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# uniforum



A temporary occupation of the Coventry Connections taxi offices in Ottawa showed widespread union support for locked out members of Local 1688.

## Unifor occupies Coventry offices

After more than three months locked out by an employer demanding that Ottawa Airport taxi drivers accept a drastic cut in pay, activists temporarily occupied the offices of Coventry Connections, the company that owns all the cabs in the city, on November 13.

“We have been forced into this action by a company and an airport authority that have refused to engage in real dialogue on this issue,” Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

The lockout of members of Unifor Local 1688 began in early August when Coventry cut a deal with the Airport Authority to drastically increase the fees paid by drivers picking up fares at the airport from \$345 to more than \$1,300 per month, by tacking

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## Unifor endorses FedForward

Unifor has thrown its support behind a team of three principled, determined and experienced trade unionists to run for election at the upcoming convention of the Ontario Federation of Labour.

The team, made up of Unifor’s Chris Buckley for President, Ontario

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## No Frills contract boosts wages, improvements for part-time workers

Unifor members of Local 414 have voted to ratify a new collective agreement with No Frills grocery stores. The unit includes 1,265 workers at 19 stores across Ontario.

“We’ve negotiated prescription drug coverage for eligible part-time workers - this is a first for Unifor members at

No Frills,” said Christine Connor, President of Unifor Local 414.

“We’ve also secured significant wage increases over the life of the agreement for both full and part-time workers, ranging from 6 per cent to 9 per cent. Hundreds of workers who earn minimum

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## Brief

# Ramsey named NDP international trade critic

Newly elected NDP MP for Essex Tracy Ramsey, a member of Unifor Local 200, has been named the NDP critic on trade issues.

"I'm honoured to be appointed to the NDP shadow cabinet as the trade critic. Our experienced and united team is ready to get to work on behalf of Canadians as the progressive opposition," Ramsey told reporters, vowing to hold the Liberal government to account.

Ramsey said she will fight to ensure good jobs are protected in trade agreements, and for the Liberals to make their intentions clear on the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal.



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# Earle McCurdy launches NDP provincial election campaign

Gathered with incumbent and hopeful candidates at Memorial University (MUN) in St. John's, Earle McCurdy recently launched the Newfoundland and Labrador NDP campaign in the province's November 30 election.

McCurdy spoke of his own history at MUN and how his days as a student activist inspired his life-long commitment to standing up for the values shared by working people, students and families across the province.

McCurdy said this election is about values such as providing accessible health care, creating a stronger and more stable economy, steady jobs, a healthy environment,



Newfoundland and Labrador NDP Leader Earle McCurdy launches the party's campaign in the province's November 30 election.

and support for families and seniors.

"These are the core values of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and these are the core values of the NDP," he said.

McCurdy is past president of FFAW-Unifor, a post he

held for 20 years, and was secretary-treasurer for 13 years. In those jobs, McCurdy fought passionately on issues such as income replacement for people out of work due to the cod moratorium, EI, foreign overfishing and health and safety.

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Secondary School Teachers' Federation's Patty Coates as Secretary-Treasurer and United Food and Commercial Workers union's Ahmad Gaied as Executive Vice-President.

"Together, this team represents the diversity of workers in Ontario and has put forward a progressive vision for the future of our movement in Ontario," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

The trio is running as FedForward, with the goal of uniting the labour movement in Ontario and advocating for progressive labour law reform. The OFL convention is November 23-27 in Toronto.

"I believe we owe it to working people, whether



The FedForward OFL slate: Ahmad Gaied for Executive Vice-President, Patty Coates for Secretary-Treasurer, and Chris Buckley for President.

they belong to a union or not, to have strong representation at the provincial level," said Buckley.

Buckley is a long-time trade unionist, social justice advocate and former President of Unifor Local 222 in Oshawa, and

past chair of the General Motors master bargaining committee.

Patty Coates is President of the Educational Assistant Bargaining Unit of OSSTF District 17. Gaied is a Member Engagement Representative for UFCW Canada Local 1000A.



**>> Continued from "Unifor occupies Coventry offices" on page 1**

\$5 onto the cost of every ride. The fee cannot be added onto fares charged to customers, so it comes straight off the drivers' pay.

This action was necessary as a result of the employer rejecting an offer that would have led to a resolution. The employer is now demanding that all taxis owned by them have access to the airport. This dispute was about personal greed, as the latest move proves.

