



JERRY DIAS NATIONAL PRESIDENT • PETER KENNEDY NATIONAL SECRETARY-TREASURER • MICHEL OUMET QUEBEC DIRECTOR

Giant “Rock In” Chair Tour



Unifor members were front and centre with their coalition partners as the giant “rock in” chair toured more than twenty cities across the province in late May and early June, raising awareness about the lack of a measurable standard of care.

“The theme; making time to care in Ontario Long-term Care homes, could not be more relevant as we head into a provincial election,” says Ontario Regional Director, Katha Fortier. “Recent polling in Ontario indicates 76% of us believe that staffing levels are insufficient for proper care, and 82% believe that the government needs to invest in long-term care now.”

Director of Health Care, Corey Vermey who represents Unifor on the Ontario Health Coalition Board says that the goal of the campaign is to pressure the government to improve access to care and reduce wait times and to implement a 4 hour minimum staffing level. “This is something that our union came very close to achieving before the recession hit, and it’s not out of our reach, especially with the overwhelming public support.”

Unifor members are encouraged to ask local candidates about their commitment to long-term care, and their position on a minimum standard.



Grand River Hospital Includes Peer Navigators in the Bargaining Unit

In late 2012, Grand River Hospital posted four full-time, non-union positions for peer navigators. Local 1106 filed grievances, and were successful in having all four positions included in the bargaining unit.

“This is an incredible victory for our union” reports Chairperson and RPN Sandra Hillcoat. “The hospital will be posting more jobs in this classification, and it is an excellent opportunity for members of our bargaining unit to find new challenges.”

Peer navigators work with patients in mental health, to help them find their voice and express their challenges, as well as assist other staff to better understand their patients. Peer navigators have had personal experience with mental health. The classification is compensated at a rate of \$31.27 per hour.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Paramedic Services Week
- International Care Research Conference
- 2014 Health Care Conference Report
- Caressant Care Rally

Unifor Marks Paramedic Services Week With Call to Revive PTSD Bill

Paramedics, as emergency medical services (EMS)

personnel, bring tremendous dedication, skill and commitment to their jobs as first responders, Unifor says, and during Paramedic Services Week, called for strong legislation to help them cope with an often traumatic job.

“We rely on paramedics in times of great need,” said Jerry Dias, National President of Unifor, which represents hundreds of air and land paramedics across Ontario. “They are there for us, so we must be there for them.”

Dias noted that as first responders, paramedics are on the front lines of emergency health response, and are often witnesses to horrific and traumatic circumstances. Dias called on all political parties in the current Ontario election commit to swift passage of Bill 67, a private member’s bill to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act regarding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for paramedics.

The bill, sponsored by Parkdale-High Park NDP MPP Cheri DiNovo, passed second reading February 27 with all-party support, but died when the June 12 election was called. Bill 67 proposed that if first responders such as police, fire fighters and paramedics suffer PTSD, the disorder would be presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to

the employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary was shown to be the case.

Unifor also called on all parties to support consistent and equitable early access to retirement pension benefits for paramedics as is now provided to other emergency first responders such as police officers and fire fighters. “Paramedics are as deserving as other first responders and public safety personnel as they are also often called to the same horrific scenes,” Dias said.

The cumulative impact of decades of emergency first response service and repeated experience of horrific and traumatic situations has led to few paramedics being able to endure the physical or emotional demands of paramedicine until age 65.

During Paramedic Services Week, held May 25 to 31 this year, and at all times, Unifor recognizes the often dangerous situations faced by first responders and remains committed to ensuring safe conditions of employment. We honour and remember the crew of Ornge Flight 7793 who were killed during the line of duty on May 31st 2013. Unifor paramedics Dustin Dagenais and Christopher Snowball, Captain Don Filliter and First Officer Jacques Dupuy.

International Care Research Conference

Assistant to the President Deb Tveit and Director of

Health Care, Corey Vermey attended the International Care Research Conference held in Bergen, Norway on May 14th, 2014 in conjunction with the MCRI: Re-Imaging Long-Term Residential Care conference and Annual Team Meeting on May 15-16, 2014.

The project is led by York University researchers such as Pat Armstrong and Tamara Daly for a multi-national (US, Germany, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark and Canada) and interdisciplinary research team involving multiple universities and community partners, including Unifor.

Tveit noted that we have been participating at the annual conferences with the research project, although

the conference is typically held in Ontario. “The Pulse readers may remember the work by the researchers around violence against staff in LTC and how exceptional or unusual that was in Nordic countries compared to North America. The annual MCRI conference was largely a report back and sharing of the various teams that did site visits at LTC homes in various countries.”

