

Canadian Council Report

(August 18th – 20th 2017)

Canadian Council this year took place in Winnipeg on August 14th to 20th and the theme for the Council was “Solidarity for a Better World.”

Secretary Treasurer Bob Orr welcomed everyone and asked Clarence Nepinak and Barbara Nepinak to come to the podium and give a traditional Aboriginal welcome. There was a Hoop Dance by some of the Aboriginal people who did a great performance after which a prayer was recited for guidance and to bless those we left at home. Both Clarence and Barbara gave a brief background of where we are meeting saying this is the traditional homeland of the Metis people. There was a minute of silence to respect those who have passed away and an anti-harassment statement was read to all the Delegates and guests.

National President Jerry Dias spoke and said he had arrived for the Council just for the day, this was due to him being involved with the NAFTA discussions in the U.S. A video was shown about Bob White who had passed away and Jerry mentioned how it was the vision of Bob White to have a Canadian Union and it's because of his vision that we are here today.

There were 7 National President's Recommendations which were as follows:

Equity - With the right-wing populism and hateful and discriminatory messages dominating the political discourse, we need to take the lead to promote inclusion and equity more than before. The recommendation is to establish a special Equity Advisor Panel who will be responsible for developing action items (which will focus on ways in which Unifor can become a more inclusive and responsive union to the needs of its members) to present at the 2018 Canadian Council.

Human Rights - Canada's contribution to the advancement of international human rights is notable, however each day we have constant reminders of how racism, sexism, gender based violence, ableism, homophobia, and transphobia permeate Canadian society. The recommendation is to initiate a national dialogue on racism, recommit our support to the 94 recommendations outlined in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, urge federal governments to comply with the decisions and orders on the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal which found the systemic underfunding of First Nations child and family services to be discriminatory, continue to raise awareness of the gender wage gap in Canada, support the passage of legislation creating buffer or bubble zone around health clinics allowing women to access reproductive health clinics without fear of intimidation, violence or public humiliation, engage the federal ministry of sport and persons with disabilities to ensure the promised Canadians with Disabilities Act is brought to parliament as quickly as possible, lead a national campaign calling on Canadian Blood Services to lift the discriminatory restrictions on blood donations for men who have sex with men and recommit to the fight for decent work, which includes measures to alleviate the specific challenges faced by young workers entering the job market.

Trade - Canada has an opportunity to redefine its approach to fair trade and fully define what a progressive trade agenda really means in NAFTA and other deals. The recommendation is to participate to the fullest degree possible in ongoing federal consultations on trade and trade agreements, lead a national campaign on NAFTA renegotiations, continue to pressure Canadian and U.S. governments to negotiate a new bilateral deal on softwood lumber that is fair for Canada and ensure workers have access to a full range of government supports to mitigate the impact of job loss resulting from U.S. import duties, play an active role in developing a modern and alternative framework for global trade in collaboration with interested stakeholders and community partners across Canada.

Pharmacare - Canada remains the only country in the world with a universal health care system that doesn't include coverage for prescription drugs. Three million Canadians are unable to afford their prescribed medication and 9 in 10 Canadians support having a National Public Drug Plan that provides universal access to prescription drugs. The recommendation is to participate in a national campaign urging the federal government to institute a nationally, universally accessible Pharmacare program in the 2018 Federal Budget, synchronize our efforts with labour movement and community partners, encourage our employers

to speak publically in support of a national Pharmacare program, ensure the voices of those most disadvantaged (women, retirees, newcomers and unemployed) by the lack of national drug coverage are at the forefront of this struggle.

Politics - Union members continue to play an active role in the politics of the country, our union has proven in recent years to be an effective counterweight to the right wing government attacks on trade union principles, the rights of workers and democratic values. The recommendation is to make a sustained effort to fight back against a rising tide of ultra-conservative, right-wing political movements in Canada, engage members in a working class political dialogue that is inclusive, respectful, progressive and internationalist in scope, further develop our relationships with multiple political parties, social justice movements, equity seeking movements and institutions that contribute the advancement of our political, social and economic goals. Push forward on campaigns to win \$15 minimum wages along with fair and progressive labour standards. Make a concerted effort to collect contact information for active members from all local unions and submit prior to 2018 Canadian Council to be used to populate Unifor's new membership database to ensure all members receive relevant and timely information in regards to the union's ongoing advocacy work, campaigns and correspondence from the national Union. Recommendations Green Jobs and Sustainable Development and Technology, Automation and the Future of Work were referred to the N.E.B. by the Resolutions Committee.

