



LABOUR DAY POSTERS: CENTRESPREAD
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Labour and social activists from across Canada rallied outside the recent Premier's meeting to show their support for public healthcare.

Grocery workers make huge gains

Members of Unifor Local 414 working at 28 Metro grocery stores across the GTA ratified a new industry-leading collective agreement for supermarket workers.

The deal includes wage increases across the board,
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Health care tops agenda

When Canada's premiers gathered for their bi-annual meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, they were greeted by a group of labour activists from across Canada demanding they make a stronger commitment to health care funding.

"We need a federal government committed to Medicare and to providing

quality, accessible care for everyone, and we need our premiers to stand with us in this fight," said Katha Fortier, Unifor Ontario Regional Director speaking to the crowd of labour and civil society members gathered in Bannerman Park on July 16.

Later that day, news broke that the premiers were requesting Ottawa cover at least 25 per cent of health care costs instead of the proposed model of per capita spending which would see a loss of more

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Unifor hosts women in trades

Unifor hosted a five-day program of skilled trades awareness in June in partnership with St. Clair College and Women Enterprise Skills Training.

This program was open to 75 unemployed and underemployed women in the Windsor Essex area seeking information about

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#unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@gavinmcgarrigle

We need a better government, one that invests in the services we need. Listen to the new ad from @UniforTheUnion uniforvotes.ca/healthcare_ad


@rankandfileca

#Unifor prez Jerry Dias: Tories have steered Canada into a preventable recession huffingtonpost.ca/jerry-dias/can... #canlab #cdnpoli @UniforTheUnion

In brief

Local 672, SGS Canada

A four-month strike SGS Canada in Sarnia, Ont., has ended after 35 members of Unifor Local 672 ratified a new four-year agreement.

The deal came after the local filed bad faith bargaining charges against the company. The new agreement includes a nine per cent wage increase over the life of the contract, new vacation relief and shift differential premiums, as well as language to protect pensions and benefits. Company proposals around the issue of part-time workers were withdrawn. 

Local 21-A, AT Films

A brief strike at AT Films in Edmonton ended with the ratification of a new collective agreement by members of Unifor 21-A.

The local insisted that its members receive contractual assurances about benefits, which until this agreement, were not formally included in the collective agreement.

The agreement also includes strong language preventing contracting out and annual wage increases. All concessions from the company were rebuffed.


AT Films researches, designs and manufactures polythene film products. 

Photo spotlight

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PHOTO BY KATE WHELAN

Pride Parade in Newfoundland and Labrador.



PHOTO BY TREVOR BECKERSON

Unifor members celebrate Pride in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Support GardaWorld members


A financial appeal has been sent out on behalf of 135 members of Unifor Local 4266, who were locked out on May 14th.

After only bargaining for three days, the local's bargaining committee was given a final offer. With the company demanding huge cuts in benefits and

replacement of their defined benefit pension plan with a defined contribution plan. These workers are fighting hard to maintain these benefits.

After being locked out, the company closed the Ottawa branch and moved the work to Gatineau, Quebec. The company

laid off all the members of Local 4266 and is refusing to return to the table. "These workers deserve every local union's full support," says Unifor National President Jerry Dias

Locals are asked to send cheques directly to Local 4266. 

Harper deliberately obstructive on ORPP

The Harper government's refusal to provide administrative support for the planned Ontario pension plan is deliberately obstructive and goes against the democratic will of the people of the province, Unifor says.

"In the last provincial election, the people of Ontario sent a clear message that they supported a pension plan for the province to supplement the Canada Pension Plan," said Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier.

"Unifor is calling on the federal government to reverse this bad decision."


Unifor has been a strong supporter of the Ontario Register Pension Plan (ORPP), as a first step to expanding the CPP. The Harper government has opposed any plan to expand public pensions.

In a letter to the Ontario government, Federal Finance Minister Joe Oliver said Ottawa will not provide administrative support for the ORPP, such as using the CPP's existing payroll deduction mechanism to

collect contributions.

"This is deliberately obstructive, and does nothing to serve the people of Ontario," Fortier said.

Fortier said Unifor will continue to push for a mandatory, universal, defined benefit ORPP that mirrors the CPP/QPP, stressing retirement security is a major concern for workers.

For more on Unifor's ORPP and CPP efforts, go to unifor.org/pensionscampaign. 

UNIFOR COMMUNICATIONS: KATIE ARNUP, SARAH BLACKSTOCK, IAN BOYKO, SHELLEY BURGoyNE, SHANNON DEVINE, STUART LAIDLAW, SARAH LESNIEWSKI, MARIE-ANDRÉE L'HEUREUX, AND ANNE MARIE VINCENT



Change is in the air!

Join us to celebrate Labour Day!

Join with your family and friends to celebrate Labour Day on **Monday, September 7** with Unifor members in your community.

To find out about Labour Day celebrations in your area, please contact your Local:

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than \$43 billion over the next eight years from the health system.

"We're pleased the Premiers are pushing the federal government on health care. Strong political leadership is critical to protecting the health care system Canadians so value," Fortier later said.

The Premiers also launched a Canadian Energy Strategy at the gathering and discussed Aboriginal children in care.

"Important issues are discussed and decisions made at these meetings," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias. "Unifor participates because they offer an excellent opportunity to impact political decisions." 

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skilled trades, qualifications and classifications. It was held at the Local 200/444 union hall in Windsor and funded by the Ontario Government's Women's' Directorate.

