



IN THIS ISSUE:
TAXI DRIVERS TAKE UBER CONCERNS TO PARLIAMENT HILL >> PAGE 2
BLACK HISTORY MONTH >> PAGE 3
TPP IS STILL BAD >> PAGE 4

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Unifor National President Jerry Dias led a delegation that met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa recently, kicking off a massive lobby effort by Unifor activists.

Unifor activists lobby Ottawa

With a new government in Ottawa, more than 70 Unifor activists from across Canada traveled to Ottawa recently to meet with the Prime Minister, cabinet ministers, Opposition Leaders, MPs and senior government advisors.

“Unifor will be incredibly active during the life of the 42nd Parliament,” Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

“Defeating the Harper government was good, but we need to keep the new Liberal government focused on improving the lives of all working people in this country.”

Dias led the delegation of more than 70 Unifor activists to Ottawa on February 3 and 4 to meet MPs and staff from both government and opposition to discuss a wide variety of issues, from manufacturing

Bold change needed in Ontario budget

Investing in social services, job creation and economic growth must be the focus of the upcoming Ontario budget, Unifor told the Ontario government’s Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs during pre-budget

>> Continued on page2

Unifor welcomes motion to repeal C-525, C-377

Unifor commends the Liberal government’s decision to repeal Bills C-525 and C-377.

These two anti-labour bills, a direct attack on unions by the previous Conservative government, undermined the charter right to form a union for workers in federally regulated sectors and imposed unnecessary and

onerous reporting burdens on all unions.

Unifor had been outspoken about the problematic nature of these bills since they were first brought forward.

“The union movement worked diligently to repeal these undemocratic and unjust bills,” said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

>>Continued on page3

>> Continued on page3

Ratifications

Local 114

First Canada

Members of Unifor Local 114, representing transit workers Cowichan Valley Regional District working for First Canada, have ratified a new collective agreement, averting a strike or lockout.

The new deal is for four years and will see an additional 20 cents per hour in each year of the deal, retroactive to April 1, 2015.

The deal was patterned on a BC Transit deal negotiated last summer, got two-tiering concessions off the table – as well as the notion of integrating the conventional bus system with the community shuttle system, which would have meant a significant cut in take home pay for members.



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Uber fight goes beyond taxis as struggle goes to Parliament Hill

Unifor taxi drivers were joined by cabbies from Toronto and Montreal, and supporters from as far away as British Columbia, recently as they brought their concerns about Uber to Parliament Hill.

"When Uber doesn't pay taxes, they are not ripping off the government, they are ripping off all Canadians," Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

Dias said those taxes go to pay for such things as health care, law enforcement and all the things that make Canada a great place to live. When companies don't pay taxes, they put all that at risk.

"We pay our taxes because that's the rule, and that's how

we get the Canada we want."

Karam Punian of the Airport Limousine Drivers Association in Toronto said the fight over Uber is about much more than taxis, saying the so-called sharing economy could move into almost any other business to undermine the livelihoods of those involved and the products and services sold.

"You name it, they will enter it," he said. "This is a challenge to our whole economy."

Liberal MP Raj Grewal, son of a cab driver, said a fair solution must be found, including a level playing field for all drivers.

"The taxi industry housed and fed me and put clothes on



Unifor National President Jerry Dias spoke at Uber rally.

my back. It's the reason I was able to become a lawyer and a Member of Parliament."

Unifor Local 1688 President Amrit Singh called on the federal government to stop Uber as part of its pledge to help working families.

>> Continued from "Bold change needed..." on page 1

consultations.

"We need to see some bold changes in Ontario," said Unifor Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier. "Ontarians are looking for the government to re-focus its priorities and commit to enhanced government investment."

Fortier and fellow Unifor members joined Ontario Federation of Labour and Ontario Health Coalition members to rally outside the pre-budget hearings recently to demand "The Ontario We Want." Fortier appeared before the committee after the rally.

Unifor's submission places special emphasis on restoring and enhancing public programs, investing in infrastructure and the



Unifor attended a rally outside Queen's Park before making its pre-budget submission.

manufacturing sector, fair taxation and pension reform. Unifor is also urging the government to reverse the sale of Hydro One.

"Austerity and an obsession with balanced budgets is the wrong

approach," said Fortier. "It's time for Kathleen Wynne to live up to her promise to build Ontario up by investing in the economy."

Unifor's submission is at: unifor.org/Ontariobudget2016

>> Continued from “Unifor activists lobby Ottawa” on page 1

to labour law reform to Missing and Murdered Aboriginal Women and Girls to the Canada Pension Plan.

“Unifor is a social union. Our concerns extend far beyond the shop floor and the bargaining table,” Dias said.

“Issues such as violence against women, tax policy, Aboriginal issues, and health care have a tremendous impact on the lives of all working people, so Unifor needs to be active on these issues.”

