



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

Unifor responds to attack on health care workers in Nova Scotia



Dias and Payne join CUPE and NSNU leaders on steps of legislature

UNIFOR MEMBERS FROM ACROSS NOVA SCOTIA GATHERED IN HALIFAX to join National President Jerry Dias and Atlantic Director Lana Payne in a march to the provincial legislature on Thursday, October 2. This followed an earlier major rally on September 29 when Unifor members travelled from across the province to Halifax to join in unity and solidarity with others in the labour and progressive community.

The rallies were called after a tumultuous week in provincial politics to support the struggle by health care workers and their unions as they resist one of the most vicious legislative attacks aimed at working people in decades. "Health care workers across the country are facing unprecedented attacks and we're here to say it has to stop," said Dias. "Bill 1 is an outrageous violation of workers' rights, union rights. This government must respect that our members, proud Unifor

members, have already expressed their freedom of association. What the health care unions here have been proposing is innovative and allows for labour stability. It was developed in the true spirit of labour movement solidarity. This government needs to respect that."

Unifor members from many different sectors are expected to join health care members, many of whom have been in Halifax demonstrating at the legislature since Monday when Bill 1 was intro-

duced. "Unifor has been clear from the beginning, a bargaining association model is the only way that all union members have their choices respected. This bill pits worker against worker, union against union," said Payne. "We did exactly what we were asked to do, in good faith and Unifor has been clear that both the carving up of members and run-off votes are destructive and fail to respect the decisions of our members."

The McNeil government revealed to the media last week they were rejecting the Bargaining Association proposal put forward by all four unions, including Unifor, NSGEU, CUPE and NSNU (for more information on the proposed model, go

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Proud Unifor members rally in Halifax

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to http://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/attachments/health_care_union_bargaining_association_member_communication.pdf). The four unions had proposed a new provincial bargaining system in which all four unions would join together to negotiate at one table for each of the province-wide bargaining units. In each of these units, the unions would form a Bargaining Association to negotiate with the new provincial health authority and IWK Health Centre, respecting members' previous choices and permitting members to stay with their current union.

Instead, the Government introduced legislation on September 29th dictating which health care workers would be placed into which bargaining units and which union the McNeil government had chosen to represent them. The legislation freezes bargaining until April 1, 2015 and any subsequent terms and conditions of these new

provincial collective agreements for the provincial bargaining units will also be determined by an individual appointed by the McNeil government.

Unifor represents 4,000 health care workers throughout Nova Scotia in acute, long-term and community care who would be adversely be affected by this legislation.



Unifor members speak out



Susan Gill, Local 4600 President joins with Payne and Dias

Rallies at Caressant Care continue in September

Local 636 continued with weekly rallies throughout September at both the Caressant Care head office and Woodstock nursing home to demand the company return to the bargaining table and offer a fair and equitable settlement. Members at three Caressant Care homes including Courtland and Harriston represented by Local 302 have been with a contract since early 2014.

"We will keep it up until we get them back to the table," said Ross Gerrie, Local 636 president to local media. Karen Rodrigues, chairperson of the Woodstock unit said "We haven't had a wage increase since April 2011 and most workers are part-time."



Members rally at Caressant Care in Woodstock

Unifor steps up actions in Sudbury for a fair deal

Health care workers with Local 598 picketed outside the Provincial Building on Larch Street in Sudbury on September 18th asking the government to impose minimum staffing standards for long-term care facilities. Local 598



Local 598 and Assistant Deb Tveit rally at Ministry building

represents staff from four Sudbury long-term care facilities that have been without a contract since March 2013.

Local 598 president Anne-Marie MacInnis said long-term care facilities are cutting corners, and residents are falling through the cracks. The union has asked for residents to receive a minimum of four hours of care each day.

Deb Tveit, assistant to national president Jerry Dias, attended the rally to support the health care workers. "There were austerity measures over the previous two years where workers were forced to accept wage freezes to help the government get through some hard times," she said. "It's no longer acceptable for us when people on the management side get increases and the workers are expected to take accept declining real wages, after inflation."

Northern hospital members rally to support negotiations



Local 1359 members rally in Sault Ste Marie

Continuing frustration by the lack of a fair and equitable offer of settlement from the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) representing 10 northern Ontario hospitals, both local 229 and local 1359 organized major rallies with members and their supporters in both Sault Ste Marie and Thunder Bay last week. The Local 229 Great Northern Fight Back Rally took place at St. Joseph's Hospital on September 29th followed by a rally in Sault Ste Marie the next day.

National President Jerry Dias travelled

to both cities to join the rallies and support spreading the message through the media to the general public to ensure pressure is put on the hospitals, OHA and provincial government. "We're going to educate the population," he said to local media. "We're going to talk about the issues and we can certainly do some stuff. Taking care of the residents and patients is primary and will never be impacted but people need to start challenging the management team and the government."



