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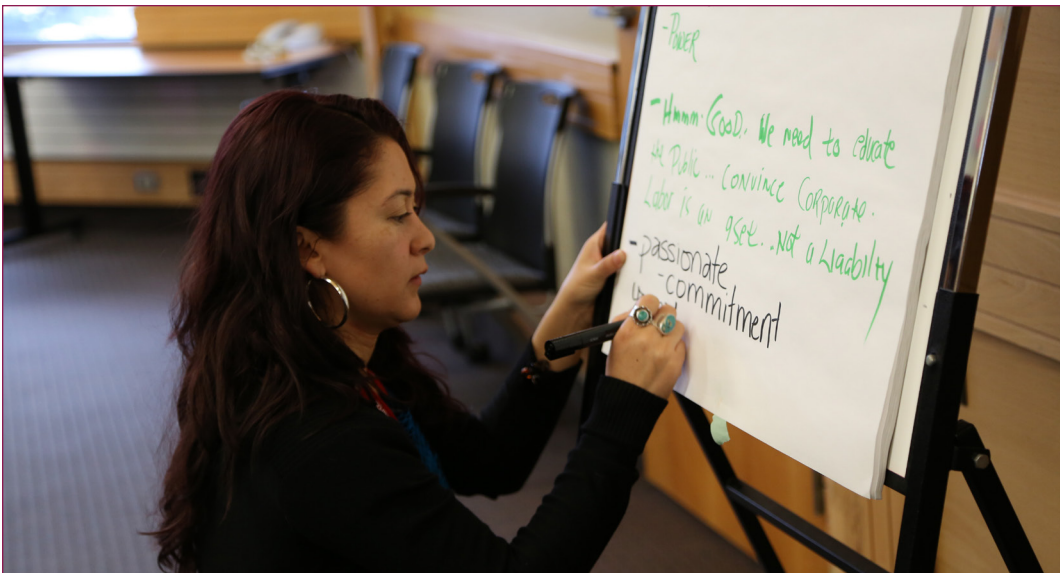
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uniforum



Delegates to the Retail Conference answered such questions as, "What does a Retail Revolution look like?"

Retail workers mobilize for change

Unifor held its inaugural Retail and Wholesale Workers Conference from March 13 to 15 in Port Elgin.

Themed "Realizing Our Power Potential", the conference brought together Unifor members

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Unifor members for transit

Unifor members throughout the Metro Vancouver region are undertaking a massive education and voter mobilization effort for improved transit and transportation.

A regional referendum is underway on a 0.5 per cent increase to the provincial

sales tax to fund a massive expansion of transit infrastructure across BC's Lower Mainland.

The vote is a project of the area's mayors after Premier Christy Clark refused to fund improvements to the province's largest urban centres.

Unifor transit workers in Locals 2200 and 111 are leading the charge, and Unifor has united with more than 100 other organizations in the region to support a Yes vote.

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CN deal ratified

Unifor members have ratified six new agreements with CN Rail.

Voting took place at membership meetings over the last two weeks, in 50 locations across Canada. The agreement was reached February 23, avoiding a lock-out by CN.

"Year over year, CN is a tremendously profitable company," said Unifor

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#unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion

@DarrenTGibson

Working hard to prepare for the upcoming Federal election is the best job ever. #IWillVote2015 #StopHarper #Unifor

@PeggyNashNDP

Great meeting the @Nestle team & the hardworking members of #Unifor Local252 at Sterling Rd. We need more good manufacturing jobs in Canada!

In brief


Daycare deal

Unifor Local 4600 members at Town Daycare in Glace Bay ratified a new collective agreement after four days on strike.

The new deal will expire December 31, 2015 and includes a pay increase of 1 per cent and a commitment that any additional government funding will be subject to wage negotiations.

"We can't and shouldn't expect trained professionals, charged with the early education and care of our children to be paid such low wages," said Local 4600 President Susan Gill.

The daycare had offered zero per cent.

"The Nova Scotia government is reviewing childcare funding and Unifor will be making a detailed submission to the review process," said Lana Payne, Atlantic Regional Director. 

Local 523, Welland


Unifor Local 523, representing outside workers with the City of Welland, Ontario, have ratified a new three-year collective agreement. The deal will apply retroactively from Jan. 1, 2015 to Dec. 31, 2017. The agreement will see wages increase by 1.9 per cent in 2015, 1.5 per cent in 2016 and 1.5 per cent in 2017. 

