

2016 CALENDAR

January					February						
M	T	W	T	F	S	M	T	W	T	F	
				1	1	2	3	4	5		
4	5	6	7	8	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
11	12	13	14	15	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
18	19	20	21	22	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
25	26	27	28	29	28	29					

BLACK HISTORY MONTH
Skills Trades Conference



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uniforum



Unifor Local 444 in Windsor showed what international solidarity looks like when it participated in a recent drive to send bottled water to fellow auto town Flint, Michigan, where years of neglect have left municipal water contaminated. Windsor Fire Service, Caesars Windsor, and the Real Canadian Superstore partnered to send more than 22,000 bottles of water.

Public debate needed on TPP

There are serious concerns with the Trans Pacific Partnership that can only be addressed with a full and open debate among Canadians about the deal, Unifor National President Jerry Dias told the House of Commons Standing Committee on International Trade recently.

"Meaningful public consultation informed by credible, independent research is a must," Dias told the committee. "But if meaningful changes cannot be made to the TPP at this point, then it's not a deal that our union can support."

Dias said the Liberal government needs to take a hard look at the deal, negotiated by the previous Conservative government, before putting it to a vote for ratification by Parliament, and urged the government to avoid

Hydro program fails workers

After receiving notice of at least 17 layoffs at the Gibraltar Mine, Unifor says that British Columbia's corporate hydro deferral program is failing northern communities.

"If the BC Liberal government's hydro deferral can't generate good jobs, then it's just

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Ontario budget falls short on key initiatives

Unifor welcomes investment in education, health and infrastructure but says overall funding in the Ontario budget falls short.

"Increased funding in these key areas is overdue," said Unifor Ontario Director Katha Fortier. "Today's budget is a start, but we need greater investment to really make a difference in the lives of Ontarians."

In its pre-budget recommendations, Unifor called on the Wynne government to restore hospital funding and increase core funding of long-term and home care. The union describes the announced budget increases for long term, hospice and palliative care as modest and says it found the hospital funding level

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Local Union Task Force meetings 'inspiring'

Retired CAW National President Ken Lewenza regaled delegates at the Skilled Trades Conference with stories from the Local Union Task Force.

"I have learned so much during the last ten months with this task force; this great privilege has been an inspiration," he said.

Lewenza said the task force provides an opportunity to give direct feedback, and recognizes that times have changed for the labour movement.

Task force meetings wrap up in April, with a report to the Convention in August.

"Through friendship, comradeship and in sharing ideas about our union all of us can be inspired to fight another day," Lewenza said.

For a list of upcoming meetings, or to fill out the task force survey, visit www.unifor.org/lutf.



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Reach us at:

Uniforum

Unifor Communications
205 Placer Court, Fifth Floor
Toronto, Ontario, M5H 3H9

1-800-268-5763

communications@unifor.org

www.unifor.org

Rally supports local TV, changes to laws

More than 120 people rallied in front of Hamilton City Hall recently in support of local news and to protest the unfair termination and treatment of the unionized employees of CHCH TV.

Dedicated Unifor members at CHCH were fired when Channel Zero Inc. declared the subsidiary that created news for CHCH bankrupt. More than 100 employees were thrown out of work, with no notice and no severance, two weeks before Christmas.

Within days of declaring bankruptcy, the station slashed local programming from 80 hours a week to 17.5 and resumed operations without recognizing the union or the collective agreement.

"We must change bankruptcy laws that put



CHCH TV workers and supporters rallied at Hamilton City Hall on February 29, in support of local TV and bankruptcy law changes.

workers last," Unifor Ontario Director Katha Fortier told the February 29 rally. Fortier also criticized Channel Zero for failing to offer jobs at its other TV stations.

"If it looks like union busting, and it smells like union busting, then it's union busting" said former NDP MP Wayne Marston.

Anthony Marco, President

of the Hamilton and District Labour Council, also slammed the CHCH parent company.

"Channel Zero has zero respect for its workers, zero respect for seniority and zero respect for workers' rights."

CHCH on-air personality Donna Skelly, who lost her job, encouraged viewers to change stations and called on business to stop advertising.

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corporate welfare," said Joie Warnock, Unifor's Western Director.

"BC's families don't get a pass on their hydro bills, why should multinational mining companies that are laying off workers?"

On February 26, BC Hydro applied to the B.C. Utilities Commission for a 4 per cent rate hike.

BC companies can apply for a two-year deferral on hydro bills. When introduced by Minister of Energy and Mines Bill Bennett (Kootenay East), the government said that it would be used as a measure to help struggling companies create jobs.

"This minister and MLA Donna Barnett have some explaining to do to these



Despite the promises, a B.C. hydro deferral program amounts to nothing more than corporate welfare, Unifor says.

unemployed workers," said Unifor Local 3018 president Ken Lewins. "The copper market is on the rebound, so there is no reason that the mine needed a corporate hand-out at the same time it laid off hard-

working miners."

According to the company's website, the mine is the second largest open pit copper mine in Canada and the largest employer in the Cariboo region.

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“fantasy-land assumptions” when discussing the deal with Canadians.

“We don’t need more government studies that simply aim to convince Canadians all ‘free trade’ deals are good deals,” he said. “Canadians need to be empowered to decide if the TPP is, in fact, in our best interests.”

