



RPNs go to Legislature
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uniforum



Unifor women participated in International Women's Day events across Canada, and sponsored a report that found women face a particularly difficult time in today's precarious job market.

Auto strategy needed

The decision by Chrysler to withdraw its request for financial assistance from the federal and provincial governments as part of its proposals to invest in its assembly plants in Brampton and Windsor is regrettable, Unifor National President Jerry Dias says.

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Korean deal a threat

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's announcement, in South Korea, of a free trade agreement between Canada and South Korea poses a serious threat to Canadian job security, says Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

"The problem is that Prime Minister Harper did not address the current trade imbalance," Dias said.

The current auto trade

imbalance is \$2.6 billion, which is expected to increase under this deal.

According to a Unifor analysis, the deal extends to South Korea many of the investor and government procurement rights already in NAFTA.

Unifor has endorsed a call for a task force to monitor the deal's impact.

Canadian negotiators were unable to win the same protections to those the U.S. negotiated in its deal with South Korea.

The US deal included protections against import

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Sustainable energy endorsed

Delegates to Unifor's inaugural Prairie Regional Council endorsed a sustainable energy strategy for Canada that includes a commitment to limiting greenhouse gas emissions and a prohibition of raw bitumen exports in favour of domestic upgrading and processing.

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#unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@JeffCasey2

Auto industry safeguards sought by Ontario missing from Canada-South Korea trade pact: #canlab #unifor #cdnpoli

@solidaritysis

Celebrating #IWD with @UniforWomen @PeggyNashNDP @judyrebeck + many, many amazing #women We celebrate + re-commit to work remaining #unifor

Vancouver port action

A failure by the port of Metro Vancouver and various employers to meet past commitments on rate enforcement has pushed more than one thousand container truck drivers off the job.

After a lengthy dispute in 2005, truckers won what's known as the "Ready Rates" of pay: a minimum below which companies couldn't charge for moving containers.

But without sector-wide enforcement, companies continue to under-cut the Ready Rates, eating into truck drivers' take home pay.

"Container truckers are tired of lip-service and demand real changes and real solutions," said Paul Johal, President of Unifor-Vancouver Container Truck Drivers (VCTA).

Line-ups at the ports are another major issue for the truck drivers. Often paid by the container, sitting in line-ups waiting for their cargo to be processed costs them money.

Unifor is the largest union representing truckers at the port. On March 1, Unifor members voted 100 per cent in favour of a strike and initiated job action on March 6.


More than 300 Unifor-VCTA truck drivers are on picket lines. The remaining drivers are not unionized. 

Photo spotlight

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PATTY BARRERA

Registered Practical Nurses from across Ontario went to Queen's Park to lobby MPPs.



Darren Zak

Workers at MTS in Manitoba wore Unifor T-shirts to support their bargaining team.

RPNs go to Legislature


Nearly 30 Registered Practical Nurses from across Ontario, members of Unifor, went to the Ontario Legislature to talk to members of the provincial parliament about their concerns about health care in the province and the role of their profession.

"Registered Practical Nurses are on the front line of our health care system. For many patients, and for thousands in long term

care, they are the face of health care in Ontario," said Katha Fortier, Unifor's Ontario Regional Director and an RPN.

The RPNs pushed for full utilization in Ontario's health care system. During the lobby sessions, the RPNs stressed with MPPs the vital role they play in Ontario's health care system, and how to build on that through further education and training.

The nurses also called for the elimination of barriers to RPNs putting their full range of skills to use, and a greater voice for RPNs in the administration of hospitals and long term care facilities.

RPNs are the fastest-growing job category in the health care system, with almost 43,000 working across the province today, compared with some 33,000 in 2009. 

Families of missing women need support

Despite First Nations people being only about 4 per cent of the population, they make up a quarter of the missing and murdered women in Canada, Unifor's Prairie Regional Council heard.

And yet, the families typically have trouble getting police to take their cases seriously, Candice Neuman of Ka Ni Kanichihk said in a moving address to the council.

