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VOLUME 5, NO. 11

WWW.UNIFOR.ORG

JUNE 8, 2017



uniforum



Newly-elected Atlantic Regional Council Executive and Standing Committee members

Atlantic Regional Council tackles politics & equity

Members from across New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, PEI and Newfoundland and Labrador gathered in Halifax from June 1-4 to attend the Atlantic Regional Council. This year's council highlights included energetic support for creating spaces for young workers, celebrating the success of programs like Pathways to Shipbuilding and Women Unlimited, and an incredible show of solidarity for locked-out members of Local 597 in Gander.

"The strength our members have shown on the picket line in Gander has been incredible and our membership showed just how strong our solidarity is

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Towns and Cities act on softwood lumber

Unifor called on local governments to take action on softwood lumber at the 2017 Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Conference, held in Ottawa June 1-3.

The union's Political Action department

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New labour reforms won in Ontario and Alberta

The Ontario government introduced sweeping labour reform that will make it the second province to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by January 2019, following the lead of Alberta.

The Fair Workplaces, Better Jobs Act, was tabled on June 1, the last day of the Ontario session. If passed, the act will also allow for job-protected paid sick

days; fairer rules around scheduling; equal pay for part-time, temporary, casual and seasonal workers; card check certification in three sectors dominated by precarious work; and much more.

The introduction of the legislation is the result of the two-year long Changing Workplaces Review, which was the first ever

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Workers and Community Protect Casino Jobs

Casino workers and community members met at a Niagara Falls, Ontario community centre to defend good jobs in the region.

A provincial Request for Proposals (RFP) recently put 1,400 local jobs at risk through the possible closure of the Fallsview Casino.

Greg Brady, President Local 199, representing security workers at the casino, pledged the union will defend all jobs at the workplace and the dignity of workers. "I'll fight for all of you," he told a packed room.

Niagara's casinos were built to bring good jobs to the community but are now being treated as a revenue source by the provincial government, with no regard for the working people who rely on them.



Uniforum is published every two weeks by Unifor, Canada's largest union in the private sector.

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Report documents dangerous chemicals at GE plant

A new Unifor-sponsored report shows that workers at the GE plant in Peterborough, Ontario were exposed to more than 3,000 toxic chemicals, including at least 40 known or suspected carcinogens.

"These GE workers have suffered horrific and often terminal diseases at a disproportionate rate, yet approximately half of the compensation claims filed have been rejected, abandoned or withdrawn due to insufficient proof," said Joel Carr, Unifor National Representative.

"This report provides much needed evidence to allow the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board to reopen and support these claims."

Unifor will present

the new report, which conclusively documents the extent of worker exposure to toxic chemicals, to Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB). To download the report go to unifor.org/healthandsafetyandenvironment

The chemicals workers were exposed to include: asbestos, arsenic, vinyl chloride, beryllium, formaldehyde, trichloroethylene, PCB, uranium, lead, and many others. The study found that workers were immersed up to their elbows bare handed into chemicals, chemical-soaked rags were used to clean equipment, and asbestos boards were cut without proper respiratory equipment, and more.



Family members of deceased GE workers speak to media following release of report

"I've seen the results, I've been to the funerals," said GE retiree Sue James, who has lost many colleagues as well as her father Gord, a GE veteran employee who died with a tumour in his lung and four on his spine.

There are 31 Unifor members with WSIB claims for GE job-related illness, including several forms of cancer. The report was commissioned by the Advisory Committee on Retrospective Exposures, consisting of retired GE workers.

>> Continued from "Towns and Cities act..." on page 1

set up a booth at the Conference trade show to share information on how municipal governments can support Unifor's softwood lumber campaign. "At FCM I learned that we can stand together with communities from across Canada and make a difference on a political forum," said Local 74 President Joanne Lamothe. "As a member of Unifor it gave me such pride to be part of the solution for a better tomorrow." In addition, Unifor hosted a reception to appeal to political delegates where National President Jerry Dias welcomed mayors from across the country, including Vancouver, Saskatoon, Toronto, Brampton, Mississauga,



Unifor focuses on fair softwood lumber trade at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Conference

Ottawa, and Corner Brook.

"Softwood lumber is a municipal issue," said Dias. "Unifor took that message to mayors and our union succeeded in getting a resolution passed on the impact of the softwood lumber trade dispute."

On June 3, conference delegates voted 94 per cent in favour to support the Free and Fair Trade - Softwood Lumber Resolution.

The motion called on the FCM to continue to work with the federal government to support the interests of municipalities across Canada affected by U.S. countervailing duties and to ensure that the federal government understands the full impact of trade measures on local economies.

To learn more about the campaign visit unifor.org/softwood.

>> Continued from "Atlantic Regional Council..." on page 1

this week," said Lana Payne, Atlantic Regional Director. "This group of 32 workers is continuing to stand strong and they've got an entire region, an entire country of members standing with them."

