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uniforum



Casino Rama worker Anna Joudrey, right, hugs Unifor Organizer Elaine White after the Casino Rama certification results were announced.

Casino Rama workers join Unifor

Roughly 1,700 workers at Casino Rama in Orillia, Ontario have joined Unifor.

Casino Rama workers and Unifor organizers worked together for eight months to unionize the casino and on February 12 the workers headed to the polls in a certification

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Port boss must step down

Unifor National President Jerry Dias has written to BC Transportation Minister Todd Stone calling for the replacement of Andy Smith, the Container Trucking Commissioner at Port Metro Vancouver.

Smith is also the President and CEO of the BC Maritime Employers' Association (BCMEA). The BCMEA is closely tied to operations of the Port.

"You can't be a referee and play for one of the teams," said Gavin McGarrigle, Unifor's BC Area Director. "The Port needs a commissioner who is independent and impartial. Andy Smith has competing obligations and cannot properly fulfil his role as commissioner."

Smith was appointed commissioner in January 2015 to oversee the implementation of the

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New deals at CP and CN

Unifor has successfully negotiated new collective agreements at CP and CN, covering 6,600 members across the country. Unifor reached an agreement with CP first on February 14, minutes before the midnight strike deadline.

The union also reached agreements with CN on February 23 before the lock-out deadline of 11 p.m.

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#unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@kaikit_tim

Unifor halts contract talks with Air Canada over shift trading rules trib.al/PC2hPFw @Unifor2002 @UniforTheUnion

@nadinetkat

Congratulations are in order for Casino Rama workers who voted over 70% to join @UniforTheUnion Great news!! #can lab #solidarity


In brief

Local 1894, Atlantic Packaging

Unifor Local 1894 members at Atlantic Packaging voted overwhelmingly in favour of a new collective agreement. The deal includes increases to wages and benefits.

The approximately 65 members will see a wage increase of two per cent in each year of the contract, retroactive to Oct. 15, 2014. The agreement also includes a \$1,000 signing bonus as well as improvements to the employees' dental, vision, and long-term disability programs.

Monetary items including allotments for safety boots, shift premiums and severance payouts were also covered.

Unifor committed to bargaining wage and benefit increases for workers in Eastern Canada's forestry sector in February 2014. 

Local 1106, Revera

Unifor local 1106 members at Revera Victoria Place ratified three-year tentative agreement in December.


The agreement with the a retirement home in Kitchener, Ontario, provides for wage increases of two per cent in each year of the agreement, plus other improvements for the 65 members. 

Photo spotlight

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Unifor's federal election meetings continued in Windsor on February 21.



Area Director Bill Gibson (front row, far right), MPP Mitzie Hunter (front row, centre), and Unifor delegates at the ORPP Consultation in Stratford ON

Unifor participates in ORPP consultation


Unifor members have been actively participating in discussions about the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan (ORPP).

"With public consultations almost

finished, Unifor members can be proud of their excellent contribution to the public discussions in their communities," said Jo-Ann Hannah, Director of Pensions and Benefits at Unifor. "Unifor leadership spoke from their own experiences on the need for all Ontario workers to participate in the ORPP."

Unifor supports the OFL in calling for the ORPP to be a universal, defined benefit pension with mandatory

employer and employee participation. The goal is for an ORPP that can be integrated into an expanded Canada Pension Plan. Unfortunately, the current federal government has refused to expand the CPP, despite a significant decline in workplace pension coverage.

"The ORPP is a positive step to expand pension coverage in Ontario, particularly for younger workers," said Hannah. 

More upheaval in NS health care

The Bill 1 rollercoaster ride for Unifor's Nova Scotia health care members got even bumpier when the government announced recently it would fire Arbitrator James Dorsey and introduce a second piece of legislation to determine union representation - rather than follow Dorsey's earlier decision and recommendations.


"Unifor has believed from the beginning that Bill 1's

heavy-handed interference in the union representation of health care workers was not necessary for the government to achieve its stated goal of streamlined bargaining," said Atlantic Regional Director Lana Payne.

The government's unprecedented move February 20 followed a decision by Dorsey, who left the door open for an amalgamated union

structure in both nursing and service.

Dorsey had awarded the health care unit to NSGEU, but needed more information before awarding the clerical unit. NSGEU has majorities in both these units

No union has the majority in service or nursing. Unifor has members in the nursing, health care and service support units. 


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

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Container Trucking Act, including broad powers to set terms and conditions governing licenses, rates and fuel surcharges for businesses in the Port.

The BC government has dismissed concerns about Smith’s conflict of interest, insisting the BCMEA can determine if their CEO is in a conflict of interest.

“Port Metro Vancouver must operate with integrity. If truckers can’t be guaranteed fairness, it threatens the operation of the Port,” said Joie Warnock, Unifor’s Western Region Director.

Container truckers shut down the port for nearly four weeks last March due to undercutting by trucking firms and wait times. 

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local time.

“We’re pleased that we were able to reach negotiated agreements and avoided labour disputes in both cases,” said Unifor President Jerry Dias. “We were able to find solutions to the concerns raised by our members – best achieved at the bargaining table.”

