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Strategic Planning For 2014 Negotiations



Chair people, local union leadership and national staff representatives from long-term care homes across Ontario met in Toronto October 28 and 29 to plan strategy for upcoming negotiations in 2014. Research presentations included a provincial economic overview, and a review of bargaining achievements and existing economic patterns.

Unifor Assistant to the President Deb Tveit stressed the importance of preparations for these meetings. "Within our structure it is always the elected workplace bargaining committee that makes decisions at the table, and at these meetings we provide them the tools they need to do that effectively."

Meetings for the hospital sector leadership are scheduled for December 9 and 10, and will include a similar agenda. Tveit adds, "It's a priority for our union to clearly identify what we've done, and what our goals are going forward."

Ontario Regional Director, Katha Fortier recognized the value of these meetings, to not only set a

worker-focused agenda, but to make critical decisions about master negotiations. "Our union gives every bargaining unit the decision to opt in or out of a master process, but what is even more important, if they choose to participate at a central table, every single unit has workplace leadership represented there. This is something that sets our union apart, and the reason so many of us chose this union 13 years ago."

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Local 302 leadership meeting a success

120 workplace leaders from local 302 meet in London October 24th for an opportunity to review the roles and responsibilities of workplace committees and discuss changes as we transition to Unifor.

Local 302 President, and NEB member Nancy McMurphy recognized the amount of work and time invested by chairpeople in representing their membership. "We announced that each chairperson will be provided with one paid day every quarter to hold membership meetings and deal with workplace concerns."

Deb Tveit, Assistant to the National President, brought greetings from the national and spoke to the delegates about our new Union and the upcoming bargaining in the health care sector. "Unifor workplace leaders always have the respect of their members, and will always direct the strategy of our negotiations."

The meeting also included a presentation on defending the Rand formula, which is under attack by conservatives both federally and provincially, as well as an overview of the required steps in filing a grievance or a WSIB claim, and information on the new percentage-based dues structure that will provide a truer assessment for part-time workers.

Registered Practical Nurses Forum

RPN's, along with their local and national representatives met in Toronto October 1 and 2 for an opportunity to discuss issues unique to their practice, including challenges and successes, utilization, and practice concerns.

RPN and Local 2458 chairperson from Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor, Scott Fazekas appreciated the opportunity to communicate with peers on trends within other hospitals. "We learned that at Grand River Hospital in Kitchener, the workplace committee has been successful in utilizing RPN's in almost every single department, including the ER and the OR. We also had a chance to discuss the implementation of the professional practice workload concern form that we negotiated at our master bargaining last year."

NEB member and President of Unifor Local 302 Nancy McMurphy recognized the importance of developing a communication structure for practical nurses. "Our union will provide them with the assistance they need to continued dialogue into the future."

Local 302 reaches pay equity settlement at Strathmere Lodge

Members of Local 302 at Strathmere Lodge will receive pay equity adjustments as high as \$2.14 per hour as the result of a recently negotiated pay equity agreement.

Unifor Local 302 President and NEB member, Nancy McMurphy reports that most female job classifications were entitled to at least some adjustment. "The largest adjustment went to registered practical nurses who were compared to the mechanic classification. Overall the internal Unifor committee did excellent work to ensure that traditional women's classifications received the equal pay due to them under the Pay Equity legislation."

SAFER (Staffing Alliance for Every Resident)

Unifor has joined the SAFER coalition to lobby the provincial government for an evidence based, minimum, measurable, enforceable standard of care in our nursing homes.

Ontario Regional Director, Katha Fortier notes that what is unusual about this coalition is the presence of Extencare and their President Paul Tuttle. "This is the first time that a for-profit operator in Canada taken the position that minimum standards are required to meet the needs of the vulnerable patients in our nursing homes. The reality is that many users of long term care resources are frailer and have a significantly greater mix of mental health issues; Dementia being the most prevalent, while others are younger and stronger with cognitive impairments."

SAFER met with the Minister of Health and Long Term Care on October 30th. Fortier says that Minister Mathews claimed that they are currently providing 3.4 hours of care per day, but sadly we know this is not the case. "We know there are no checks and balances on what a provider says they provide, (or even if they provide it) and they can easily add non-care related (management) hours, and include all paid hours versus direct hours."

