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# uniforum



BC Council Delegates gather to engage and discuss action plans to be agents of change in the province.

## BC Council activates plan for a better province

Delegates from more than thirty Unifor locals gathered in Vancouver for the BC Council, on November 25-27.

The meeting opened with an inspiring welcome from Debra Sparrow, an elder from the Musqueam Nation. Unifor's Western Regional Director Joie Warnock followed up with a speech that brought delegates to a standing ovation about Unifor's plan for activism in BC.

"We can have a better BC. I know it's right around the corner," said Warnock. "On virtually every issue near and dear to British Columbians' hearts, Premier Christy Clark has failed, but we can change that."

Warnock said that Unifor will be focusing the talent and skills of BC members to

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## Quebec Council

Unifor's Quebec Council had a pointed political tone, as delegates from across the region met in Montreal from November 25 to 27. Members were encouraged to start mobilizing today, with a view to ousting Philippe Couillard's Liberal government in 2018. This was just one of the messages delivered by Quebec Director Renaud

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## Unifor calls for expanded local news and ethnic programming

Unifor has called on the CRTC to bring in strong measures to boost local news and programming, including calling for the restoration of expanded programming in Italian, Punjabi, Cantonese and Mandarin.

Unifor Media Director Howard Law told the

CRTC's recent hearings on the future of local TV that it should pay no attention to earlier submissions from Canada's private broadcasters.

"Private broadcasters are simply out of touch with public opinion and the clear views expressed by both the CRTC and the Heritage

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## Roundtable lobbies ministers

The Good Jobs Roundtable, which came out of the Unifor organized Good Jobs Summit in 2014, met recently with two federal cabinet ministers to discuss ways to create more good jobs in this country.

“Our union stressed with both ministers the importance of good jobs in building strong communities, and the vital role government plays in making that possible,” said Unifor National President Jerry Dias.

The November 28 meeting was joined by Labour Minister MaryAnn Mihychuk and Natural Resources Minister James Carr. The coalition discussed improving labour market information and planning, and ways to sustain and create a future good jobs by adding greater value to Canada’s natural resources.



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## Unifor calls for Federal Disabilities Act

On December 3, we mark the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. As part of our mission to build a more equitable and inclusive society, Unifor is advocating for legislative changes to improve accessibility and ensure full and equal participation by persons with disabilities.

Unifor believes that the creation of a national law could meaningfully impact the quality of life for many Canadians. During federal consultations on the development of a Canadians with Disabilities Act, Unifor made a submission to advocate for accessibility legislation, with the goal of eliminating physical, social and attitudinal barriers. Read Unifor’s full submission on

accessibility legislation here:

[unifor.org/nobarriers](http://unifor.org/nobarriers)

In its “No Barriers – It’s Time!”, Unifor recommends an active approach to seek and remove all barriers that create hardship and segregation. Federal standards need to support the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all social, political and economic institutions, as well as in services and facilities.

Among Unifor’s suggestions to remove barriers is the inclusion of Braille signage and accessible websites along with requirements that organizations who conduct business with the Federal Government incorporate barrier-free accessibility into all proposed projects and



services.

In addition, any new legislation must cover all people with disabilities, regardless of whether the disability is related to mental or physical health. The union also calls for the proposed Act to address all physical barriers that impede free movement, use of public transportation, access to information or use of technology.

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Gagné in his report to the 370 delegates. In his update on Unifor’s work and the current political landscape, Gagné also talked about the presidential election in the U.S. and the serious concerns it has sparked.

“Facing the prospect of such a protectionist government, we are particularly worried about our jobs in the softwood lumber and aluminium industries, but also in manufacturing,” declared Gagné.

Unifor National President Jerry Dias also spoke to delegates about President-elect Trump.

“The lesson from Trumpland is that the demagogues fill a void when Liberal centrist



**Quebec Council focuses on political action.**

politicians abandon the working class and the trade union movement,” said Dias. He also congratulated the Quebec labour movement for recent mobilizations including the demonstrations and campaigns against the austerity program of the Couillard government, and for pushing for the \$15

minimum wage in Quebec.

The Council also played host to Jean-François Lisée, head of the Parti québécois and leader of the Official Opposition of Quebec. Mr. Lisée, whose numerous attacks on his political rivals made headlines throughout the weekend, delivered a rousing speech.