Donations from the floor, along with matching funds from the national union, totaled over \$45,000 in contributions toward the locked-out workers.

Members at the council reinforced the importance of fighting back against regressive employers and governments, with Unifor National President Jerry Dias delivering a fiery post-provincial election reminder of our union's political clout. "When Unifor decides to

act, we make an impact," said Dias. "Our members in BC and in Nova Scotia have taken down one neo-liberal government and knocked another one down to the weakest of majorities."

Dias recommitted the union's strength to fighting back against anti-worker governments and congratulated Nova Scotian members for their activism leading up to the May 30 election. Stephen McNeil's Liberals managed to hold on to a razor-thin majority by a handful of votes.

"The involvement of Unifor members was outstanding," said Gary Burrill, leader of the Nova Scotia NDP. "To stand there on election night and see this outstanding group right beside the podium was wonderful."



President Jerry Dias with locked-out members of Local 597

Guest speaker and former Poet Laureate of Halifax, El Jones, lit up the room with spoken word poetry about women's movements, justice for the incarcerated and equality for people of colour. Christine Saulnier of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Nova Scotia presented clear data on income inequality and

the impact of neo-liberal policies.

The Council passed resolutions on employment insurance, long-term health care, and labour council and federation affiliations.

To view a photo gallery of the Conference visit

[Facebook.com/UniforCanada](https://www.facebook.com/UniforCanada)

>> Continued from "New labour reforms..." on page 1

independent review of both the Employment Standards and Labour Relations Acts.

"This is a victory for workers and I am proud to say Unifor played a role," said Ontario Regional Director Naureen Rizvi. "Over the last two years, members have been involved in town halls, consultations, lobby sessions and active on social media to demand change."

One week earlier, the Alberta government also introduced changes to the laws governing work, with Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act.

The Act includes changes to the Labour Relations and Employment Standards Codes which is the first

modernization in 30 years. It reintroduces card check certification, setting the threshold for certification at 65 per cent and also gives greater powers to officials who are enforcing employment standards as well as leave provisions for Albertans who are sick, caring for a family member, or fleeing domestic violence.

"By re-balancing the power dynamic in the workplace, the government is giving Albertans important tools to have greater leverage at work," said Western Regional Director Joie Warnock.

Unifor was heavily involved in the Alberta review process and worked with the NDP government to develop the new legislation.

More Bus drivers at First Student join Unifor!

On May 16, another 285 bus drivers employed by First Student voted overwhelmingly in support of joining Unifor.

The workers based in Ajax and Whitby, will now join other bus drivers represented by Unifor at First Student in Markham and Bowmanville, Ontario.

During the organizing campaign, bus drivers came forward with concerns regarding eroding health and safety provisions, pay for hours worked, and respect at work. The union and a collective agreement will provide these workers with a real voice and the capacity to address issues with a clear process and

strong bargaining power.

This campaign was successful because of the dedication and active participation of a large inside team who helped to gain the support of their co-workers. Members of the inside organizing team conducted widespread outreach to their co-workers over the many months leading up to the vote, and managed to secure a resounding victory for their workplace.

As Ontario's largest school bus drivers' union, Unifor has been actively working to improve working conditions in the industry. To learn more visit [unifor.org/schoolbus](https://www.unifor.org/schoolbus).



IN THIS ISSUE Atlantic Regional Council delegates discuss politics and equity. Path to \$15 minimum wage announced as part of Ontario labour law reform. New report documents exposure of GE Peterborough workers to toxic chemicals. Unifor calls on municipal governments to take action on softwood lumber and more!

Unifor Supports Indigenous Mental Health Programs

Unifor and Bell Let's Talk joined forces to donate \$200,000 to Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre (Ma Mawi) and the Canadian Mental Health Association, Manitoba and Winnipeg (CMHA) to support the launch of the Strengthening Wellness Education to Love Life (SWELL) program.

Through the SWELL program, Ma Mawi and CMHA will deliver culturally relevant mental health programs to equip Indigenous youth and their families with tools for mental health promotion.

"Unifor shares the Ma Mawi philosophy of working together to help one another," said Jerry Dias,

Unifor National President. "The stigma of mental illness too often leads to isolation and solitary struggle, which makes the need for community and culturally based support so crucial for Indigenous people."

Funding for the donation was made possible from the Unifor Social Justice Fund that contributes to projects both within Canada internationally. To present Unifor's donation Joie Warnock, Western Regional Director was on hand to speak at the event.

As part of the program, volunteers and staff from youth-serving organizations in the community will be



Western Regional Director Joie Warnock at the launch of the SWELL program at the Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre

trained in mental health first aid for First Nations communities. SWELL will also engage youth through an annual Indigenous Youth Summit to increase their voice in mental health services.

"The mental health needs of the Indigenous community are unique,

complex and rooted in multi-generational trauma," said Diane Redsky, Executive Director of Ma Mawi. "SWELL directly addresses this critical need by providing training to staff helpers on the front lines supporting youth and saving lives."