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Unifor Lawyer Niki Lundquist goes door-to-door canvassing for votes in the Ontario riding of Whitby-Oshawa, where she is running in a provincial by-election on February 11.

Unifor marks 100 years of women's suffrage

January 28 marks the one hundredth anniversary of the first Canadian province, Manitoba, to grant women the right to vote and be elected in Canada.

"Of course this right wasn't granted to all women and, to be accurate, it wasn't granted, but achieved after a long, hard-fought period of activism spearheaded by the Political Equality League during 1916," said Unifor Women's Director Lisa Kelly.

Kelly was one of about 50 people taking part in a joint labour and women's canvass on January 23 for Unifor Lawyer Niki Lundquist, who is running in the February 11 Ontario by-election for Whitby-Oshawa.

Kelly said that to achieve the vote and the right to

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Newspapers vital to our democracy

The merging of newsrooms in major centres across the country and two of Canada's oldest daily papers closing underlines the need for a broad public policy discussion about the future of Canada's news media, Unifor National President Jerry Dias says

"The state of the news

>> Continued on page 3

Casino Rama workers ratify first contract

Unifor's newest members at Casino Rama, one of Ontario's largest casino resorts, have ratified their first collective agreement.

"Congratulations to the workers at Casino Rama, and welcome to the Unifor family," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

"Today, you have taken an important step in ensuring your voice will be heard in

the workplace, and toward building a more stable future for you, your families and your community."

Unifor Local 1090 President Steve Batchelor said the bargaining committee is extremely proud to have addressed the key concerns of the 1,700 new members at Casino Rama, including:

- wage improvements and

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CP cuts denounced

Unifor is extremely disappointed that Canadian Pacific Railway will cut its workforce by approximately 1,000 employees in the next six months despite posting record profits.

"It's regrettable that CP has decided to cut jobs while posting record profits and revenue," said Unifor Rail Director Brian Stevens.

CP Rail had a record \$1.35 billion in net income in 2015 after cutting 1,800 staff last year, and recently announced that another 1,000 jobs will be cut.

A January 14 order from Transport Canada demanded changes to CP Rail's practices after identifying "excessive fatigue" among CP Rail crews that pose "an immediate threat to safe railway operations."

Stevens said Unifor is increasingly concerned about rail safety with cuts to staff responsible for safety inspections and maintenance.



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Unifor backs Coast Guard petition

Unifor is throwing its support behind a new petition to the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard that calls on the government to halt its plan to close the Comox Marine Communications and Traffic Service base.

Sponsored by new Member of Parliament Rachel Blaney (NDP, North Island-Powell River), the petition contributes to the high-profile campaign waged by Unifor Local 2182 throughout 2015. Unifor represents 300 Coast Guard Marine Communication Officers on both coasts.

Blaney's petition also calls on the federal government to re-evaluate the bases closed since 2012 and re-open centres if practicable.



Unifor has been a leader in the fight against Coast Guard closures.

"In closing coast guard communication bases, the Harper government took great risks with the lives of Canadians on our coasts," said Joie Warnock, Unifor's Western Director.

After closing bases in British Columbia in favour of remote monitoring with untested technology, the coast guard was riddled with

outages during the summer that could have had disastrous results for mariners.

Unifor argues that the Harper government closed MCTS bases without consultation or proper risk assessment. When the MCTS Centre in Comox is closed, the two remaining Centres in Prince Rupert and Victoria are located in Tsunami Zones.

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parity within classifications

- a grievance and arbitration process
- equitable scheduling to maintain work/life balance
- elimination of an unfair employee rating system
- a women's advocate program

• improved vacation provisions, including pushing back on two tier vacations

- benefit premium frozen for part time
- skilled trades language
- no contracting out
- commitment to increasing full time employees
- full time union representation

"This agreement is the culmination of not only the strong determination of the bargaining committee,



Casino Rama workers brought their stories to Unifor's All In organizing conference in Montreal last September.

but is also the result of the unwavering solidarity of the membership," Batchelor said.

"This agreement definitely establishes a relationship moving forward that will continue to improve the working conditions for our new members at Casino Rama."

Almost 1,700 workers at Rama, including dealers, cashiers, slot workers, food and beverage staff,

environmental services, finance, hotel, valet, entertainment and other staff, voted to join Unifor last year.

Rama workers and organizers shared their stories at the Organizing Department's All In conference in September.

They join more than 15,000 hospitality workers, including more than 7,000 at casinos, already represented by Unifor.

>> Continued from "100 years of women's suffrage" on page 1

run, women activists posed questions that still guide the efforts of today - such as the words of Nellie McClung in 1914: "Have we not the brains to think? Hands to work? Hearts to feel? And lives to live? 'Do we not help build the Empire? Give us our due!'"