Photo spotlight

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PHOTO BY KATIE ARNUP

Retail workers discussed many issues at their conference.



PHOTO BY JONH MACLENNAN

Unifor helped broker a deal that could end the Crown Holdings beer can strike.

Homeless woman wins with Unifor help

The case against a homeless Indigenous woman being taken to court for building a cabin on Crown land in Northern Ontario has been dropped, thanks in part to efforts of a Unifor activist.

Darlene Necan said the decision means she'll finally have a home.

"I'll be going home to where I grew up. I'll be

going home to never be kicked out for any reason."

Steve Watson, a Unifor staff retiree, said he was inspired to help after hearing that Necan had previously built a cabin for an elder living in a chicken coop.

"The first action she took wasn't for herself, it was for somebody else," Watson

told the CBC. "That resonates with me."

Her lawyer said community support helped Necan's cause.

"We can all draw a lesson from the fact that grassroots organizing and grassroots efforts to try and achieve small victories can succeed," Michael Leitold said. 

Lost jobs shows school bus turmoil

The loss of 430 school bus jobs in Ottawa recently is an illustration of the unneeded turmoil caused by the Ontario government's Request for Proposals process for handing out contracts, and points to the need for reforms to the system, Unifor says.

"Parents and drivers deserve better than to be left wondering from year to year who will shuttle children to and from school each day," said Unifor National Representative


Mike Armstrong.

First Student today told 127 members of Unifor local 4266, drivers and other employees, that it had lost its contract for 350 school bus routes in Ottawa due to the board's Request for Proposals (RFP) process, a secretive system the province requires school boards to use for bus contracts.

"Unifor will do all it can to ensure drivers are re-hired by the new operators when they take over the routes


next year, but there's no job guarantee and there's no guarantee that drivers will maintain their wages and work standards, already among the lowest in the province," said Armstrong.

Unifor has been a leader in raising concerns about the RFP process. Its report, Steering Clear, Avoiding the RFP Trap, was released at the start of the school year. Unifor also spoke to a panel looking into RFPs.

To see the report go to unifor.org/schoolbuscampaign. 

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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“Better transit and transportation benefits workers in a real way by making it easier and faster for them to get to and from their jobs and to spend more time with their families instead of wasting precious time on long commutes and traffic gridlock,” said Gavin McGarrigle, coalition co-chair and Unifor’s B.C. Area Director. 



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in the retail wholesale sector from across the country. Participants in the conference discussed ways the union can develop a program to strengthen bargaining power and break down barriers that have constrained retail workers in the past.

The retail and wholesale sector is one of the largest in Unifor. With more than 20,000 members working in retail stores, supermarkets, food warehouses, drug stores, wholesaling outlets and others across Canada, they are a key constituency in the union, representing Canada’s single largest employment industry.

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National President Jerry Dias. “In 2014 alone, CN’s revenue was \$12.1 billion. With this set of negotiations, it was important for us to make gains for our members on every front, recognizing their efforts in CN’s success. This is part of the core work of the union.”


“These agreements were made possible by the steadfast resolve of all committees to make progress on the issues most important to our members.”

The agreement included wage increases in each of the four years, improvements to benefits, stronger job security, better rates for CNTL truck drivers, stronger apprenticeship ratios, the re-establishment

“This is an industry plagued with low wages, erratic work schedules, high turnover and lack of meaningful training opportunities among other significant issues,” said Jenny Ahn, Assistant to the President.

In a panel discussion on building worker solidarity, Local 468 President Mark Armstrong said Unifor must look at its contracts and how employer tactics hurt workplace solidarity.

“We need to look at how employers attempt to divide and conquer the workers when bargaining,” said Armstrong, pointing to differing priorities for part-time and full-time workers, as well as young workers.

“When we accept two-tiered agreements, we undermine our solidarity.” 




Unifor’s bargaining committees made progress on the issues most important to members.

of the joint health and safety committee and provisions that will see the insourcing of work and new jobs created. Unifor and CN will also partner to create a fund which will focus largely on initiatives related to women’s equality and aboriginal issues.

“We represent a wide range of members at CN and I’m pleased that we were able to move the bar

for each group, so that by working together, everyone makes gains,” said Unifor Council 4000 President Barry Kennedy.