Jerry Dias and Kari Jefford are joined by members in Thunder Bay



Local 229 members rally in Thunder Bay

Getting to the point where strike mandate votes are conducted is unprecedented locally. "It's never happened before but we need to send a very clear message to the employer and government that we need to continue the fight for Medicare in this country and we'll do what we need to do to secure that for all of us," Jefford said. "That doesn't mean the folks aren't delivering the services in the hospital; but other folks can be out on the picket line raising awareness and mobilizing our community."

Local 229 conducts strike votes in northern hospitals

Local 229 conducted strike mandate meetings in all of their northwestern Ontario hospital units with phenomenal attendance and participation by members. A clear strike mandate has been received ranging from 96% to 100% of ballots cast in favour of strike action if required. Local 229 represents more than 500 hospital members from Manitowadge, Marathon, Nipigon, Geraldton, Thunder Bay and Atikokan in northwestern Ontario.

"Members are standing up, they are ready to fight, they are voting between 96% and 100% to strike if need be." Local 229 president Kari Jefford said. "Healthcare in Canada is under assault, Harper refuses to renegotiate the Canada Health Accord, the provincial government has frozen hospital funding yet again and hands of the employers are tied". "Our members took zero wage increases for the past two years and there remain major concessions on the table again in this round" she added.

Fighting on two fronts, the rally sought to push local hospitals back to the table, but also recognized that government funding at both the federal and provincial levels needs to increase to allow the facilities to maintain their current standards. Jefford said that's no reason for workers to accept concessions when they haven't received a wage increase in two years while seeing management receive raises and bonuses. "We are fighting for all Ontarian's to have access to good healthcare services in the North for the North, we are fighting for fair wages and fair working conditions, and we are fighting for members of our communities" she said.

Historic vote at St. Joseph's London results in substantial force for change

The St Joseph's Health Care, London representation vote concluded with workers at two of the six hospital sites; Regional Mental Health Centre and South Western Forensic Unit joining with Unifor members at Parkwood Hospital; Mount Hope, Healthcare Materials Management Services (HMMS) and St. Joseph's Health Care into one service bargaining unit.

The Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB) on June 27 decided on the future bargaining unit structure after the hospital merger is formally completed on November 25, 2014, after ordering a representation vote under the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act (PSLRTA).

Because of the different existing bargaining units between Unifor and OPSEU, two issues needed to be determined including whether RPNs were to be placed in a separate RPN-only unit and whether various pharmacy classifications were to be placed in the service or paramedical unit. The Board also directed that Registered Pharmacy Technicians; Pharmacy Technicians and Pharmacy Assistants be placed in the service unit "to increase and protect employee mobility and to enhance seniority rights".

With voting conducted on September 30th and October 1st, the OLRB declared Unifor the successor union on Thursday after counting the ballots and finding a 593 to 355 margin in favour of Unifor.

Anne-Marie Tulett, chair at Parkwood said: "Our message to St. Joseph's employees was simple and direct - we set the standard in bargaining in the sector because we believe in standing up for a fair deal for our members." "In the end, folks realized that the Unifor collective agreement had excellent provisions such as early retirement benefits; an unreduced part-time in lieu even if enrolled in the pension plan; parental and pregnancy leave top-up for 52 full weeks, and job posting language that put seniority first."

Michelle Flewin, chair at Mount Hope-St. Joseph's added: "The campaign stayed focused on how important negotiating is as the best way to get a good deal for members; how important it is to avoid the risk and lengthy delay of simply going off to interest arbitration, rather than bargaining a collective agreement". "This gives

health care workers themselves the final say, and not a third-party arbitrator", she added.

Jim Reid, Unifor Local 27 president noted: "There will certainly be many challenges ahead, and our new members at St. Joseph's will become an important part of our local and our unity and strength together will be crucial in meeting those challenges."

The campaign was supported by the Organizing Department and Brian Chapman, first vice-president of Local 27.



Unifor Health Care Council formed at Canada Convention

Delegates from Unifor Locals across Canada representing health care workplaces met in advance of the 1st Unifor Canadian Council in Vancouver to adopt new industry council by-laws under Article 11 of the Unifor constitution. The first inaugural meeting of the Unifor Health Care Council also endorsed Nancy McMurphy as part of the Unity Caucus. McMurphy joins Ruth Pryce at the National Executive Board representing the health sector. Delegates also elected a new National Health Care Council Executive by acclamation.

The Health Care Council executive includes Shawn Rouse, President; Jim Kennedy, First Vice-President;

Susan Gill, Second Vice-President; Lisa Tucker, Secretary-Treasurer; Kellee Janzen, Recording Secretary; as well as Steve Olsen, Jennifer Benoit and Shelley Smith, Trustees and Vernon Martell and Jake Gibson, Members at Large.



