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Budget misses auto, aerospace

The new federal budget marks a good start, but much work remains, and Unifor is urging the government to move quickly to develop long-term programs to revitalize the economy – including investing in Canada’s auto and aerospace sectors.

“It makes sense for this first budget to emphasize projects and programs where the money can flow right away, but Canadian families need longer term solutions on which they can build their futures,” Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

“We are disappointed that there were no changes made to the Automotive Innovation Fund, beyond extending it another three years, and no mention of the vital aerospace industry beyond the space program,” Dias said.

Dias said Unifor will play an active role in the

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SJF funds shelters

Across the country, Unifor members delivered a \$2,000 cheque to 72 women’s shelters in recognition of International Women’s Day. The individual cheques were part of a \$150,000 donation that was made possible through the Unifor Social Justice Fund.

Although the Social Justice Fund has contributed to shelters

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Technology puts ships at risk as Kitsilano reopens

Ongoing failures in the new technology deployed in the Coast Guard’s Marine Communications and Traffic Services centres in Victoria and Prince Rupert are so serious that Unifor is warning that the safety of vessels and the coastline are at risk.

“In some instances, the transmissions are so rife with echoes and static

they are distorted beyond comprehension,” said Joie Warnock, Unifor’s Western Director. “We’re talking about vital communications here with the potential to be a life or death situation.”

Unifor is demanding a halt to the planned closure of the Comox communications centre, which does not use the new technology, pointing to the

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Scholarships available

Unifor recognizes that post-secondary education is out of reach for many working-class children due to skyrocketing tuition fees. To assist in making education more accessible, Unifor established 28 scholarships worth \$2,000 each.

The scholarships are awarded to sons/daughters of Unifor members in good standing. Students must be entering their first year of full-time post-secondary education in a public Canadian institution. One scholarship is available to a Unifor member with at least one year seniority.

For more information visit: unifor.org/en/member-services/education/scholarships.

Deadline is April 30. See your local union for an application, or print one from the website.



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New Flyer members show solidarity

Unifor Local 3003 members at the New Flyer bus plant in Winnipeg recently hosted workers from their sister plant in Anniston, Alabama, who are hoping to form a union, prompting the president of the IUE-CWA to send an emotional letter of thanks to Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

"I write to thank you for the solidarity and support your union has shown to ours," IUE-CWA President James D. Clark said in the letter.

"From the moment they arrived in Canada to the moment they left, they were treated like true union brothers and sisters."

Unifor Organizing Director John Aman said unions must stand together to make sure the lives of all workers are



Unifor Local 3003 members at New Flyer in Winnipeg stood with workers from the company's plant in Anniston, Alabama, who are trying to form a union.

improved.

"International solidarity is vital to building this movement. We need to work together," Aman said.

One of the Anniston workers, Charlie Pace, wrote to Clark about visiting Winnipeg.

"I saw first-hand how a true bond between brother and sisters of a union work, and myself and the others were treated as one too. If only we can get that for ourselves in

Anniston," Pace wrote.

Clark said the Anniston workers are in the midst of a difficult campaign, facing poor working conditions, pressure and discouragement from management, but are standing strong.

"This experience bolstered their confidence and lifted their spirits, and they left even more committed to fight for their union at New Flyer," Clark wrote.

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in prior years, the total donation amount was increased to meet a growing need. Unifor's Director of International and Human Rights Department, Mohamad Alsadi said, "The demand increased this year when 23 additional shelters contacted Unifor for support."

The Social Justice Fund is established from a direct levy paid by Unifor members, negotiated during collective bargaining.

Donations were made in recognition the incredible work staff at local facilities do on behalf of women in their community. The needs of women living with domestic violence remain



Local 240 President Theresa Farao and Local 444 Women's Committee Chair Sue McKinnon present a \$2,000 donation from the Social Justice Fund to Genevieve Isshak, Director of Windsor's Hiatus House. Also present, left to right, are Paula Bastien Stedman (Local 240), Dana Dunphy (Local 444), Karry Palskitt (Hiatus House) and Angela Divitaris (Local 240).

great, and yet government funding to support the needs of women remains inadequate.

"If we want to get serious about addressing women's equality the government must take immediate action to both implement strategies to combat sexism, sexual

harassment and violence, along with addressing economic conditions for women by closing the wage gap, including funding a universal child care system and restoring funding to feminist organizations," Unifor Women's Department Director Lisa Kelly said

>> Continued from "Budget misses auto, aerospace" on page 1

review of the Automotive Innovation Fund announced in the budget, and urged the federal government to replace the fund's current system of taxable loans in the auto sector with a program that is non-taxable and not loan-based.

"The industry consensus is that this is the way to go, and all levels of government need to recognize this if Canada is to continue having a strong auto sector, our largest exporter," Dias said.

