

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

Day of Action for health care workers



A sea of Unifor red under a grey fall sky.

Hundreds gathered on November 6th at Victoria Park in London, Ontario for a Day of Action called in support of over 17,000 Health Care Workers across Ontario represented by Unifor who are currently in collective bargaining talks with their employers. After a 2 year wage freeze, typically imposed through arbitration in the past round, Unifor health care workers in both public hospitals and for-profit nursing homes have demanded

that their employers negotiate a fair settlement, instead of arbitration.

The November 6th Day of Action included rallies in Sudbury and Sault Ste. Marie, as well as Thunder Bay on November 7th. The Day was the culmination of a series of workplace and community actions throughout the summer and fall. Beginning with Unifor nursing home workers at Extencicare, health care workers have since the summer held rallies and pickets in front of their workplaces. More recently, hospital workers have also mobilized and in northern Ontario conducted strike votes to record the determination of hospital workers to engage in direct workplace action in support of their bargaining objectives.

Members of Unifor, along with supporters from CUPE Ontario, the Council of Canadians, the Ontario Federation of

Labour and others, heard from Jerry Dias and Katha Fortier from Unifor, Fred Hahn of CUPE Ontario, Sid Ryan of the OFL and Natalie Mehra of the Ontario Health Coalition.

“Our health care workers can’t be the last on the list of our government’s priorities,” said Jerry Dias. “We can’t have the people who care for us being left behind – making the same wages that they were making nearly a decade earlier. Some day politicians will learn that we can’t achieve prosperity through austerity.”

Nancy McMurphy, president of Unifor Local 302 and NEB member representing the health sector was quoted in the London Free Press, “Now is the time to bring relief to front-line workers.” “Many of them are part-time workers; they are working two and three jobs to try and support their families,” McMurphy said. “They need to see an increase, they don’t want an arbitrated collective agreement,

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they want to negotiate an agreement, which we think is the way to go.”

Unifor members from other sectors, along with Unifor retirees and other union members and community activists stood together with healthcare workers across the province in the fight for a fair bargain and an end to the austerity agenda by joining with them in this Day of Action in London.



Rally at Deb Matthews MPP office

Re-committing to end violence against women

This year is the 25th anniversary of the Montreal Massacre, which violently claimed the lives of 14 young female engineering students at L’Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal. It was an event that brutally highlighted the issue of violence against women for the entire country and acted as a catalyst for the movement to create awareness and end violence against women, including stronger gun control.

To commemorate the anniversary of this tragic event and to re-focus our efforts around the issue, Unifor has created a special poster and pin that are now available through the workroom – both have the theme of challenging sexism and ending violence. You can download the order form at http://www.unifor.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2014_december_6_order_form.pdf.



Nova Scotia Unifor activists inspire Ontario Health Coalition assembly



Susan Gill, President Local 4600 speaks at OHC General Assembly

Unifor activists Susan Gill and Shawna Wilcox; fresh from the front lines of the battle against the Nova Scotia MacNeil anti-worker Bill 1 legislation joined with delegates at the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) General Action Assembly held October 18. The OHC Assembly serves as the annual membership convention and convened under the slogan,

“Private Prosperity, Public Austerity: Overcoming the new assault on Medicare for All”. Susan Gill, President of Local 4600 was invited to speak and update delegates from Ontario on the situation and struggle in Nova Scotia.

The general meeting adopted the annual action plan directing the work of the Coalition for the coming year and also strongly endorsed the proposal to convene a massive Rally to STOP Private Clinics and SAVE our local public hospitals which the OHC has begun mobilizing for at the Ontario Legislature, Queen’s Park Toronto on Saturday, November 21.

Unifor delegates from the Ontario Regional Council being held the same weekend in Toronto also joined the rally at Queen’s Park in the hundreds, marching up University Avenue in a proud procession of Unifor red.



Members at Princess Court, Dryden ratify contract

Unifor members have approved a new 2-year deal at Princess Court in Dryden with the 120 members voted 90% in favour of the contract. Unifor national representative Stephen Boon said: "With members coming off a solid agreement, they were prepared to live with a more modest, short-term deal. Certainly this is in line with others at similar facilities across the region."