There were 20 Resolutions which were as follows;

- 1 **The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day** - more than 1200 Indigenous women and girls in Canada have gone missing or been murdered since 1980. Resolve is for Unifor to make October 4th as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day and that the Unifor Aboriginal and Workers of Colour Committees to make a concerted effort to lobby provincial governments to enact similar legislation as Manitoba to recognize October 4th as Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Awareness Day.
- 2 **Orange Shirt Day** – September 30th has been declared Orange Shirt Day annually in recognition of the harm the residential school system did to children's sense of self-esteem and well-being and as an affirmation of our commitment to ensure that everyone around us matters. Unifor will actively participate and support an annual "Every Child Matters" campaign in relation to Orange Shirt day. Orange Shirt Day was inspired by Phyllis Webstad who being an indigenous child at the age of 6 years wore a brand new orange shirt on her first day of school in the early 70's. She was a kid who was sent to an education system designed to break down her identity and "take the Indian out of the child."
- 3 **GM asr Trust** – referred to the N.E.B.
- 4 **Establishment of Equity Positions on Unifor Local Executive Boards** – referred to the N.E.B.
- 5 **Palestinian Self-Determination and the Movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions** – Article 49 of the 4th Geneva Convention prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its own civilian population to territory it occupies. Israel has continued, despite international pressure to expand its settlement and to demolish Palestine homes and other structures in the Occupied Palestine Territories. Unifor supports the use of divestment, boycott and sanctions that are targeted to those sections of Israel's economy and society which profit from the ongoing occupation.
- 6 **Women and Persons with Disabilities Being Left Behind on CPP Expansion** – women and persons with disabilities will face significant and unfair disadvantages with changes to CPP that will harm workers already vulnerable to post-retirement poverty. The federal government is abandoning those already vulnerable with CPP amendments that exclude special provisions to ensure that workers with child raising responsibilities and persons with disabilities receive equitable retirement benefits even though these provisions existed for decades. On March 2nd 2017 Bill C-26 became law without any amendments to address the "dropout" issue (parents away from work due to raising children and persons with disabilities away from work due to disabilities – penalized for being away from work). The federal government advises that they now require agreement from the provinces to correct this error. Resolution is for all Unifor Locals and the Pension and Benefit Department to contact the provincial and territorial

finance minister to demand that the CPP expansion be amended to include Child rearing and Disability Leave Dropout provisions.

7 Repeat of 6

8 **Safe Access to Reproductive Health Care Services** – there currently exist limited municipal and provincial regulations to protect and to eliminate the harassment of members accessing reproductive health care services. Resolution is to support the “Safe Access Zone” legislation in order to guarantee the constitutional right for all members to access safe reproductive health care services.

9 Repeat of 8

10 **Inclusive Practices Toolkit at all Unifor Events** – many people live with disabilities be they visible or not, Unifor has to be proactive and organize all events without barriers.

11 **Assign an Accessibility Coordinator to all Unifor Events** – Unifor is an inclusive union and must ensure all events organized are fully accessible and appoint an Accessibility Coordinator for all meetings, conventions and conferences to ensure the needs of all are respected.

12 **Gender pay Equity** – Canadian females earn on average \$0.86 for every dollar a male earns and Canada ranks 7th worse on gender pay equity of the 35 OECD countries. Resolution is for Unifor National start a political/public campaign aimed at federal government.

13 **Alberta Labour Code and Organizing** – referred to the N.E.B.

14 **Driverless Vehicles** – Referred to the N.E.B.

15 **Softwood Lumber fair Trade** – Referred to the N.E.B.

16 **Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River** – referred to the N.E.B.

17 **Disparity of Treatment** – referred to the N.E.B.

18 **Stop Outsourcing Jobs in Hospitality** – referred to the N.E.B.

19 **Young Workers Education Package** – with more young workers entering the workforce and knowledge of our union is essential along with support to build a stronger union, the National Union provide support to the Young Workers Standing Committees in the distribution of the Young Workers Education package.

20 **Language Barriers** – referred to the N.E.B.

Reports

Ontario Regional Director Naureen Rizvi – It has been a busy year and we are on the cusp of pushing changes to the Employment Standards.