Local 302 workplace leadership meeting expresses strong resolve to mobilize

Over 130 workplace leadership gathered and packed their local union hall on September 18th to receive updates on recent negotiations and provide input into plans for mobilization underway within their local and across Ontario.

Local president Nancy McMurphy provided those attending with an overview and reflection on the process of recent negotiations with emphasis on the long-term care sector.

Workplace leaders expressed a strong commitment to achieving a fair settlement that recognizes the sacrifices imposed by the wage freeze endured in the previous round of negotiations. Equally important was the commitment to support a series of escalating activities that would serve to connect with members and the public around standing up for health care workers at a time when tens of thousands of Unifor members are being frustrated and denied respect by their employers.

Local president and National Executive Board member Nancy McMurphy said “Sisters and Brothers it’s time to lead the charge in demanding respect for all health care workers, it’s time to demand a freely negotiated not arbitrated settlement, and it’s time to demand that our Federal government re-sign the Canadian Health Accord to ensure that we not only maintain but we enhance public health care for all Canadians.



Unifor delegates at RPNAO conference

Building the RPN profession

Unifor delegates to the RPNAO 56th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Conference held September 25th and 26th at the scenic Nottawasaga Inn came away rejuvenated and inspired to continue to advancing excellence in nursing. The Unifor Health Care Council was a proud gold sponsor for the fourth straight year of the Conference and AGM which is the largest annual gathering of RPNs in Ontario.

Many locals sent RPNs as delegates to take part in educational and networking sessions and locals 2458, 229, 1106 and 504 were particularly well represented. The Health Care Council display was a very popular spot to visit during the networking sessions and showcased the on-going support by Unifor for RPNs and their practice roles.

RPNAO Executive Director Dianne Martin spoke directly to the support from Unifor at the meeting stressing how Unifor advocated for RPNAO membership as providing access to professional liability insurance for RPNs as new regulations came into force earlier this year. Martin related a heartbreaking story of a RPN who purchased insurance through her union but when terminated due to an abuse allegation, insurance didn’t cover her in the proceedings at the College of Nurses.

Pictured are RPNs from locals 1106 and 229, along with local 229 president Kari Jefford and Shawn Rouse, Health Care Council president. Missing from the photo were Local 504 and 2458 participants.



Local 302 workplace leader building greater skills in representing members

Two dozen members from a variety of workplaces represented by Local 302 recently participated in a 3-day grievance handling course. Students are shown in the photo practicing their grievance handling skills.

Prince George Retirement Residence members ratify first contract



Prince George committee members and National Rep Julie Herron

Local 27 members employed at Prince George Retirement Residence in Lucan ratified a tentative settlement by 100% after overcoming incredible employer pressure. The previous operator, Oasis Retirement Home had fired 20 of 23 employees shortly after an organizing drive was mounted. A new management group Palladian Health Solutions Inc. assumed operations at the recently built 55-bed retirement home shortly thereafter and re-hired many employees.

In addition to re-hiring staff, the new employer eventually agreed to significant monetary and language gains, including wage increases ranging from

\$1.50 to \$2.00 during the life of the agreement, uniform allowance, shift premiums, call back pay, improved vacation entitlements and two additional float days and other benefits. One of the more critical issues was ensuring adequate coverage in the event of occupational injury or disease as the employer didn't pay WSIB premiums but had contracted with an insurance carrier. These members now enjoy WSIB coverage as well as conversion to full time jobs where only part time jobs existed as well job posting language, seniority provisions and other

protections that didn't exist prior to being unionized.

In a jointly written letter, committee members Brenda Morgan & Kathy McFarland [pictured with Julie Herron, National Rep] said "We are overjoyed with the outcome and winning efforts of UNIFOR. Without your support we would have never been successful in obtaining a union contract nor improvements within the retirement home. From all the employees of Prince George we thank you for a long awaited win and full support on our behalf.

Take action on PTSD

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a significant occurrence among emergency response workers such as paramedics. Unifor and CUPE are supporting a petition in Ontario in support of a private members' bill that would amend the Workers Safety and Insurance Act to presume PTSD as an occupational disease. This would be a significant first step in having PTSD arising from the critical incidences many health care providers experience similarly covered under WSIB.

Blank copies of the petition can be obtained from Lisa.Diaz@unifor.org



Where can I find the Pulse?

The Pulse newsletter, published at least every two months is sent to any local unions requesting copies. Also available on the Unifor web site at www.unifor.org; simply click on "What's New", and then click on "Newsletters" and scroll down till you find "The Pulse" - <http://www.unifor.org/en/whats-new/newsletters/pulse>. Local unions and unit chairpersons can order copies for direct delivery by emailing your request to Lisa.Daiz@unifor.org

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