SAFER will be meeting on November 11th to discuss our next steps. Up until this point, the coalition has waited until they had a response from the Minister before expanding the coalition partners and taking the campaign public.

National Pharmacare; the dialogue continues

A web site designed to foster dialogue about pharmacare in Canada, www.pharmacare2020.ca has continued the discussion started at the Canadian Health coalitions' conference this past May, supporting universal pharmacare.

Canada is the only country in the world that has universal health care that does not include pharmacare, and evidence shows that either individually or with group coverage, we are grossly overpaying drug costs, reports Unifor Assistant to the President, Deb Tveit. "At least one in ten Canadians cannot afford to fill prescription medications, resulting in higher use of other services - generally adding avoidable and higher hospital costs."

Everyone is encouraged to visit this web site for valuable information and details on the benefits a national pharmacare plan could have for every Canadian.

Ontario Health Coalition Assembly and Conference

This year's OHC assembly and conference will be held at the Sheraton Centre in Toronto on November 23 and 24, and will feature several significant health advocates including Unifor's own Jim Stanford who will be speaking and providing a critical analysis of the Ontario fiscal situation and public policy responses.

For further details and registration visit the OHC web site <http://www.web.net/ohc/> or contact your local union office.



Local 8300 Annual General Membership Meeting

Unifor Local 8300 held their Annual General Membership meeting in Kingston on October 16, bringing together over 65 unit chairs, stewards and women's advocates, as well as Unifor Local 8300 executive board. Included in the meeting was newest unit Kingston Interval House, who reported that the shelter is going through a financial hardship and our members who work at this unit were bringing in food from home to help feed the women and their children at the shelter. A collection was taken and the leadership in attendance generously donated to the shelter to which the local added \$1000.00.

Guest speaker was Unifor Ontario Director Katha Fortier, who spoke on our new union and the direction of Unifor and the future.

Local 2458 partners with Windsor Health Coalition to fight privatization

A door-to-door, face-to-face campaign is always a huge undertaking, but both Unifor Local 2458 and the health coalition are up for the challenge. The concern is a proposal from the Ontario government to license private clinics to act as community health providers with direct funding from the LHIN.

"This represents a major shift in public policy that will jeopardize our public hospitals and the services they provide" notes Unifor Local 2458 President Bruce Dickie. "The threat of losing good hospital jobs to the for-profit sector is real, and won't necessarily result in savings; evidence shows that clinic owners do extraordinarily well, but the health care workers who staff them generally have no benefits or pension plan, and earn far less."

Coalition Secretary Treasurer and Financial Secretary of Local 2458 Tullio DiPonti invites all Unifor members and any other concerned citizens to attend their regular meetings. "Anyone who cares about preserving public, not-for-profit hospitals should be here."

The next coalition meeting will be held on Saturday November 16, 2013. Contact co-chair Richard Laverty for details at Richard.laverty@unifor.org or watch for meeting postings in your workplace.

Local 2458 welcomes new members at Hotel Dieu Grace Hospital

Two new bargaining units at HDGH voted over-whelmingly to join Unifor Local 2458 in June of this year. Represented in the new units are pharmacists, physiotherapists, speech therapists and occupational therapists.

Financial Secretary of Local 2458 notes that these members did their homework and chose the union they felt would best represent their interests with the pending restructuring to both local hospitals. "Technically they are now employees of Windsor Regional Hospital and will be involved in a vote later this month, as required by the legislation that governs amalgamation of services. They've given us every indication that they intend to stay with Unifor, a union that has a proven track record of representation in both city hospitals."

Voting will take place on November 20 and 21 at all three hospital sites. Details can be found in other documents distributed by Unifor, or you can call Local 2458 at 519.254.8630.



Windsor Area Locals join the rally at Niagara-on-the-Lake to "Take a Stand for Medicare". The rally coincided with a meeting of all Provincial Premiers with the purpose of lobbying Premiers to "Tell Stephen Harper to Renew Canada's Health Accord".

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