Northstar in Milton had decided to close the Plant by end of September 2017 and leaving the retirees and current workers short on their pensions by 24 percent. To emphasize the importance of the workers pensions the Plant was occupied with 20 members who locked themselves inside (one of whom was Justin Minello Local Organizer from 1285). After two days Northstar went to get an injunction and the occupiers had to vacate the property. The message was clear to Northstar that they cannot just walk away from these workers who had made them prosperous.

We are about 10 months away from the elections in Ontario and will everyone’s help to put in a government who will be on the workers side.

During July 16th to the 22nd the North American Indigenous Games were held in Toronto, Team #88 was so called because the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Call to Action #88 calls on all levels of government to take action to ensure long term Indigenous athlete development and growth through continued support of the Games. We were proud of the fact that members from Local 1285 had gone to the games as volunteers and helped make them a success.

Quebec Director Renaud Gagnè – Gave praise for the lobbying efforts of Unifor members for the lumber dispute with the U.S. he also said the Premier of Quebec highlighted the importance of the work accomplished by Unifor on this issue. He gave a recount of the negotiations which had been concluded in aerospace, forest, hotel, telecommunication and manufacturing industries. At the same we still have disputes remaining where the members are still out on strike. One is at Local 1044 with

AMT Die Casting launched on May 10th. This is an anti-union employer and main issues are about fair wages in the industry and maintaining a balance between family and work. The other workplace is Delastek where members of Local 1209 have been out on strike for 28 months. This employer recently announced of planning to expand work into Mexico which just shows there was never any intent to negotiate in good faith with the workers. More so is the fact that scab labour is being used to perform the work of striking workers even though the province has an anti-scab law, the parties are in court to discuss the issue of using scab-lab.

Western Regional Director Joie Warnock – In Saskatchewan Premier Brad Wall has an austerity budget, he is working on privatization and selling off crown corporations. “Brad Wall has no mandate to sell off public assets that generate millions for the people of Saskatchewan, selling off Crown corporations would be a disaster for the long-term health of hospital and school funding” said Joie Warnock.

A march is being planned on May 2019 to commemorate the Winnipeg General Strike which took place on May 1919. This is Canada’s best known strikes which resulted in 30,000 workers walking off the jobs, at stake were the principles of collective bargaining, better wages and working conditions.

Atlantic Regional Director Lana Payne – Reported about 32 workers in Gander who have been locked out by their American based employer (D-J Composites) since December 19th 2016. The employer has demanded huge concessions, attacked seniority rights and want changes which would undermine the union. To add further injury the employer has been advertising to hire scab workers. These union members are not giving up the fight and have been standing strong even during the winter, they’ve built strength by standing together repeating their motto “One day longer, one day stronger.” In May 2017 the labour board had found the employer guilty of bargaining in bad faith, the employer has still continued it’s bad behaviour.

Nelson Mandela Award – This year the award was given to Brother Bob White posthumously in recognition of his significant contribution to the fight for human rights and social justice.

Bud Jimmerfield Award – This award to recognize health, safety, environment and workers compensation advocates was given this year to Roger Haggerty from Unifor Local 592. Roger has been a safety activist at his workplace Catalyst since being hired in 2002 and strives to make the workplace a safer place for all.

Danny Glover – Actor and activist Danny Glover gave a passionate speech about justice, diversity, activism and global citizenship. He said “We have an opportunity to reimagine ourselves as activists and as global citizens, to engage decisively and in solidarity to establish peace and justice and solidarity for a better world. We must reach across cultural, geographical, racial differences to seek sustainable freedom and justice in the world.” His speech covered a variety of issues including climate change, universal health care and campaigns to raise wages for low paid workers.

There is a lot more our governments can and should do to make this a better world as was the theme of the Canadian Council. There is a need for the politicians to step up and push for a national pharma care, make fair trade agreements for the citizens of Canada, increase wages for the low wage earners so they can make a decent living and close the gender wage gap.

Let us all wear an orange shirt on September 30th to recognize the harm done by residential schools and raise awareness.

There was lot more detail in the above and additional items which can be found on the Unifor National website. This report can others can also be found on our Local 1285 website too.

All copies of the resolutions, recommendations, financial statement, agenda and reports can be obtained from the union office.

Thank you everyone for your support in giving me the privilege of attending the Canadian Council.

In Solidarity,

Jaspal Brar

President and Canadian Council Delegate (Unifor Local 1285).

