

Unifor Ontario Regional Council Report

December 2016

December 2nd and 3rd, 2016, I attended Ontario Regional Council in Toronto at the Sheridan Center Hotel. Council was called to order at 9:00 am, by the Ontario Council Chairperson, Dino Chiodo (also President of Local 444). Dino welcomed everyone to the 5th Ontario Regional Council and recognized the Ontario Regional Executive Board. Dino also recognized the retirees who have made huge contributions to our Union. Dino spoke of some of the challenges within the Union and about Bill 70, schedule 16 and 17 that takes away the right of regulations within skilled trades. Dino introduced Candace Lavalley and Marilyn Netemegesic who greeted us with an Aboriginal smudging ceremony.

We watched a video/slide show called Year in Review. This showed some of the strikes, rallies and demonstrations that Unifor was involved with over the last year.

Naureen Rizvi, the new Ontario Regional Director started her speech by recognizing Katha Fortier for everything she has done as the first Ontario Director. She said next year Ontario will celebrate the 100 year anniversary of women getting to vote. She spoke about Detroit 3 bargaining where the Union was able to get the 3 companies to invest 1.5 million dollars in Canada. She spoke about the many struggles that workers face every day in Ontario. She talked about the rising cost of Hydro. There is still a large percentage that is not privatized and it is not too late to change the path that will only drive the cost up as corporations mandate more profits. Naureen spoke about Bill 177 that will grant people up to 10 days of paid leave for domestic violence and then urged people to attend their December 6th candle light vigil.

Chris Buckley, OFL (Ontario Federation of Labour) President said he can see how busy Unifor has been with Detroit 3 bargaining, school buses and the many other sets of bargaining and campaigns. He congratulated Unifor for saving the Auto Industry in Canada and said the governments need to create an Auto Strategy. Chris pointed out 52% of jobs in the GTA are precarious, part time, contract, and agency work. He spoke about the rebuilding of the OFL and Unions are re-affiliating with the OFL. He said they have been able to hire and are doing so as diverse as possible. Workers need fair wages, hours of work, benefits and good working conditions. He is worried about our youth, gone are the days when they walk out of school and found a good job with a good salary, benefits and a pension. Today they find themselves on the unemployment line, unable to find work in their field and with significant student debt.

There were 5 committee reports on the first day from the LGBTQ, (Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender and Queer), AWOC, (Aboriginal Workers of Colour), political Action, Organizing and the Women's Committee.

Jerry Dias, National President, addressed the council. Jerry started by recognizing the Syrian family that Unifor sponsored and who were in attendance. Jerry said there couldn't be a worse time for the Paper Industry restructuring when the CEO's of the 3 top companies were awarded 2.7 million dollars in retention bonuses. He said he didn't see any retention bonuses for the workers, only lay off slips. He pointed out print media has dropped 22% in the last year. Jerry said there was a strike at the Windsor School Board for 5 weeks were the school board was blaming the province government and the provincial government was blaming the school board. After Unifor arranged a meeting between both, our members were back to work. Jerry said Bill C525, C377 and C4, the anti-Union bills are before the house to be repealed. These were all put in place by the previous Federal Conservative government. Jerry said he met with Patrick Brown, Leader of the Ontario Conservative Party who said when I am premier of Ontario, I'm not going to do anything against you and the Union but I am not going to do anything for you either. Remember what the Conservative government is already saying during the next Ontario Election. Jerry said our Union will continue to fight to put an end to violence against women. Jerry spoke about the U.S. elections where Clinton got more votes than Trump but because of their election procedure, Trump was elected. He said we have the same problem in Canada and Ontario. We need election reform. Trudeau said this would be the last time Canadians would vote with a first past the poll system but since the elections, he is wavering. Trump struck a chord with workers in the U.S. when he said he would end the trade agreements that affect the people negatively. He said the TPP trade agreement will be negative for everyone and what did Canada do? Nothing! Even when it was said the tariffs in the U.S. would not come off of vehicles until 25 to 30 years; Canada would allow the tariffs to come off in only 5 years, hurting our Auto industry even more. NAFTA was to increase the standards in Mexico but they are worse off today. The "all in" cost in Mexico is \$5. We have a \$122 billion trade deficit after NAFTA and before NAFTA we had a \$15 billion surplus.

There was a video showing 2 of the 5 families Unifor sponsored from Syria, the many challenges they faced and the 1 million Syrians displaced in Jordan. One of the families that relocated to Antigonish, Nova Scotia attended the council and the son, Tareq Hadhad said their family had a chocolate factory in Syria exporting to Egypt, Jordan and Germany. He urged his father to leave the factory but his father didn't want to do so. 10 minutes after his father left, the factory was destroyed by bomber jets. He said it was tough coming to Canada, probably the coldest country in North America but the country with the warmest hearts. They have since started a chocolate company and have been selling their chocolates there. When they heard about the wild fires in Fort McMurray, they sent their profits to help those people as they know what it is like to lose everything.