All agreements have the unanimous endorsement of the Unifor bargaining committees. Ratification meetings will be scheduled in locations across the country over the next three weeks. Details of the agreement will only be disclosed following ratification.

Unifor Local 101R represents 1,800 members




Wesley Gajda and Pauline Fondeur were part of Unifor’s CN bargaining team.

at CP Rail in 18 different locations. Unifor members conduct safety inspections on all rail cars and locomotives, as well as maintenance and repairs.

Unifor has six collective agreements with CN Rail, which cover mechanics, clerical workers, excavator operators, locomotive engineers (Savage Alberta

Rail) and truck drivers. Unifor Local 100 represents skilled trades in mechanical shops.

Unifor Council 4000 represents intermodal, clerical, mechanics and owner operators.

Negotiations had been taking place since September with both CN and CP. 

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vote. The results showed overwhelming support for the union, with 71 per cent voting in favour of being represented by Unifor.

“We are thrilled with the results,” said Anna Joudrey, who has worked at Casino Rama for 10 years.

“When I heard about this campaign I decided to go to a drop-in to get more information and I was struck by the sense that this was all about workers coming together to have a collective voice at work. It was incredibly positive and for once I felt that we might have a shot at improving our workplace,” said Joudrey.

This is one of the largest successful certification

votes that has taken place in Canada in more than a decade, and a significant victory for Unifor and the labour movement as a whole. But most importantly, it is a huge victory for Casino Rama workers.

“We couldn’t be happier to welcome the Casino Rama workers into our union,” said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

“They’ve worked tremendously hard and shown incredible determination throughout this drive, and it’s because of them that the vote was a success.”

Casino Rama workers now join thousands of gaming and hospitality employees across Canada who are already represented




Unifor Organizer Laura Davis and Great Blue Heron worker Swee Pang celebrate the Casino Rama vote.

by Unifor. Soon they will elect a bargaining committee and begin working towards their first collective agreement.

“Strong and healthy communities are built on good jobs. We are committed to ensuring that Casino Rama continues

to provide good jobs for families in the area, and to help workers have a say in what the future looks like for jobs at Casino Rama,” said Dias.

For more information on the campaign at Casino Rama, visit unifor.org/casiorama 

Unifor marking International Women's Day

Unifor activists kicked off International Women's Day early with a luncheon held by the Unifor Windsor Essex Kent Women's Network.

Lisa Kelly, Director of the Women's Department, spoke to approximately 60 women about the importance of activism.


"Unifor was founded with structures to ensure women's voices and

experiences are at the table. It is crucial that we be active and make our experiences heard," Kelly said.

She said that activism can take many forms, from running for office like Unifor Local 200 member Tracey Ramsey, the newly nominated federal NDP candidate for Essex, to speaking to co-workers

about equality issues.

As part of Unifor's efforts to mark International Women's Day, the union donated \$100,000 to shelters and other organizations helping women across Canada.

For IWD events: unifor.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2015_community_events.pdf 



Unifor activists in Windsor were the first to mark International Women's Day this year.

Rally for beer can workers

Unifor President Jerry Dias joined with local politicians and other labour leaders recently to stand in solidarity with striking Crown Metal Packaging employees. The workers, members of USW Local 9176, have been on strike since September 2013 as a result of the excessive concessions demanded by the global manufacturer.

In a strike which has been characterized by corporate ugliness, Crown Packaging first demanded two-tier wages, but now wants a

30 per cent pay cut across the workforce, which would drop hourly wages from \$25/hour to \$16/hour on average. It also wants to wind up the Defined Benefits pension plan.


Dias addressed the strikers at the February 9 rally saying, "We have nothing but admiration for the workers who have maintained this picket line for 17 months - and you are still strong. We applaud you." Dias said that the strike was about the "basic



Unifor National President Jerry Dias spoke at a recent rally for Crown Packaging workers.

right to negotiate, and to return to work with dignity after a labour dispute - and not to be punished and replaced by a scab."

Crown Packaging has been using scabs to maintain production at

the plant, so the striking workers have been campaigning for an Ontario-wide boycott: "Bottles, Not Cans" calls on beer consumers to buy beer bottles and to boycott cans made by Crown. 

Air Canada files for conciliation

Air Canada has filed for conciliation after only 14 days of bargaining with Unifor Local 2002.

Fresh off of the threat to legislate Unifor members at CN back to work, another large national employer is calling for government intervention in bargaining.

"We're eager to negotiate and there are lots of items to discuss," said Cheryl Robinson, President of

Unifor Local 2002.

"But Air Canada appears eager for government interference early on in the process."

Usually used as a last resort after reaching an impasse, conciliation triggers the appointment of a federally appointed conciliator who works at the bargaining table with the employer and the union for up to 60 days. However,

Unifor disagrees that negotiations are anywhere near an impasse.

"In all my years at Air Canada, I've never seen management so quick to declare an impasse," said Leslie Dias, lead negotiator for Local 2002.

In CN negotiations, the Harper government had back-to-work legislation prepared before a lockout had started.

The Local 2002 Bargaining Committee is confident that a negotiated settlement can still be reached.

Bargaining began Jan 26. Unifor Local 2002 represents 4,100 employees at Air Canada.

Across the aviation sector, Unifor represents more than 14,000 workers, including in customer service and ground crews. 