per year, as well as additional days of notice on scheduling.

While these gains are important, the fight for decent work and a $15 wage is far from over. Companies, like some Tim Horton’s franchises seek to claw back benefits to workers to offset these gains. But in response there has also been a huge public backlash and widespread support for workers.

The rising anger towards billionaire employers who put their profit margins ahead of decency should give us hope. The task for the union is to translate that hope in to action and that requires a continued fight back, solidarity and Unifor action.

Minimum wage as of April 2018

Unifor members in Toronto show solidarity for $15 and fairness.
The online outpouring of women’s experiences of trauma, sexual harassment and assault, under the social media hashtag of #MeToo last year has provoked a deeper conversation about how sexism and misogyny harms women. This awareness has called starkly into question what should be done.

In the days and weeks since #MeToo resurfaced in 2017, the discussion also morphed into #TimesUp as women’s anger and outrage gave way to determination to create a better future by fighting sexual harassment and gender inequality.

“The #MeToo conversations allowed some women to re-examine interactions and events that have happened in their lives, through a different lens and recognize that what happened was really not okay,” said Unifor Women’s Director Lisa Kelly.

In January, millions of women around the world took to the streets once again, on the one-year anniversary of the global Women’s March and the inauguration of Donald Trump. Unifor members turned out in big numbers at rallies and marches across the country.

At the same time, here and across the border, women have come forward about male politicians who have abused their positions of power to harass and assault women. In a single week in January, three Canadian politicians—two provincial Progressive Conservative Party leaders and one federal minister—resigned after accusations of sexual assault and harassment came to light.

A cultural shift and understanding about harassment and the treatment of women is taking place and this is an important moment for all of us to advance women’s inequality. Unifor activists have been deeply committed to re-enforcing this shift by taking part in public actions, online dialogues and making it a priority topic at union events and at the negotiating table.

“We now must work to ensure this is a permanent cultural shift so that interactions between people of all genders are characterized by equality and respect,” said Kelly.

Conversations also open the door to thinking about other social and political inequities between women and men, including gender expectations, access to decent work, fair wages, affordable housing and laws that actually address women’s realities, particularly as mothers and those who are still doing a disproportionate amount of the domestic and caregiving work.

Resistance over the last year has led to tangible gains. Unifor has lead the fight for paid domestic violence leave in several provinces, Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario and soon to be New Brunswick. The union has increasingly negotiated this paid leave in several collective agreements. All of this work is in conjunction with Unifor’s ground-breaking women’s advocate program. There are currently 350 advocates in workplaces across the country with the program. A women’s advocate is a specially trained workplace representative who assists women with concerns such as workplace harassment, intimate violence and abuse.

**Here is what your local can negotiate to stop sexual harassment at work:**

1. Anti-harassment language
2. Respectful workplace training
3. A joint-investigation committee for sexual harassment and assault.
4. A women’s advocate in every workplace

For more information, please visit: [unifor.org/women](http://unifor.org/women)
WOMEN

Wear Red For Equal Pay Day!

On April 10 Unifor will mark Equal Pay Day. This date represents the fact that on average, women must work more than 15 months to earn what men earned in 12 months. The gap in wages is even wider for racialized women, women with disabilities, and Indigenous women. The day, which fluctuates each year based on average earnings, is officially marked by some governments, like Ontario’s, and Unifor is pushing for recognition in other jurisdictions.

Members are encouraged to send a united message about income inequality by wearing red because “in the red”, in accounting refers to not having enough revenue to meet expenses. On Equal Pay Day wearing red also symbolizes that women are “in the red” due to the under valuing of their work and often being stuck in precarious jobs.

Along with participating in the red day of action, members can become change makers by adding their voice to this important issue. Here are three ways to close the gap:

1. Contact your provincial and federal representatives and ask that meaningful actions be taken to finally end the gender wage gap, such as funding for universal childcare, increasing the minimum wage, and legislating paid domestic violence leave.

2. Review your collective agreement and make maternity top-up and parental leave a bargaining priority. Studies show that women slide backwards economically when they become a parent, more so than men. A top up can help level the playing field.

3. Get involved, visit unifor.org/closethegap.

EDUCATION

Local union leaders, education committees, discussion leaders and education activists

Come to the upcoming Education Conference: Truth, Reconciliation and Education

May 11-13, in Port Elgin, Ontario

keynote speakers

interactive workshops

solidarity building
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Hotel Workers Join Unifor

Roberto Perez, new member from the Marriott Bloor Yorkville in Toronto.

When hotel workers came calling earlier this year with a desire to leave their heavy-handed U.S. based union, Unifor answered the call. Members of Local 75 of the American UNITE HERE asked to join Unifor after the U.S. parent sought to control the Canadian local union and proved it was out of touch with the democratic rights of workers. UNITE HERE took over its Toronto local and appointed a trustee. After it seized the local’s assets and fired elected leadership, the workers had enough.

At the end of January many of the UNITE HERE workplaces were in what is known as an open period. This is where the collective agreements are set to expire and the workers can choose another union without losing their collective agreement or bargaining rights. “When given the choice, these workers have sent a clear signal that they want to be members of a union that listens to their concerns and treats them with respect,” said Unifor National President Jerry Dias. “I am humbled that they have chosen Unifor.”

Unifor worked with local 75 leaders and members to hold votes at 13 hotels across Toronto and Mississauga. It was an intense campaign given the timeline, but the union drew on resources across departments and the membership, making it a truly Unifor-wide campaign. In the end, hundreds of hotel workers became members of the newly formed Unifor Local 7575 and joined the 19,000 workers in the hospitality and gaming industry that Unifor represents.

| PENSIONS |

Unifor’s First Pension Summit

The first ever Unifor Pension Summit will be held at Port Elgin, May 4 to 6. This invitational conference will bring together some of the brightest minds to collectively tackle the challenges workers face in the struggle for secure and adequate pensions.

Delegates will include key sector and industry council leaders, pension trustees, pension representatives along with Unifor retirees executive. These experts and activists will undertake a critical review of the issues and will work to enhance our common vision for the role of Unifor in securing fair retirement benefits for all our members.

The goal of the summit is to develop a blueprint and refine the union’s foundation to negotiating better pensions for Unifor members. With political changes and corporate approaches seeking to drive pensions downward the union will examine current pension board structures and approaches in bargaining.

The Pension and Benefits Department is proud to announce that the keynote conference speaker is Elizabeth Shilton, a Queen’s University senior fellow at the centre for Law in the Contemporary Workplace. Shilton brings extensive experience as a union-side labour lawyer and she has appeared before tribunals and courts, including the Supreme Court of Canada, in significant employment and equality rights cases. Her research on pension reform explores gender inequality in Canada’s current retirement income system and the role played by law and legal institutions in constructing and reinforcing that inequality.

The Pensions and Benefits Department is an instrumental part of Unifor to safeguard and improve Canada’s social safety net for all workers.

To learn more email pensionsandbenefits@unifor.org.