Lisa Kelly, Unifor Director of Women's Department gave a presentation about the gender gap. She said for every dollar a man makes, a woman makes .69 to 73.5 cents. She spoke about the many issues that create the gender wage gap. Affordable child care makes a big difference to the jobs women can apply for and get. A woman has to work 14 more years to make what a man makes over his career. The smallest wage gender gap is within unionized workplaces.

Tullio DiPonti, ORC Financial Secretary gave the ORC Financial report. As of July 30, 2016 the total net assets of the ORC is \$5,450,212. That is an increase of \$706,367 from previously reported on December 31, 2015. The report was voted on and accepted.

Nancy Peckford, the National Spokesperson for the Daughters of Vote gave a presentation that included pointing out it wasn't until 1960 that women actually got the full right to vote. A video highlighted that with 13 female MPP's who are currently in the house; 26% of the members in the House of Commons are female. She said on International Women's Day, there will be 338 women sitting in Parliament out of 1500 that applied for the opportunity.

Roberta Jamieson, President and CEO of SJF/CN Rail Inspire Project said 87% of Canadians graduate from high school and First Nations don't have the same record. She stated there needs to be more investment in First Nations. She also said when the support is there, 93% of First Nations graduate. She said \$12.2 million have been spent to support 3800 bursaries. That only meets 11% of the children that come to them. As a result of working with Unifor, CN will be committing \$250,000 to support the students during a time when the government is matching dollar for dollar.

Bonnie Braynton, Executive Director – DisAbled Women's Network said people with disabilities have many challenges in their lives; there are always barriers that need to be removed. December 3rd was the International Day of Persons with Disabilities. 60% of all Human Rights complaints are based on disability. A National Disabilities Act is being developed by the Federal government. Over 70% of disabled women are unemployed and 58% live on \$10,000 or less.

There were 3 committee reports on day 2 from the Workers with Disabilities, Health and Safety and the Young Workers.

Amanda Dale, Executive Director – Barbra Schlifer – Commemorative Clinic said violence against women is never tolerable and never excusable. They have clinics worldwide and half of all women by the age of 16 face some form of sexual or physical abuse. Every 6 days a woman is killed by her partner and with aboriginal women, the rate is 6 times higher.

Kaylie Tiessen, National Representative gave a presentation on the Changing Workplace Review. The Employment Standards Act and the Labour Relations Act are being reviewed for change. Unifor submitted a 150 page document asking for changes that would raise the floor for all workers, not just unionized workers. Unifor submitted another 70 page document explaining our request. It has been two and half years to this point and it will still be some time before this is complete. Kaylie raised the top issues with us but pointed out all the requested changes are important.

Michael Mitchell, Special Advisor Changing Workplace Review commended Unifor for the great job on their submission. The last time the ESA and LRA were changed was 35 years ago. One of their recommendations is that this happens more frequently. He said they were given no agenda by the government with one exception. They wanted the recommendations on Personal Emergency Leave that had been committed to. The remaining recommendations are due by February and then the government will decide what changes to make.

Jamie Kirkpatrick, Program Manager – Blue Green Alliance said we need good jobs, clean jobs and a clean environment. He said Blue Green Canada has invested \$6 million in wind energy and \$5.8 million in solar energy. Anyone looking for more information on their programs can find it at bluegreencanada.ca.

Nominations and elections for the Ontario Regional Council Executive Board were held at this Council. The elections were as follows: Chairperson – Dino Chiodo acclaimed, Vice-Chair – Candace Lavalley acclaimed, Secretary-Treasurer – Tullio DiPonti acclaimed, 8 Members at Large – Kari Jefford, Tim McKinnon, Debbie Montgomery, Stephanie Haskell, Scott McIlmoyle, Pearl Almeida, Ken Cole, Jim Reid acclaimed, Health & Safety Environmental Committee – Emo Mesic, Stephanie Brownlee, Susan Markus acclaimed, Political Action Committee – Jodi Nesbitt, Jacqueline McIntosh, AnnMarie Tullet acclaimed. Bob Orr National Secretary-Treasurer then read the oath of office for all the newly elected officers.

Victoria Maxwell, Mental Health Educator is one of North America's most sought after speakers on the 'lived' experience of mental illness and recovery, dismantling stigma and addressing mental health in the workplace. Victoria is an award winning actress and playwright who has worked alongside David Duchovny, John Travolta and Johnny Depp among others. After her diagnosis of bipolar disorder, anxiety and psychosis, she became extremely proactive in her recovery. She told us her life story about accepting and living with a psychiatric disorder. She told her story in a theatrical/monologue style that made the story that much more interesting. She said 1 in 5 people will be affected by mental health. She said people don't die because of suicide; people die because of mental health.

Throughout council, there were 6 Recommendations and 3 Resolutions that were discussed and voted on in favour. Anyone wishing a copy of the Recommendations and Resolutions can see their Ontario Regional Council Delegate.

In Solidarity,

Ardis Snow

Unifor Ontario Regional Council Delegate