Vermey explains the MCRI is a group of progressive allies seeking promising alternatives to the growing dominant form of private investor-owned long-term care. “Our Nordic neighbours are increasingly needing to also push back against for-profit privatized long-term care, especially in urban centres in Sweden.”

2014 Health Care Conference Report

180 delegates, staff and guests attended the 2014 Unifor Health Care Conference in Halifax May 23 to 25. The conference theme, “Defending our Rights; Standing up for Medicare” was reflected by several speakers, including the key note address given by author and former senior US health insurance executive, Wendell Potter.

Potter told the delegates that he experienced a crisis of conscience after he found he could no longer abide the routine industry practices where the needs of sick and suffering Americans take a back seat to the bottom line. “Part of my job included misleading people on the Canadian health care system and propagating the myth that it was run by ‘death panels’ when in many cases, US insurance companies decide who lives and who dies.”

Potter, pictured on the right with Atlantic Regional Director, Lana Payne and Ontario Regional Director, Katha Fortier, told the delegates that they have a great system that they need to defend.



Health Care Conference Review

Just wanted to let you know that, once again, you outdid yourselves. Beautiful city. Lovely venue. Excellent speakers. Understandable speakers. The facts and stories they presented made me able to go back to my members and explain about the Health Accord being the glue that kept our public healthcare system together. That it made it accessible, equitable, affordable — it is the great equalizer. That without it we will be mirroring the corporate world — 1% can afford it, the rest will have to struggle to attain medical assistance.

As evidenced by the facts and stories of privatization that the Haivens, Wendell Potter and Sean Meager presented, we do have barbarians waiting at the gate. Your cross section of economist, doctors, scientist and private interests back the need for public healthcare. They all presented different pieces to make the whole picture come together so we could see what was happening and what we have to do to try to stop it. First step is at home and work then moving out into the community. Thank you very much for allowing me this opportunity to learn.

In solidarity, Janet Bailey, Unifor Local 229

A reminder that conference reviews can be sent to healthcare@unifor.org



Caressant Care Rally Thursday

Workers at Caressant Care Nursing Homes in southwestern Ontario held a rally May 29th at their employers head office in Woodstock to make the public aware of their concerns in contract talks with the chain of homes.

"These people care for our parents and grandparents in their time of need. They deserve to be treated decently," said Jerry Dias, National President of Unifor, who spoke at the rally to more than 200 in attendance.

Unifor represents about 360 registered practical nurses, personal support workers, housekeeping and laundry aides and activities personnel at Caressant Care homes in Courtland, Woodstock, Harriston and St. Thomas. All are currently in contract talks, except St Thomas. The contract there expires in September. The company has told the workers it will not agree to a pay raise during the life of the next contract. Their last contract, imposed by an arbitrator, also contained no wage improvements.

"These workers have not had a raise in three years, and almost all of them are part time," said Robert Buchanan, a Unifor National Representative. "It is not only difficult to survive on part-time hours, but tough to build a relationship with the residents to better understand their unique needs."

Assistant to the President, Deb Tveit says that as we head into negotiations in the nursing home sector this summer and fall, we can likely expect more employers to take this position. "Those employers can expect to see job actions and fight back from our union in support of our members, who have gone far too long without a wage increase."

Where Can I Find the Pulse?

The Pulse newsletter, published every two months is sent to any local unions that request copies. It is always available on the Unifor web site; www.unifor.org then click on "What's New", and then click on "Newsletters". Scroll down till you find The Pulse.

Local unions and unit chairs can order copies delivered directly to them by emailing the request to healthcare@unifor.org

Director Of Health Care Appointed

National President Jerry Dias appointed Pension and Benefits Representative Corey Vermey as Director of Health Care last week, replacing Katha Fortier who was elected Ontario Regional Director at the Unifor founding convention.

Fortier says that Vermey has worked with the health care sector extensively over the years, providing assistance with negotiations and arbitrations. "But also critical, Corey has proven his commitment to public health care as a long standing board member of the Ontario Health Coalition, and an activist on so many fronts; our health care local unions know Corey well and could not be happier about his appointment."

In addition to his role of Director, Vermey will maintain some responsibilities in the Pension and Benefits Department.

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UNIFOR
theUnion | lesyndicat

205 Placer Court, Toronto, ON, M2H 3H9

T: 1.800.268.5763 ext.6544 | M: 416.302.1699

www.unifor.org



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