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Delegates to the Canadian Labour Congress convention leapt to their feet when Hassan Yussuff, centre, was declared winner of the presidential election.

Yussuff elected CLC president

Hassan Yussuff has been elected president of the 3.3-million-member Canadian Labour Congress, the first worker of colour to hold the position.

"I'm truly honoured to be the next CLC president," Yussuff told the CLC convention delegates after >> **Continued on page 3**

Ontario election begins

The election in Ontario, and the threat of provincial Progressive Conservative Leader Tim Hudak's attack on labour that were discussed at many Leadership Tour meetings over the winter, has been called for June 12.

"This is one of the challenges we were preparing for all winter with our Rights at Work campaign," Unifor National

President Jerry Dias said. "If Tim Hudak can turn back the clock on labour laws in Ontario, other provinces will be looking to do the same."

Dias and other national leaders made 21 stops across the country in the first few months of the year, meeting with local leaders and activists to tell them about the many threats to labour rights across Canada, including Hudak's Conservatives.

While Hudak has dropped his plan to kill the Rand Formula from the

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Unifor pledges support

Canada's universal, single-payer health care system is a reflection of our values as Canadians, Dr. Danielle Martin told a crowded assembly hall as part of the Ontario Regional Council.

"It's the highest expression of Canadians caring for one another," said Martin.

But with this, there is an obligation to meet the

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#unifor

Here's a selection of tweets about @UniforTheUnion


@local468: Always great to meet a twitter sister in person! The always inspiring @UniforWomen #CLC2014 #unifor great evening of Solidarity tonight!

@jcallaghan2: #Unifor stands with #CUPW and all unions and Canadians in opposition to cuts at #CanadaPost #Solidarity @UniforTheUnion

In brief

Local 975 Direct Energy

Unifor Local 975 has ratified a three-year collective agreement with Direct Energy Essential Home Services with wage increases in each year.

The 500 members will see raises of 2 per cent, 2 per cent and 2.5 per cent in a contract expiring on March 31, 2017. They will also get a drug card and see their vision care increase from \$180 to \$200 every 24 months. Paid Education Leave was negotiated, effective April 1, 2016. 

Bandit taxis

In an attempt to put an end to bandit taxis in Ottawa, the city's police chief sat down recently with several Unifor officials and members.

Charles Bordeleau agreed to continue working with the city and the taxi industry to remedy the problem of unlicensed taxis in Ottawa.


Representing Unifor at the meeting were Eastern Ontario Director Harry Ghadban, national representative Mohamad Alsadi, Local 1688 President Amrik Singh, Local 6056 President Nega Haile and members of both locals, which represent cab drivers in the city. 

Photo spotlight

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PHOTO BY KATIE ARNUP

Ontario Council debated medicare and other issues in Port Elgin.



PHOTO BY LAURENT LÉVESQUE

Almost 350 delegates attended Quebec Council recently.

More is needed beyond PSW raises

An Ontario government plan to boost the wages of Personal Support Workers in the province is a welcome first step in addressing serious concerns in the homecare industry, says Jerry Dias.

"We can't build decent services for our elderly on the backs of working people," said Dias.


Unifor, represents more than 26,000 healthcare workers, including PSWs.

The hourly wage of PSWs is to gradually increase by \$4 an hour, to \$16.50 by April 1, 2016.

Dias said a welcome next step would be for the province to end the practice of requiring companies to bid for the support contracts, which

puts downward pressure on wages.

"When it comes to caring for our parents and grandparents, we shouldn't be in a race to the bottom," said Dias.

The province should also look into pay rates for PSWs working in long term care homes, said Ontario Regional Director Katha Fortier. 

Call for mobilization at Quebec Council

Speaking to Unifor Quebec Council, Quebec Director Michel Ouimet stressed the importance of commitment and involvement in all spheres of society, including the political sphere.

He urged members to mobilize with the aim of getting rid of the Harper Conservatives in the federal elections slated for 2015.

"As unionists and as a labour organization, we can make a difference. One of our roles is to contribute to debates aimed at improving services to the population and to society in general and at making the world of


today and tomorrow a better place," Ouimet said.

Jerry Dias also called on members to get involved, saying that "by taking strategic action, we can obtain tangible results in the political arena. This country has taken a turn to the right and it is up to progressive people like us to reverse this trend."

Participants also took part in workshops on fighting back against anti-labour sentiment sweeping the country. The discussions highlighted several courses of action that local unions have already tested or are



Quebec Director Michel Ouimet.

planning to implement. This exercise was part of a member-to-member campaign aimed at raising awareness about rights at work. 


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

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Conservative election platform, Dias pointed out that Hudak still supports the idea, and has many other policies aimed at weakening unions and driving down wages and living standards.

The Rand formula sets out that while workers can choose whether to join a union, they must pay dues to the union they are covered by under the collective agreement it negotiates with the employer.

"Unifor will not only defend the laws we have, but will push for stronger laws in Ontario and in other provinces," Dias said.

Unifor's plans for the Ontario election will be announced shortly, said Roland Kiehne Director of Membership Mobilization. 

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being elected May 8. "You have voted for change, you have voted for a strong labour movement."

Unifor National President Jerry Dias congratulated Yussuff on his election.

"Members of the CLC have voted for change. Working with all of the affiliates of the CLC, that is what Yussuff will deliver," Dias said. "I would like to congratulate all the candidates in this election. They have contributed to an important debate on renewal, and that can only be good for the labour movement."

Outgoing CLC president Ken Georgetti made a motion to declare Yussuff's election unanimous.

Hassan Hussein

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health care needs of Canadians - including expanding the system to create a national pharmacare program and addressing other issues.