>> Continued from "BC Council activates..." on page 1

bring change and elect the NDP this May. Delegates also heard a scathing review of the BC Liberal's record from BC NDP Leader John Horgan, who pledged to be a premier who stands with, and will work for, all working people.

Unifor National President Jerry Dias spoke to delegates about the collective action and solidarity required to be successful in the 2017 BC provincial election.

"We need a government in BC with a real working class agenda," said Dias. "A government that lifts people out of poverty, not one that looks after its donors."

Dias also told delegates

to keep pressure on the federal Liberal government to deliver on "big ticket" promises like electoral reform. He said that there's a window of opportunity that closes in 2017 and called on every member to push for proportional representation, "we can make every vote count."

Unifor National Secretary-Treasurer Bob Orr reminded delegates that a united labour movement is more important than ever because of the resurgence of far-right politics around the world, including just south of the border.

Lobbying for change was a theme that continued on the second day of Council. Delegates wore t-shirts with a message about removing barriers for people with disabilities and sent a clear



Unifor Western Director Joie Warnock with BC NDP Leader John Horgan.

message to the federal Minister of Sport and Persons with Disabilities, Carla Qualtrough. The minister said that she is eager to work with Unifor to ensure that a new Canadians with Disabilities

Act law is written to maximize effectiveness in the workplace.

To view the photo album of BC Council visit: [www.facebook.com/UniforCanada](https://www.facebook.com/UniforCanada)

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Minister. You might as well ignore those portions of their submissions," Law said.

Bell Media and Rogers have proposed that expenditures on local news be pegged to revenue from the company's broadcasting assets. Law said those revenues are expected to decline in coming years and under the broadcasters' proposals, that would mean a steady decline in local news coverage.

Unifor however is calling on the CRTC to establish steady and predictable expenditure on local news as a condition of license, which it said the companies can afford thanks to their broader interests in

Internet, cable, phone and other services.

On OMNI, the ethnic language broadcaster owned by Rogers, Law backed the company's idea to charge TV distributors a fee of 12 cents per subscriber, but called for the fee to be 15 cents.

"For three pennies a month more we can restore the level of free over the air local news programming to these four major linguistic communities," Law said.

As a condition of license, Law also called for OMNI to broadcast an hour of news programming a day in each language, to maintain full editorial control of its news and for Rogers to fully account for how the extra fees are being used.

## Understanding Unifor's Membership

Strengthening our union is a collective task, it takes time but it is worth it for our future!

Fill out a short survey.

Visit [unifor.org/demographics](http://unifor.org/demographics)





**IN THIS ISSUE : BC and Quebec Councils mobilize for upcoming provincial elections. Unifor calls for the creation of a Federal Canadians with Disabilities Act. The CRTC is told to boost local and ethnic news programming and more! !**

## ITF gets wages owed and transport home for stranded seafarers

In early November, the International Transport Workers' Federation was contacted by a group of seafarers facing a number of serious issues, including non-payment of wages.

Five crew members from Peru, Honduras and the Dominican Republic on the MV Dutch Runner transport ship at Port Hawkesbury in Nova Scotia were owed a month and a half's wages and had other elements of their contract broken by their employer.

Karl Risser, ITF Inspector for the Atlantic region, worked with community organization Mission to

Seafarers while Unifor's Atlantic office drew media attention to the situation.

"Shipping is an incredibly competitive industry and situations like this are not uncommon for crew members to face," said Risser. "We're really happy to see these workers get paid what they were owed and to know they're on their way back to their families."

Our union raised awareness that created public pressure that forced the ship's owners to pay the crew and secure their travel back to their home countries.

On Monday, November



Crew members of MV Dutch Runner happy to be heading home.

7, Risser and Mission to Seafarers Chaplin Maggie Whittingham boarded the vessel to find poor ship conditions with the small skeleton crew in distress. They addressed several urgent issues, provided warm clothes, heaters and food to the crew.

This is just one of

many examples of how Unifor has worked with other organizations or international federations to defend workers' rights, eradicate exploitation and restore justice. This is a telling story of why solidarity makes a difference in the labour movement.