"I have a family I am working with right now. Their daughter has been


missing since September and the police will not let them file a missing person's report because they have reports of sightings," she said.

Ka Ni Kanichihk works with families to help them cope with their loss.

Neuman said her first experience with the issue of missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada came when she was growing up in Winnipeg and a girl with the same name was found killed.



Candice Neuman

"That was my first indication for me that these streets are not safe for me," Neuman said. 

UNIFOR COMMUNICATIONS


SARAH BLACKSTOCK, KATIE ARNUP, IAN BOYKO, SHELLEY BURGOYNE, SHANNON DEVINE AND STUART LAIDLAW

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surges into the US market and a ground-breaking "snap-back" provision enabling the US government to return tariffs to pre-agreement levels if Korean non-tariff barriers limit US exports. Even with these provisions, the US has suffered a worsening auto trade deficit.

"We expected our political leadership to stand up for the rights, jobs and economic security of Canadians - and they have failed to do that," said Dias.

Resource sectors such as forestry are among the Unifor-represented sectors that may benefit.

For Unifor's Briefing Kit and Fact Sheet on South Korea, go to: <http://www.unifor.org/en/search/content/korea>. 

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"Energy Strategy
Endorsed" on page 1**

"Workers in this industry want stable jobs, and they know that means sustainable business practices that respect the environment," said Angela Adams, secretary-treasurer of Unifor Local 707A in Fort McMurray, Alberta.

"It is also vital that our resources be processed in Canada, instead of seeing the jobs exported along with the bitumen," said Adams, who is also Energy Sector chair.

Like Adams, many council delegates came to the Winnipeg meeting from locals in the oil and gas industry.


The move comes just a few weeks after Unifor's British Columbia Regional Council also endorsed a national energy and



Delegates to Prairie Council elected their executive and committees. For the complete list of those elected, see Page 4.

environment strategy that calls for Canadian oil to be used for Canadian needs, while protecting the environment, introducing strict limits on greenhouse gas emissions and respect

for First Nations rights.

The strategy also calls for a moratorium on "fracking" extraction of gas until safety, environmental, and First Nations' concerns are fully addressed. 

Did you know?

There are 40,100 Unifor members in the Prairies. The largest sectors are Resources with 11,600 members, Transportation with 8,400 and Communications with 7,600.

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"The bottom line is that the people of Ontario and our leaders need to understand the importance of developing a long-term strategy, including public investment, if we want to have a strong, competitive advanced manufacturing sector," Dias said.

Dias said Unifor looks forward to meeting with the company about the future of its plants in Windsor and Brampton.


"We're pleased that Chrysler has said it will invest in Windsor, and look forward to working with the company and the government to ensure the continued success of our auto manufacturing in that

community," Dias said.

"We are deeply concerned, however, that in the long-term we are going to lose an incredible opportunity to secure Ontario's manufacturing industry well into the future," Dias said.

"The need for provincial leadership and vision has never been clearer if we are going to build and maintain a strong economy in this province," stressed Dias.

"Unifor is eager to continue our work to ensure the long-term success of our advanced auto manufacturing and will work with all players to achieve that goal," Dias said.

"That is what our members need. That is what this province needs." 

Violence against Hong Kong journalist condemned

Staff at Ming Pao Daily Toronto and their union, Unifor, are horrified by the savage daylight stabbing of a respected Hong Kong journalist, seen by many as a leading advocate of press freedom and democracy.

"Attacks on members of the press in Hong Kong have been increasing," said Jerry Dias, Unifor National President.

"We join a shocked and outraged global community in condemning the violence against Hong Kong journalists who believe in freedom of the press and its importance to democracy, and urge Hong Kong authorities to relentlessly pursue the perpetrators of

these crimes," Dias said.

Kevin Lau, former chief editor of Ming Pao Daily Hong Kong, was attacked by cleaver-wielding assailants in Hong Kong recently. Last month, Lau was fired and replaced by a Malaysian journalist considered more pro-Beijing.