As part of its founding principles, Unifor has played a pivotal role in electoral politics since its founding in 2013 - and has much to show for its effort.

For instance, this past year, Unifor came together with one voice and for one purpose - to kick former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper out of office after nearly a decade.

That victory was thanks

to the strong local activism right across the country and to our members. Unifor is engaging in politics more than ever before because it can deliver results.

In fact, exemplary women activists have been elected from among Unifor's activists, including Essex, Ontario NDP MP Tracey Ramsey and Shannon Phillips, the NDP MLA for Lethbridge-West in Alberta.

"Electing union sisters enable our voices and demands as workers to be heard," Kelly said.

To make a long-standing difference, everyone must continue to be active agents of change in both the workplace and in electoral politics to ensure workers' voices and a diversity of women's voices are included, Kelly said.

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industry in this country - both print and broadcast - demands the immediate attention of the new Liberal government in Ottawa," said Dias.

"An informed public is the bedrock of a democratic society. Canada needs a strong news industry to ensure we have that informed public electing our leaders."

Unifor represents journalists and other staff at Postmedia papers in Ottawa and Vancouver where, along with newspapers in Edmonton and Calgary, newsrooms are being merged.

Unifor also represents workers at the Guelph Mercury and the Nanaimo Daily News, which have

both announced that they will stop printing.

The broadcast industry is also facing challenges due to questionable CRTC rulings under the Harper government that hurt funding for local TV.

Just before Christmas, CHCH TV in Hamilton declared bankruptcy.

"Fragmented ad dollars are putting Canadian journalism and coverage of local and regional news at risk," Dias said.

"Media outlets are more than a business. They are a public trust, and we need to find a way forward to ensure that they survive these difficult times and are able to thrive into the future.

"With each quieted voice, our democracy suffers."



Niki Lundquist, centre, got the support of dozens of Unifor women who came out to help in her election bid recently.

"We can make a tremendous difference in the lives of all workers."

Throughout the next couple of months, Unifor is organizing for upcoming elections and to support

women in leadership.

Members can support the by-elections in British Columbia on February 2 and the spring provincial elections in Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

CRTC abdicating leadership role in Rogers decision

Unifor condemns a recent CRTC decision following its review of Rogers' elimination of all daily newscasts at OMNI TV.

"The Commission is looking the other way while ethnic and third language television news dies in this country," said Howard Law, Media Director for Unifor. "Almost half a million new Canadians depended on those newscasts."

The CRTC ruled that that OMNI's move does not violate its conditions of license, though Commissioner Raj Shoan wrote separately from the majority of the Commission that "by denying the applications but taking

no meaningful action to address the legitimate concerns of the applicants and interveners, the Commission is abdicating its leadership role."

The Commission's passive response comes eight months after OMNI slashed its Punjabi, Mandarin, Cantonese and Italian news services in May 2015, just prior to the federal election campaign. Law points out that Rogers executives made no mention of the upcoming cuts in 2014 when it asked the CRTC to renew OMNI's license, in part because it provided the daily newscasts to ethnic communities.



IN THIS ISSUE With the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage in Manitoba, Unifor women come out to help a sister in her election bid. Casino Rama workers ratify a first contract. CP Rail cuts denounced. Challenges facing the news media.

Canadians pressure health ministers to act

Outside the January 2015 meeting of provincial health care ministers in Vancouver, Unifor and other members of the BC Health Coalition held a media outreach event to put give voice to Canadians who want their public health care system strengthened.

"Canadians spoke loud and clear in our fall election that health care remains our top shared priority," said Jerry Dias, Unifor's National President.

"Harper systematically dismantled collaboration between levels of government, and as a result put at risk the entire system of health care that we hold so dear. We expect and demand a strong

collaborative effort by all levels of government now to properly fund reform and progress."

The Harper government allowed the Canadian Health Accord to expire with no plans or agreement to renew. This would mean a \$36 billion cut in federal transfers over the next 10 years, leaving provincial governments with the increased financial burden made worse by the growing demands of an aging population.

"The Ministers gathered here this week must understand that Canadians can see what lies ahead," said Gavin McGarrigle, Unifor's BC Area Director.



Health care activists rallied outside the meeting of health ministers in Vancouver last month.

"We have an aging population, escalating drug prices, a stealthy increase in private 'fee-for-service' medicine and we also remain the only developed country with universal health care but no national

Pharmacare program for prescription medication."

Dias said bulk purchasing for prescription medication would be a modest first step, but it doesn't necessarily address access to life-saving medication.