Up to 25 women will be offered a 32-week CNC/Millwright/Mechanic pre-apprenticeship program at St. Clair College aimed at employment opportunities in the Windsor area.

While women comprise

48 per cent of the Canadian workforce, the Conference Board of Canada reports that typically less than 3 per cent of all apprentices in the construction, automotive and industry trades are women.

The program was led by a team of experienced skilled trades women and trainers. Workshops involved hands-on introduction to work with electrical circuitry, robotics and wood and metal work.

Other workshops included preparation for aptitude testing and job

interviews. Guest speakers provided a great deal of information about skilled trades apprenticeship in Ontario and the variety of pathways to apprenticeship. Presenters included area employers, Canadian Armed Forces, Ontario College of Trades and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

A highlight of the week came with the participation of some graduates from last year's course, who have since succeeded in starting apprenticeships. 



Unifor hosted a five day program of skilled trades awareness for women in Windsor.

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an innovative new wage scale for part-time workers, improvements to scheduling practices, the creation of new full-time positions and other gains.

"I am incredibly proud to see Unifor members leading the charge in improving the quality of retail jobs here in Ontario," said Christine Connor, President of Unifor Local 414. "We went into

this set of negotiations determined to get a better deal for Metro grocery workers, and we have achieved just that."

With this new agreement, 90 per cent of part-time members will see an immediate wage increase, some as high as 21 per cent. Only ten per cent of workers in these stores currently make \$15 an hour or more. By 2016, under this new agreement, 40 per cent will make \$15 or more.

"It's shocking how much the quality of retail jobs has declined over the past few decades. We went in to this round of bargaining ready to put an end to that decline," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias. "This agreement is a perfect example of how unions can play a role in improving the lives of precarious low wage workers."

Knowing that lack of control over their schedules is a major concern for

all retail workers, this agreement makes a number of improvements to scheduling practices. For the first time in this contract, part-time workers will also be entitled to a guaranteed minimum of hours per week after one year of service.

Unifor represents more than 20,000 workers in supermarkets, pharmacies, appliance stores and other retail shops. 



The Metro grocery bargaining team made great improvements for members in the latest contract.

Leadership needed on health care



Katha Fortier

The recent report from the federal Parliamentary Budget Officer showed that the Harper Conservatives have tried to balance their books by passing health care costs on to the provinces. In a column published in the London Free Press on July 25, Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier points out that the money is there, it just requires the right choices.

The Harper government has become so obsessed with balancing its own budget that it is failing to meet the health care needs of Canadians, instead passing the buck to other levels of government to fix its own failures.

Tuesday's report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer makes clear that the federal government's relatively rosy budgetary expectations are due largely

to its plans to limit transfers to the provinces for health care.

As the PBO report points out, the Harper government has legislated that health care spending will increase by only three per cent a year in order to help balance its budget, a drastic reduction from the six per cent increases under previous transfer arrangements.

The difference amounts to \$36 billion less going to the provinces to provide a sustainable health care system, than would have otherwise been the case.

But the health care needs that the \$36 billion would have covered don't disappear and the costs do not go away simply because the Harper government has decided to limit its own spending. It just means, as the PBO rightly points out, the provincial government must bear the burden.

And that burden, the PBO warns, may be too much for them.

"Health care spending has slowed. Spending growth in 2014 is estimated to have reached its lowest level in two decades," the report says.

"Subnational governments cannot meet

the challenges of population aging under current policy. PBO estimates that permanent policy actions amounting to 1.4 per cent of GDP are required to put subnational government debt on a sustainable path," Tuesday's report says.

The population is getting older. We all know that. In fact, all levels of government, academics and numerous think tanks have been warning us about it for years.

Those warnings should have spurred our federal government to take a leadership role by working with all levels of government to ensure a stable and healthy future for all Canadians.

But instead of leadership, we've seen the Harper government cut its commitment to health care, passing the burden to the provinces – which will either have to cut health care spending or increase taxes to address our growing health care needs.

Tuesday's report also points out that the federal government could increase spending (or reduce taxes) by the equivalent of 1.4 per cent of GDP, and still be able to maintain its current

debt-to-GDP ratio.

That, coincidentally, the exact amount the report later says is needed to ensure that looming health care costs do not push provinces into fiscal crisis.


In other words, the money is there, or could be there, but "would require (the federal government) setting aside its balanced budget law."

Given the Harper government's obsession with balancing the budget at all costs as we head into a federal election, that is not likely to happen.

And, that's not good enough.

Canadians want to know that health care will not only be there for them when they need it most, but is there now for their parents and grandparents.

Making sure that happens takes political leadership, not gamesmanship. We need a federal government that will work with the provinces to find a sustainable solution to the growing health care costs as our population ages.

Instead, we've had noting from Harper but partisanship and political games. Canadians deserve better. 

Beer can strike settled

After 22 months on the picket line, employees at beer can maker Crown Metal Packaging in Toronto have ratified a new collective agreement.

"They are going back shoulder-to-shoulder, with their union and their

principles intact," said Marty Warren, USW Ontario Director.

The members of United Steelworkers Local 9176 ratified a six-year collective agreement, and begin returning to work Aug. 10.

A tentative agreement

was negotiated July 8 after the company withdrew a major impediment to a settlement – its attempt to bar many striking workers from returning to their jobs. The company had recruited replacement workers to operate the Toronto factory

during the labour dispute.

The new collective agreement guarantees the rights of all striking employees to return to their jobs. It also includes enhanced retirement and severance provisions for employees who decide not to return to the plant. 