"As Chinese-Canadian media workers, we understand the importance of a free and independent press. Such a brutal attack on our respected colleague is an attack on us all," said Joseph Man Ho Kwok, chair of unionized workers at Ming Pao Toronto, one of Canada's largest Chinese-language newspapers. 

Prairie executive elected

Unifor Prairie Council elected its first executive and committees to the council recently.

892; Steve Kelly, Local 707A; Suzanne King, Local 681; Dave Kuntz, Local 1S; Valerie Saliba, Local 4050.

Dave Kindred, Local 1-S. The Council's five equity-seeking committees were elected at caucus meetings of their peers:


Workers with Disabilities

Kevin Boutet, Local 2002; Mike Kapalka, Local 21A; Roger Taylor, Local 777.

Women's Committee

Joyce Coleman (Local 3), Wilma Ellenburgh (Local 52A), Carmen LeDarney (Local 2169)

Young Worker's Committee

Jesse Allaman (Local 3003), Jennifer Mestrovic (Local 468), Ashley Wright (Local 191) 

Executive Board

Chair: Christy Best, Local 649.

Vice-Chair: Guy Desforges, Local 445.

Secretary-Treasurer: Chester Lagman, Local 2169.

Members at Large: Mark Armstrong, Local 468; Clayton Burkholder, Local

Political Action Committee

Michelle Carter, Local 649-2; Darren Gibson, Local 144; Brian Lackey, Local 4534.

Health & Safety and Environment

Brent Charron, Local 144; Kim Conway, Local 707A;

Lesbian, Gay Bisexual, Transgender

Kevin Awey, Local 4534; Kelly Ries, Local 650; Krista Wagner, Local 649.

Aboriginal & Racialized Workers

Dean Carvey, Local 773; Turesh Harnarine, Local 3007; Don Wren, Local 1S

Get active to fight inequity, Dias tells members

Inequity is one of the greatest problems facing Canada today, and can only be addressed with a strong union movement, Unifor National President Jerry Dias told the union's inaugural Prairie Regional Council recently.

"The trade union movement is about raising the standard of living for everyone," Dias said February 28. "And that means getting out and working in the community."

The inequity is all around us, Dias said, from young people forced to


take unpaid internships, to families struggling to get by on minimum wage, to seniors with inadequate pensions.

Across Canada, he said, 100,000 seniors rely on food banks. The Canada Pension Plan provides a maximum of about \$12,000 a year, well below the poverty line, and only 30 per cent have a workplace pension, Dias said.

"Let's think about who those seniors are. They are our parents, our grandparents and our neighbours," Dias said.

Unifor is the best way to fight such inequity, Dias said, because we fight for the rights of all working people, not just our own members.

Dias urged delegates to be active in their communities, campaigning during elections, or even running for office, and speaking out on issues that affect the quality of life for the working class - whether members or not. Only by being active, he said, can change be made.

"We will never win justice with our silence." 



National President Jerry Dias said union activists help the entire community.

Delegates warned about attacks on election fairness

Member of Parliament Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre) came to the Prairie Regional Council, hosted at the Fort Garry Hotel in Martin's riding, with a warning about what he has witnessed.

"The last election was determined using widespread fraud," said Martin. "It is almost certain that the Conservative

Party's voter contact database was used. Draw your own conclusions."

Martin lamented the American-style smear tactics and cheating that have crept into Canadian federal elections during Prime Minister Stephen Harper's reign.

He said that Elections Canada has uncovered evidence of misleading

"robocalls" from 240 ridings. Given the slim margin of victory for the Conservatives in the 2011 election, Martin said that Canada's democracy is in tatters.

"Many of us have relatives who went to war to fight and die for democracy. That system is being eroded with cheating, and the new Elections Act

amendments will only make matters worse," he said.

Martin concluded by saying it is up to unions and other civil society organizations to unite the opposition to Harper.

Unifor is committed to active participation in elections, and to defending the principles of democracy and fairness. 