Unifor has six collective agreements with CN Rail, which cover mechanics, clerical workers, excavator operators, locomotive engineers (Savage Rail), safety inspectors, maintenance and repairs and truck drivers. 

Overwhelming approval of Extendicare agreement

Members at the Extendicare group of nursing homes across Ontario ratified 10 new collective agreements with a firm 96 per cent approval. The new deal will see improvements in wages, benefits, working conditions, shift premiums and stronger union representation.


“I am proud of the agreement we were able to achieve and the progress we have made for our members,” said Katha Fortier, Ontario Regional Director.

“This negotiated settlement was made possible by the hard work and dedication of the Unifor bargaining committee members from across

Ontario. To receive such a high ratification is an endorsement of what our bargaining committee was able to achieve on behalf of our members.”

In a sector where many unions rely on arbitration to settle every agreement, Unifor stands out in achieving consistent results through bargaining.

“Bargaining in the health care sector is some of the toughest negotiations our union faces,” said Deb Tveit, Assistant to the President.

“To reach a bargained settlement and have it ratified by such a high number is a job well done by all of those involved.” 

Victory for Nova Scotia health care workers

The four unions representing health care workers have come to an agreement with the Nova Scotia government after months of arbitration hearings and dispute over bargaining rights.

"I am so very proud of the leadership role Unifor played in this ongoing ordeal. And I am so pleased to say that as a result of

our work, Unifor members will remain proud Unifor members," said Lana Payne, Unifor Atlantic Regional Director.

"Make no mistake, this is a huge victory for our members and for workers' rights."


The agreement will see the four unions in health care bargain together four province-wide collective

agreements under a Council of Unions structure.

"I want to especially thank our wonderful members, activists and local leaders and the staff of our union who were part of this fightback, including our most excellent legal counsel, Barry Wadsworth," said Payne.

"We stubbornly held to our principles and in the

end justice was on our side."

Members of all unions vote on the new collective bargaining structure in the coming weeks. 



Mabe retirees rally to protect their pensions

Months before the planned closure of the Mabe appliance plant in Montreal, the owners held a barbecue for the workers about to lose their jobs, as thanks for their pledge to work hard up to the very last day of production.

Three days after the plant shut down, the company declared bankruptcy and cut workers' pensions by 22 per cent, despite promising not to do that.

"They put themselves into bankruptcy," said Alain

Leduc, past president of Unifor Local 501, one of the locals representing workers at MC Commercial.

Leduc was speaking at a Toronto rally of retirees from Locals 501, 504, 513, 533 and 541 and supporters outside a high-end appliance store selling the appliances they once made. They want Mabe to live up to its earlier commitment to maintain pensions and benefits.

The pension cuts alone amount to about \$500 a



Mabe retirees traveled from Montreal to Toronto for the rally.

month on average for the retirees. Leduc told the story of one retiree who was diagnosed with cancer, only to find out his life insurance was cut. He now has no insurance to help his family

when he's gone.

"It is very hard," Leduc said.

Close to 1,500 retirees are affected across Canada. 

CRTC puts homegrown TV at risk

The CRTC's approach to pick and pay cable will be needlessly disruptive to Canada's broadcast and entertainment industries, putting at risk this country's ability to tell its own stories, Unifor says.

"Too many jobs are at stake - the jobs of people who make their livings telling Canadian stories to Canadians. Our talented actors and content creators

will be forced to move to the U.S. to find work," Unifor Media Director Howard Law said.

The CRTC announced February 19 that consumers will soon be able to pick which cable TV channels they want, rather than the current bundling system, along with skinny basic cable packages of local and U.S. stations. The Harper government promised in its

2013 Throne Speech that no jobs would be lost.

"If anyone should be left fully exposed to pick and pay, it should be the U.S. stations," Law said.

In its submissions to the CRTC, Unifor has said a hasty approach to pick and pay and skinny basic would cost more than 16,000 jobs by 2020.

"It is now up to the Harper government to

say how it will live up to the promises in its Throne Speech," Unifor Media Council Chair Randy Kitt said.

In an earlier decision, the CRTC cut the Canadian content that must be shown on daytime TV, which Kitt said will further cut jobs and hurt broadcasters' ability to tell Canadian stories. 