

# Unifor Ontario Regional Council Report (December 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016)

The 5<sup>th</sup> Ontario Regional Council took place in Toronto on December 2<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> 2016 and was well attended by Delegates from various sectors from across the province.

The Council was opened with a traditional aboriginal greeting by Candace Lavalley President of Local 7-0 and also Vice Chair of the Ontario Council.

A minute of silence was taken in respect of those who have passed away and retirees who attended the Council were also recognized.

**Naureen Rizvi** (*Ontario Regional Council Director*) spoke about “Save the Trades” rally held on Wednesday, this was well attended by members of Unifor, other unions, tradespeople, employers, apprentices, politicians, etc. The rally was about how the Liberal Government is pushing through Bill 70 which has Schedule 17 hidden within it. This has changes impacting public safety and certification skilled trades and apprentices (more information can be found on [www.protradesafeontario.ca](http://www.protradesafeontario.ca)). Naureen also spoke how Unifor has been in the forefront improving working conditions for working people; successful bargaining and investment for Detroit 3, groundbreaking improvements for school bus drivers, unionizing the first Sobeys grocery store and that Unifor was playing a lead role in the Ontario government’s workplace review.

**Jerry Dias** (*President of Unifor*) spoke in his address to Council saying our union will continue to be active on many fronts; from boosting the number of women in politics, to being active in elections, advocating for a \$15 minimum wage and working hard at the bargaining table on behalf of the members. Dias recounted a meeting earlier with Postmedia Chief Executive Officer Paul Godfrey after top executives at the Company gave themselves \$2.3 million in bonuses while slashing staff at its newspapers and newsrooms. **“If there’s \$2.3 million for the top three executives, there needs to be something for our members,”** he said. Dias also spoke about the “Save the Trades” rally saying even though it was put together in a few days we had over 5000 people who showed up. The changes being pushed through are about giving non skilled workers the right to perform skilled work; we want qualified people performing the work and perform the work safely.

There were 6 recommendations from Ontario Regional Council Director;

1. **School Bus Campaign** - The Ontario government bidding system for school bus contracts called Request for Proposals (RFP) system has forced large operators to give up routes, driven small independent operators out of business. At the beginning of the year thousands of students were left stranded because of lack of drivers causing chaos. RFP caused a wave of job losses and a bidding war saw contract flipping with a race to the bottom. The recommendation is to encourage all members to sign an online petition titled “School Bus Drivers Deserve Better” and to send a letter to your MPP expressing concern about deteriorating work standards and to contact the local school bus trustees to raise awareness of the campaign.
2. **Make it fair Campaign** - Work which is precarious, temporary, part-time and contract has been steadily on the rise. This type of work only benefits employers and not the workers, this campaign is in part about making changes to the outdated Employment Standards through the Changing Workplace Review process. The Ontario Federation of Labour is leading this campaign and we all need to support it to create more permanent jobs.
3. **Psychological Wellness** - The psychological health and safety of workers is just as important of workers as protecting them from physical health and safety. With mental health on the increase (healthcare workers suffer from the highest level of stress) it is recommended that the National Health and Safety Department and other local unions

work together to lobby the Ministry of Labour to accept the CSA Psychological Health and safety in the workplace standard as a code of practice under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and leadership negotiates the standard into the collective agreements.

4. **Cap and Trade** – In May 2016 the Wynne government passed legislation of Ontario’s commitment to join the Western Climate Incentive Cap and Trade program. Our union does not oppose climate control but wants the government to take concrete steps to demonstrate to workers that they will not be left behind as economic and environment changes take place. We want to see just transition for those workers who depend on making a living working in oil extraction, upgrading, refining, auto, truck and bus manufacturing, aerospace, mining, etc.
5. **Paid Leave for Victims of Domestic Violence** – Unifor has been a leader in advocating for solutions to gender based violence, paid leave would provide some security of retaining employment and earnings while dealing with the effects of domestic violence. It was recommended to lobby governments and negotiate this leave into the collective agreements.
6. **Accessibility Legislation**- Many Canadians continue to face barriers (visible and invisible) that affect their ability to participate in daily activities that most people take for granted. Unifor’s Workers with Disabilities have drafted a submission examining the scope of accessibility legislation and are actively participating in consultations with governments.

There were also three resolutions of which two were to create a committee for E.I./CPP/EFAP and Addictions and WSIB Committee, the second was for procedural work for the Resolutions Committee. The third resolution was for support of Bill C-285 to help create regulations for those working for armoured cars. Workers and public safety needs to be a priority and not corporate profits.

The new executive for Ontario Council was also elected at this meeting for a three year term. Congratulations to: Dino Chiodo, Chair; Candace Lavalley, Vice-Chair; Tullio DiPonti, Secretary-Treasurer; and Kari Jefford, Tim McKinnon, Debbie Montgomery, Stephanie Haskell, Scott McIlmoyle, Pearl Almeida, Ken Cole and Jim Reid, who were elected as members at large.

**Victoria Maxwell** (*Mental Health Educator*) treated delegates to a live performance in the afternoon. The one-woman show revealed her personal story of living with bipolar disorder. Maxwell told delegates that they have an important role to play in helping workers with mental illness lead full lives. **“Therapy got me stable, but work made me well.”**

**Chris Buckley** (*OFL President*) spoke of how 52% of Ontario jobs were precarious and said this is not the Ontario we want. He said he is worried about our youth who will no longer have good jobs for them and are graduating into unemployment lines. OFL has partnered for a \$15/hour minimum wage saying if it can be done in Alberta then it can be done here as well.

**Roberta Jamieson** (*President and CEO of INDSPIRE*) Gave insight to the neglect of First Nations youth education, she said that only 37% of the youth will graduate compared to 87% of the rest of the Canada. The reason for this she said was poverty, INDSPIRE (recognized as one of the top 25 charities by National Post) has been helping to invest in education for the young people of the First Nations. She quoted Senator Sinclair who had spoken about residential schools **“It was education that got us into this mess, its education that will get us out of it.”**

A project to encourage more women to run for political office, Daughters of the Vote, was outlined by spokesperson Nancy Peckford and a participant in the program, Antu Hossain. Hossain will be one of 338 women representing their communities in Parliament next March 8, International Women’s Day.

**Tareq Hadhad** newcomer to Canada from Syria told Council of how his family lost everything in Damascus, their family chocolate factory was bombed and his father was lucky enough to vacate the property in a matter of hours. They settled and rebuilt their lives in Nova Scotia starting up the chocolate factory business named “Peace by Chocolate.” He said the family was grateful of being accepted and said in other countries refugees from Syria are turned away at the border, in Canada the officers had signs “Welcome to Canada” as we walked through the airport. When the family heard

about the fires at Fort McMurray they donated money from the family business saying when they needed help Canada was there and now it is there turn to give.

All of the copies of the recommendations and resolutions along with reports of the National Staffs are available in the union office. More detailed information can also be found on the Unifor National website at [unifor.org](http://unifor.org).

*Thank you for your support in electing me as your Ontario Regional Council Delegate.*

*In Solidarity,*

**Jaspal Brar**