Dias said no plan to help Canada's middle class is complete without investments in both auto and aerospace.

"A strategic investment in aerospace leader

Bombardier would meet many of the goals set out in this budget: supporting innovation and greening the economy," Dias said.

Dias welcomed news of the reopening and expansion of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station, as well as investments in public transit and to revitalize VIA Rail and improve rail safety. Dias said plans to improve training programs, including working with unions to expand apprenticeship programs, are also welcomed.

Improvements to the Employment Insurance program, such as added benefits for workers hit by the drop in oil prices, will help those workers and their communities, Dias said. Dias also welcomed the budget's allocation of



The federal budget contained nothing to support the auto industry, beyond extending the flawed Automotive Innovation Fund.

\$89.9 million to build 3,000 women's shelter spaces.

Many of the announcements are based on quick solutions, with promises to consult with stakeholders on next steps.

"It's always good to consult, of course, but the needs of Canadians are real and immediate and must be addressed quickly," Dias said.

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reopening of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station as evidence that public pressure can keep stations open.

Audio, obtained by Unifor using a Freedom of Information request, was presented to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans in Ottawa during a recent meeting on the planned closure of the Comox MCTS station.

The audio exchange, originating from the Marine Communications and Traffic Services (MCTS) Centre in Iqaluit, clearly demonstrates that, at times, Coast Guard transmissions from MCTS stations using the new technology are unintelligible. Listen to the audio here: soundcloud.com/unifor/tracks

com/unifor/tracks member Scott Hodge told the Committee that over the last two years, nine of the 22 MCTS centres were closed without consulting industry, mariners, the public, or Unifor.

Geographic and seismic considerations also make closing the Comox base dangerous, Unifor said. Both the Prince Rupert and Victoria MCTS centres lie in a tsunami hazard zone in older buildings that will be evacuated during a major earthquake. Only the Comox base could be staffed for such emergencies.

NDP MP Rachel Blaney has sponsored an online petition that was initiated by Hodge, and will be presented to the House of Commons in April.

Family Education Program offers family vacations to Unifor members

The Unifor Family Education Program is your chance to take your family on vacation to Unifor's beautiful Family Education Centre in Port Elgin, Ontario on the shores of Lake Huron.

You will meet people from across Canada, learn about our union and issues facing families, all while enjoying one of the most beautiful sunsets in the world. The program has been offered since 1960.

Members and families can apply to attend a one-week session: July 24 to 31, or July 31 to August 7.

Pre-teens participate in recreational programs run

by fully-trained child care workers and counsellors. Teenagers participate in a specially designed program incorporating social unionism in the curriculum.

Accommodations, meals and program costs are covered by the National Union. Those travelling more than 500 kilometres will be provided with flights or mileage. Members use vacation time to attend.

Visit unifor.org/en/member-services/education/family-education-program for an application, or see your local. Registration deadline is April 15.



IN THIS ISSUE Unifor takes a look at the first federal Liberal budget. Malfunctioning technology a danger to shipping. Unifor marks IWD with donations. International solidarity at New Flyer. Take a family vacation with Unifor.

Unifor economist's study shows strong unions needed

The combination of rising corporate concentration and falling trade union power has led to the growing income gap in America. That's the findings of a new study by Unifor economist Jordan Brennan, published by the Levy Economics Institute in New York.

"The wage gap in America went from a postwar low in 1976 to a postwar high in 2012," said Brennan.

"During that time we experienced a double-sided phenomenon. As concentration of corporate ownership increased we simultaneously saw the decline of organized labour and the middle-class that it

created."

While there are roughly 5.7 million registered corporations in the United States, Brennan points out that the 100 largest own approximately one-fifth of the total assets. Over the past few decades these conglomerates have invested tremendous resources into acquisitions. The resulting top-heavy corporate structure has put downward pressure on growth while elevating inequality.

The study found that, in the past, the power of organized labour mitigated the wage gap.

"Historically, unions act as a "check" on the



Unifor Economist reported his findings to the Unifor Skilled Trades Conference earlier this month, where it was well-received by the members.

firms," said Brennan. "The decrease in the number of unionized workers in the U.S. has coincided with frozen wages, the diminishment of the middle-class and a growing income gap between the majority and the one per cent,"

Union membership in America hit a historic high of 29 per cent in 1954. By 1979 membership slid to 24 per cent, then anti-union policies during the Reagan era, combined with other

developments, took their toll. By 2013 union participation in America had declined to 11 per cent.

"The impact of organized labour is felt in ways as diverse as social policy, politics, and culture - not just wages," said Brennan. "This study clearly demonstrates the vital role that unions play in improving the quality of life for both their members and for society as a whole."

Read Brennan's study at levyinstitute.org