Coventry is now holding Blue Line Unit and Airport drivers hostage demanding that they share their work with plates directly owned by those who are supposed to be bargaining in good faith with Local 1688.

"Taxi drivers in Ottawa

work long hours at minimum wage level incomes. They simply cannot afford such a massive cut in their pay," Dias said. "This is a cash grab by the airport and Coventry of more than \$2 million, on the back of these working families."

Dias called on Coventry to return to the table to negotiate a deal that is fair for all sides, and on all levels of government to lend their authority to getting a deal.

"This has gone on too long. The families of these drivers are suffering," he said. "Unifor has made a reasonable offer to settle this dispute."

The occupation was followed by a rally outside the offices that attracted supporters from across the Ottawa labour movement,



Supporters came from across Ontario and Quebec for members of Unifor Local 1688.

as well as support from other Unifor locals across Ontario and Quebec.

On November 16 Unifor responded to the company's latest offer, hoping to make progress towards a

resolution to the dispute. Unifor also sent a request to the Ministry of Labour asking that the mediator assigned to file convene a meeting of all parties as soon as possible.

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wage will see immediate improvements to their pay."

Other gains in the new agreement include enhanced call-in pay provisions for part-time workers to help guard against 'on-call' scheduling, and a 'new hire' wage scale that protects part-time workers wage increases against inflation.

Unifor is one of the

country's largest retail worker unions, with more than 20,000 members working in supermarkets, pharmacies, appliance stores, and other retail shops across Canada.

"Retail is a very challenging sector," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

"But our members are continuing to create positive change through their activism and tenacity."

## Time to fix TPP mistakes now that full text released

With the release of the full text of the Trans Pacific Partnership trade deal, Unifor is calling on the federal government to thoroughly consult with Canadians on the agreement's impact on this country and to revise provisions that will damage key Canadian industries.

"The former Conservative government was in a rush to reach a deal before the federal election. We now have a chance to see what concessions they made so that could happen," Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

"The new government needs to commit to fixing whatever mistakes lurk

in the TPP text because the former Conservative government was in such a rush."

Going through the entire document must not be rushed. It will take weeks to review the TPP itself, the technical annexes, and the bilateral side-deals to identify what parts of the deal were not publicized prior to the election.

"The big question is, what did the Conservatives give up to reach this deal in a hurry," Dias said.

Unifor Economist Jim Stanford previously calculated that the TPP will ultimately threaten 20,000 well-paying jobs in Canada's auto sector alone.



The bargaining team at No Frills was able to negotiate a deal that helps part-time workers at the grocery chain.



## Unifor welcomes Vancouver trucking crack down

Container truck drivers in Vancouver are commending the sector's new Commissioner Corinne Bell for taking steps to push Metro Vancouver's port trucking companies to pay drivers outstanding back pay.

Many companies have refused to implement the wage rates agreed to last spring after truckers shut down Port Metro Vancouver for nearly four weeks.

The deal that ended the job action included significant wage increases and a reduction in wait times at the port.

It was signed by Premier Christy Clark, then-federal Minister of Transportation

Lisa Raitt, and Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

On November 5, Bell and Deputy Commissioner Vince Ready sent a letter to all companies in the sector demanding that all drivers be paid outstanding wages retroactive to April 3, 2014.

The commissioners cited Section 28 of the BC Container Trucking Act, which outlines penalties of up to \$500,000 for non-compliance.

Unifor says that the warning to employers is long overdue and could help avoid work stoppages later this winter during bargaining.

"Our members are

**IN THIS ISSUE** Unifor holds a mass rally in Ottawa in support of taxi drivers locked out for more than three months in a dispute over fees. A deal at No Frills includes improvements for part-timers. FFAW-Unifor's Earle McCurdy launches the NDP election campaign in Newfoundland and Labrador.



**Unifor has led the efforts to settle disputes at Metro Port Vancouver, improving conditions for all drivers working out of the port.**

relieved that the new Commissioners are taking back-pay seriously, but it will remain a major labour issue at Port Metro Vancouver until it is resolved and the drivers have the cheques in their hands," said Gavin McGarrigle, Unifor's BC Area Director.

"The law is clear and

now the message from the Commissioners is clear: Pay up now, risk massive fines, or get kicked out of the port," said Paul Johal, President of Unifor-Vancouver Container Truckers' Association.

At the time of a 2014 deal, Johal said enforcement was critical to its success.