One of the first meetings was with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, attended by Dias, Atlantic Regional Director Lana Payne, BC Regional Director Joie

Warnock and Scott Doherty, Executive Assistant to the National President.

The group discussed the Trans Pacific Partnership and other trade deals, manufacturing, labour laws, the Canada Pension Plan, health care and more – issues that would be raised at meetings throughout the week.

“We need trade deals that help Canadian workers,” Dias said in a meeting with Elder Marquis, Chief of Staff to Innovation, Science and Economic Development Minister Navdeep Bains.

Several participants, including Dias, commented that after 10 years of being shut out of Ottawa under Harper, the new government showed throughout the lobby days a willingness to listen and consult.



More than 70 Unifor activists visited Ottawa the first week of February to meet with cabinet ministers, Opposition Leaders and senior government staff on a wide variety of issues.

In a meeting with NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair, Dias stressed the need to hold the government to account, especially since it had made so many promises during the election about helping ordinary Canadians.

The activists gathered after all the meetings were finished to compare

notes and plan for ways to continue the work started during the lobby days throughout the life of the government.

“This is just the start of the conversation,” said Unifor Political Action and Member Mobilization Director Roland Kiehne. “We are going to be very active.”

>> Continued from “Unifor welcomes motion...” on page 1

“I applaud the action taken today by the government, however it’s important to note that we have simply been given back rights that were taken from us by the Harper government as part of it’s agenda to restrict and weaken the rights of trade unions. This is an important first step to undo the damage that has been done.”

Unifor members made the defeat of the Harper Conservatives a top priority in the federal election last fall. Thousands of members were engaged in the election, volunteering on local campaigns and participating in workplace canvasses.

“Unifor was built to

change the politics of this country so that we can all thrive,” said Dias, noting that the union continues to work closely with federal and provincial governments on key issues facing Canadian workers.

In addition to promising better working relationships with unions, the Liberals campaigned on promises to be a champion for the middle-class, to prioritize job creation, to improve the Employment Insurance and Canadian Pension plans and to protect our national healthcare system.

“We will continue our work to ensure the Liberals are held to account for these commitments,” said Dias.

Dias also called on Conservative senators not to block the repeal of Bills C-525 and C-377.

Black History Month important for unionists

February gives us all reason to celebrate and share the historical and ongoing contributions of black people and those of African and Caribbean descent.

“We will recognize these contributions have been made in the context of struggles against racial prejudice and barriers and are, thus, even more significant,” Unifor’s statement on Black History Month says.

Although there is much to celebrate, it is important to acknowledge that racism is a lived reality for many in Canada.

Trade unionists working for a better world must push themselves and others

to recognize that barriers and stereotypes remain, and our collective obligation to remove them.

“We will stand up against racial profiling, unequal justice, and economic and social exclusion and acknowledge that racism, discrimination and inequality persist,” Unifor’s statement says.

Unifor encourages locals to shine a light on the experience of people of African and Caribbean descent to learn more about the untold history of work and progress in Canada.

The National Film Board has a playlist of videos, nfb.ca/playlist/nfb_celebrates_black_history_month/



IN THIS ISSUE Unifor activists from across Canada proved Unifor is an activists union with Ottawa Lobby Days the first week of February. Ontario budget priorities laid out. Repealing Bills C-377 and C-525 is a good start for the new government. Concerns about Uber are taken to Parliament Hill. Black History Month.

TPP bad then, bad now and must not be ratified

The federal government's decision to sign the Trans Pacific Partnership is disappointing, but will give Canada a chance to fully debate a trade deal hastily brought in by the former Conservative government during the federal election, Unifor says.

"This deal was bad for Canada then, and it's bad for Canada now," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

"The Harper government negotiated and signed this deal in secret. Perhaps now we can have the public debate needed to make all Canadians aware of the risks posed by the TPP."

When Trade Minister

Chrystia Freeland announced that Canada would sign the TPP, she characterizing it as a formality required before the deal could be put before Parliament for debate.

Unifor will be active in that debate, and has several concerns about the TPP and its impact on Canada.

A Unifor study last fall calculated that weakened regional content rules in the TPP will ultimately threaten 20,000 well-paying jobs in Canada's auto sector alone.

"The TPP will allow vehicles and parts mostly made in non-TPP countries such as China and others to have unfettered access to North American markets,"



Unifor National President Jerry Dias, Quebec Director Renaud Gagné and Unifor regional directors met with NDP Leader Thomas Mulcair in Ottawa.

Dias said. "That is not acceptable. We need an honest, evidence-based look at the deal, with full input from Canadians, to determine if it helps or hurts our economy."

Dias also pointed to provisions of the TPP that would make it easier for companies from

TPP countries to bring in potentially unlimited numbers of temporary foreign workers without worrying about proper certifications here or wage floors established for other temporary foreign workers.

"Any worker coming to Canada for a job should have the right to apply for full citizenship," Dias said.