Princess Court is a long-term care facility operated by the District of Kenora Homes for the Aged. The settlement provided 1.7% annual wage increases in each year of the contract as well as improved benefits and the elimination of some pay grids for newly hired workers with previous experience.

Health care workers demand fair deal in Kitchener

Health care workers in the Kitchener-Waterloo area along with supporters from the surrounding community gathered for a Day of Action on October 30th as a prelude and build-up event to the London Day of Action demanding a fair deal in current negotiations with their employers.

"Health care members are expecting a fair collective agreement that respects the work they do every day," said Bill McLachlan, President of Unifor Local 1106. "We'll be out and we'll be vocal because there is a need to see real wage increases for the people who provide the most essential of care." The rally took place at Grand River Hospital site at 835 King Street in Kitchener.

Ebola Fact Sheet

Check out the Unifor Health, Safety and Environment Department Fact Sheet on the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) available at <http://www.unifor.org/member-services/departments/health-safety-and-environment/document>. The British Medical Journal has also produced an excellent info-graphic on the Ebola virus available on-line at: http://journals.bmj.com/site/bmj/images/ebola_clinical_features_infographic.pdf

Quebec retirement home workers demand better conditions

Several dozen members of Local 517Q demonstrated outside the retirement home's Flower Show in Lachine, to put pressure on the employer after negotiations for the renewal of the collective agreement stalled. The negotiations for the collective agreement that expired in December 2013 cover 90 Unifor members at the home in Lachine, Quebec. An earlier demonstration occurred in September at the Floralties LaSalle; a sister retirement home operated by the same company.

"People are frustrated because the employer continues to make offers that are simply inadequate at the negotiating table," said Manon Dubuc, National Representative. "We have demonstrated our willingness to find a compromise." "But our members have incredible compassion to care for older people in the residence; they give tirelessly to ensure quality services, and that is something the employer must recognize." "Right now, at current wage levels, an employee, even though she works full time, gets a salary below the poverty line," said Dubuc.



Quebec Unifor retirement home members speak out

"We believe that those who care for seniors deserve better. The resident needs are only increasingly and creating heavier workloads for our members. It's time to give them better working conditions" said Francine Varennes who along with Lise Laperle and Dieurilla Philip comprise the bargaining committee.



Settlement in Nova Scotia remote

Despite the formal mediation process coming to an end, Unifor remains strong in the belief that bargaining councils are the best solution for our members and will ensure the continued provision of superior health care in Nova Scotia. A mediated settlement is now very remote after talks between the unions and employers over the 45 days with British Columbia-based mediator James Dorsey failed to reach a settlement.

"Unifor is deeply committed to building and maintaining a strong voice for the public health care workers that impact our lives in very profound ways," said Lana Payne, Unifor Atlantic Director. "We find ourselves in a situation created by a government bent on not only undermining unions, but also the stability and quality of the public health care system on which Nova Scotians rely."

The full release is available at:

<http://www.unifor.org/en/whats-new/press-room/health-care-talks-move-arbitration-after-mediation-fails>

Elgin Paramedics Launch "I've Got Your Back Campaign"

Since April 2014, a total of 25 emergency first responders across Canada have committed suicide.

In light of these recent events, paramedics with Medavie Elgin EMS represented by Unifor Local 302 launched the #ivegotyourback911 campaign on October 1, 2014 to bring awareness to emergency first responder mental health. The campaign website at <http://www.ivegotyourback911.com/> has almost 9,000 'likes'.

The group of Elgin paramedics, including Jill Foster, Stephanie Romano, Denise Laing and Shaun Taylor, were at a point of desperation after hearing the news that 2 more emergency first responders had committed suicide. The group said enough is enough... something MUST be done! They launched the #ivegotyourback911 campaign to attach a human side to first responders and PTSD.

The campaign is also attempting to put added pressure on the politicians involved in passage of Bill 2 - An amendment to the WSIB Act to recognize post-traumatic stress disorder. The campaign focuses on WYNNE WEDNESDAYS - where on Wednesday there are coordinated emails and tweets sent to the private member, Cheri DiNovo, NDP MPP Parkdale-High Park sponsoring the Bill and to all responsible Ministers and the Premier.

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