Dias pointed out that the TPP will do nothing to address Canada’s growing auto manufacturing trade deficit – and will, in fact, make it worse. Canada’s auto trade deficit now sits at \$19 billion. “This is a pretty significant drop from the \$14 billion surplus we once enjoyed, and not that long ago,” Dias said.

Dias pointed out that the types of vehicles produced in Canada are not desired in most Asian countries – so any opening of the market is unlikely to see more cars shipped there.

Dias used South Korea as an example. Canada signed a trade deal with that country a year ago. Since then, manufacturing exports have dropped 3.9 per cent, while imports from South Korea have jumped 9 per cent and our manufacturing trade deficit with Korea grew to \$4 billion.

Likewise, the TPP will not give Canadian auto manufacturers greater access to the Japanese market, Dias said, pointing out that Japan already has no import tariffs on autos.

“The problem with Japan isn’t about tariffs. There are



The Trans Pacific Partnership puts good jobs in the auto industry at risk, Unifor National President Jerry Dias told the House Committee on Trade.

deeper, structural issues at play,” he said.

Dias spoke to the committee on a day dedicated to the auto industry, but took the opportunity to point out

other concerns with the TPP, including foreign ownership rules in telecommunications, raw log exports, drug costs, the ability to regulate online TV, and supply management.

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disappointing.

“Following a five-year freeze the Ontario government has increased base funding for hospitals by a mere one per cent,” said Fortier. “This is a stop-gap measure that won’t significantly improve the day-to-day care of Ontario patients.”

The union is also disappointed the budget does not go further to protect public assets.

“Rather than recognizing the sale of Ontario Hydro as a mistake, the Wynne government seems to be doubling down on its plan to sell off valuable public assets to achieve short term financial gain” cautioned Fortier.

“The budget refers to government-owned assets,

but they belong to the people of Ontario and once sold the priority will be on the bottom line not fair service to the taxpayer.”

In addition, the budget provides very little response to the dire state of manufacturing in Ontario, with no significant investment in the advanced manufacturing sector.

“Unifor is concerned that the budget fails to outline a strategy to keep and create manufacturing jobs,” Fortier said.

Fortier did welcome Ontario’s commitment to work with the other provinces and the federal government to negotiate Canada Pension Plan reform. “We continue to believe an enhanced CPP, as good as or better than the ORPP, is the best choice for Canadians,” said Fortier.

School bus contract flip shows system’s instability

The recent flipping of 452 Toronto-area school bus routes shows how unstable a system Ontario has for handing out such contracts, and will get worse, warns Unifor.

“When school bus contracts are constantly being flipped from one provider to another, the system simply cannot deal with the issues that are most important to students and their parents,” Unifor Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier said.

“Parents are now left wondering who will be getting their children to school next fall.”

Unifor has argued that the Request for Proposals

system for awarding school bus contracts leads to constant instability as school bus companies, drivers and parents don’t know who will get children to school from year to year.

Under Ontario law, the drivers’ union representation, wages, benefits, working conditions and even employment do not move with them.

“We are hoping to bring some stability to a very unstable situation,” said Local 4268 President Deb Montgomery.

Unifor will continue to meet with the Ministry of Education on this issue. Go to: unifor.org/schoolbuscampaign.



IN THIS ISSUE: Unifor National President Jerry Dias takes Unifor's concerns with TPP to Parliament Hill. The Ontario budget falls short. B.C. Hydro program is just corporate welfare. Unifor stands up for local television. School bus route flip shows how unstable the RFP system is.

Skilled Trades call for apprentice harmonization

Every province in Canada and each territory has its own system for training the skilled trades, a situation that has hurt the country's ability to attract young people to the trades or to keep them in once they start, Unifor's inaugural Skilled Trades Council heard.

"We have 13 different apprentice systems. If you were setting it up fresh, you wouldn't set it up this way," Garry Herman, CEO of the Industry Training Authority in British Columbia, said.

Herman took part in a panel on challenges facing skilled trades training, as well as giving the afternoon keynote address. Like many at the Council, Herman

called for harmonization of apprenticeship programs across Canada.

Currently, any worker with trades papers can work anywhere in Canada. But those apprenticing cannot move from one province to another to continue their training, though there is some harmonization in the Atlantic.

The Council's 300 delegates passed a resolutions calling on Unifor to support initiatives that enable apprentices to move around Canada in search of work while pursuing their trades papers, and for Locals to recruit mentors from among their members.

"We are going to keep



Retired NHL player Theoren Fleury brought his emotional story of abuse and recovery to the Skilled Trades Conference, inspiring delegates who crowded to meet the hockey great during a book signing afterward.

pushing for this," Unifor Skilled Trades Chair David Cassidy said. "We can make a difference for these young apprentices."

Canadian Labour Congress Researcher Mike Luff said the difficult job market makes harmonization all the more important – since it would allow apprentices to move to get work when need be.

"Apprentices often can't get their first placement or they do, and then they are laid off," Luff said.

Melissa Young, Regional Coordinator for Atlantic Apprenticeship Harmonization, encouraged Unifor to push employers to include more apprenticeships when negotiating collective agreements.