Martin helped found Canadian Doctors for Medicare in 2006 to provide a voice for Canadian doctors who want to strengthen and improve Canada's universal publicly funded health care system.

The group has intervener status in the upcoming B.C. Supreme Court case of Dr. Brian Day, who is challenging B.C.'s ban on private health care. Martin called the court challenge a brazen attack on universal public health care.

Unifor committed to donating \$50,000 in total

withdrew his candidacy in advance of the election to support Yussuff.

Yussuff campaigned on a platform to reinvigorate the labour movement in Canada, pledging to reach out to workers of colour and to lead a more inclusive CLC that pushes back against the anti-labour and austerity agendas of Conservative governments across Canada.

Yussuff began his involvement in the labour movement while working as a truck mechanic and member of the Canadian Auto Workers, later becoming the CAW's first Director of Human Rights. In 1999, he was the first person of colour to be elected to the CLC executive. Three years later, he was elected secretary-treasurer of the CLC. 



Dr. Danielle Martin inspired delegates to Ontario Council to support her organization's fight to save medicare in Canada.

to Canadian Doctors for Medicare and a number of other local unions pledged several thousands of dollars in donations.

For more information on Canadian Doctors for Medicare, visit: <http://www.canadiandoctorsformedicare.ca/> 

Can work be safe when home isn't?

Be part of an initiative to collect much-needed Canadian data on the impacts of domestic violence in the workplace.

The survey is available in English and French until June 6, 2014. Anyone 15 years or older, whether or not they have experienced violence, can participate in the survey. To learn more about the project and fill out the anonymous survey visit: www.unifor.org/women

Victory for Unifor stevedores


Unifor members in Sydney scored a significant victory with the port in the Cape Breton. Under pressure from the entire local labour movement and city council, the port reversed its decision to replace unionized stevedores with non-union workers.

"If there is one place in the country where people understand the important role unions play in our communities and in our country, it's Cape Breton," said Unifor Atlantic Regional Director Lana Payne.

"This is a victory for these 12 workers, but more than that, it is a victory for the entire labour movement. We've shown that fighting back really

makes a difference."

Payne applauded the efforts by all involved, including the Cape Breton Labour Council and the town council leaders who stood with the workers, members of Unifor, and demanded Sydney Ports Corp. reverse its decision and recognize the union rights and the collective agreement of the stevedores.

The Sydney Ports Corp. had planned on replacing the stevedores with non-union workers, ignoring the fact that unionized stevedores had serviced the ports for more than 50 years. Several of the unionized stevedores have significant years of service at the facility. 

Alberta destabilizes pensions

A plan by the Alberta government would create loopholes in private pension plan legislation that threatens to reduce incomes for tens of thousands of seniors, Unifor's western director says.


The plan has now been sent for public

consultations. "Cheating seniors out of pensions that they financed over their lifetime is a new low for the Conservative government," said Joie Warnock, Unifor's western director. "Unifor will not stand by while vulnerable Albertans are treated this way."

Bill 10 would create new

loopholes allowing corporations evade their responsibilities to their retired employees. Among the proposed changes, it would allow employers to switch "defined benefit" plans to "target benefit" plans without the consent of retirees.

"The government is

breaking a promise with seniors. Seniors helped build this province, and they've earned their pensions with hard work," said Warnock. "Their pension funds are sustainable. All this bill does is guarantees bigger profits at the expense of retirees." 

Pattern contract reached with Resolute

A tentative agreement was reached May 8 between the Unifor and Resolute Forest Products. If ratified, this four-year agreement will become the pattern agreement for the pulp and paper industry in Eastern Canada.

"We are pleased with this outcome. In the past, our members have helped keep this company afloat, and now that the economic context has improved, it was time for them to make up some lost ground and ensure the security of their jobs. And that's what we were able to obtain," said Unifor National President

Jerry Dias.

Ratification meetings are set to be held in the coming weeks, with the results to be revealed at the end of the month.

These negotiations with Resolute will help establish a pattern agreement for some 10,000 Unifor members working in more than 40 plants in eastern Canada.

In 2010, Resolute (at the time AbitibiBowater) was in bankruptcy protection, and workers were forced to make numerous concessions to maintain jobs and save their defined benefit pension plan.



Pattern bargaining has been achieved for the pulp and paper sector, with Resolute Forest Products as the target.

Today, the outlook is brighter. "The pulp and paper industry is not dead. It is undergoing a profound change, and we have to make sure that it can renew

itself by developing new products and markets," said Renaud Gagné, assistant to the Quebec director. 

Report shows the value of unions

Unions built the middle class in the last century and, with the right conditions, can do so again this century, a new report by Unifor economist Jordan Brennan has found.

"What we call the 'middle class' today had little precedent in human history until unions helped create it," Brennan writes in *The Creation of a Shared Prosperity in Canada: Unions, Corporations and Countervailing Power*, published recently by the

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

"Union renewal could play a crucial role in restoring middle class security and mass prosperity."

In the report, Brennan correlates the rise in average wages from 1910 to the mid-1970s, when unionization reached its peak, and the stagnation of real wages since as union membership declined.

"This period (1910 to 1977) roughly corresponds with the growth of the

middle class in Canada and accompanying creation of a shared prosperity," he writes. "However, the growth of hourly earnings stagnated after 1977, rising a meager 3 per cent in inflation-adjusted terms in the generation since."

Brennan calculates that for every percentage change in unionization (up or down), the average income of Canadian workers goes up or down by close to \$500 dollars.

"This is the average 'value' of labour unions to

the Canadian workforce," Brennan writes.

By contrast, working people lose ground as corporations become more concentrated and powerful – boosting income inequality.

Correcting that will require stronger unions, and governments to stop attacking union rights.

The full report is available at: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/creation-shared-prosperity-canada> 