

Unifor Ontario Regional Council Report

December 2019

Ardis Snow

December 6 and 7, 2019, I attended Ontario Regional Council in Toronto, at the Sheridan Center Hotel. Scott McIlmoyle, President of Local 112 and the Ontario Council Chairperson called council to order at 9:00 am. Scott welcomed everyone to Ontario Regional Council and recognized the Ontario Regional Executive Board. Scott spoke about this being the 30th anniversary of the massacre at the University of Montreal's Ecole Polytechnique where 14 women were killed, just because they were female.

An Aboriginal welcome and greeting followed with a performance by the Chippewa Travellers and Dance and Drum Group.

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

Naureen Rizvi – Ontario Regional Director started her speech by saying we will lose 10,000 teachers in the province of Ontario with the cuts to education announced by the Ford PC government. She said, we need to ensure this Premier is only in office for one term. Naureen said, the youth make a difference in elections. They can shift the balance of power, if they get out and vote. She said, this government said it would do away with halfway health care and they plan to do this with Video Health Care. She also said, we are negotiating language into collective agreements that counter many of the attacks by the Ford government's Bill 47. She talked about the never-ending damaging announcements of plant closures, shift losses and many other job losses in the Auto sector, an industry so important to Ontario and Canada. We need to unite and support the Auto Industry. Naureen spoke about the work Unifor is doing to support the Women's Professional Hockey League.

Tullio DiPonti – ORC Financial Secretary gave the ORC Financial report. The statement of operations and fund balance ending December 31, 2018, is \$6,522,945. The report was voted on and accepted.

There was a presentation called "Success Stories: Women in Sports". **Natalie Spooner** and **Sarah Nurse** are both from the Canadian Women's Hockey League and both won Olympic metals with the Canadian women's hockey team. Natalie started by saying, it was always her goal to win a gold medal. She grew up playing hockey with 3 older brothers. She said, it was hard playing hockey with the boys and that was why she stopped playing. She continued to work on her skating and was invited to play on a girl's hockey team. She spoke about playing the gold medal game in the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. Going into the 3rd period, Canada was losing 2 – 0 before tying the game and winning it in overtime. Sarah said she started skating at age 3. She said, at age 7 she tried out for the rep team and she was cut because she was a girl. The coach said, he wouldn't have a girl on his team. She talked about the struggles on and off the ice to make it and said it is a shame that women's hockey only seems to be important every 4 years, during the Olympics. **Danika Gravelle** is a young hockey player with the Algonquin Barons and North Bay Ice Bolts. She said, she was thrilled to be in the same room with hockey players from the PWHPA (Professional Women's Hockey Players Association). She said, she started playing hockey after watching the 2014 Olympic Games. She has been campaigning for the girls to get an equal amount of ice time as the boys. It has gotten better but it is still not as much as the boys have.

Yolanda and Jamie Cameron – Founders, Wellness & Emotional Support for Youth Online. Their youngest son Wes took his life when he was 16 years of age. They own a funeral home in Walkerton and normally they are taking care of other families dealing with death and not their own. It shattered their lives. They had lots of money donated and wanted to do something positive with it so they founded an online support site for youth. It took over a year to create this and it is accessible wherever there is internet. Wesforyouthonline.ca. They receive most of their money through private donations as government funding goes to agencies with over 200 employees. The council donated \$10,000 to help them continue what they do.

Lana Payne – National Secretary/Treasurer said Unifor will support any worker on strike or lockout regardless of the size of the workplace. Our members will stand up and fight back. We are seeing strikes like never before. We fight employers and governments that don't support workers. We will fight for a minimum wage increase to \$18, universal child care, pay equity, auto strategy and pharma care. She said our solidarity will be tested. We need to build "worker" power. Lana said, we need to change the way we think about women and our Union has been a leader in ending violence against women. She pointed out, we now have paid and non-paid domestic violence leave in every jurisdiction in Canada. Many of the things that are now law started at the bargaining table. Until we all have equality, none of us have it.

Sara Mojtehdzadeh – Work and Wealth Reporter Toronto Star spoke about an investigation she did on Fiera Foods that makes bakery products for many of the big grocery stores. Most of the workers are foreign workers or new Canadians. They are hired by a temp agency and they were being injured at twice the rate of the National average with 5 deaths since 1999. While she was doing her investigation, another temp worker was killed. She decided to apply for a job to see what was happening inside. To do her investigation she had to apply through the temp agency because 70% of the workers are hired that way. She said she received about 5 minutes of training and was told by other workers not to get hurt as they will send you home and replace you. She only spoke to the temp agency over the phone. She said she discovered many temp agencies are run through residential homes. The Ministry of Labour did an investigation and wrote 200 orders and fined the company \$300,000. It was discovered that when the worker was pulled into the mixer, the other workers did not know how to turn the mixer off. The Liberal government made changes to the ESA affecting what temp agencies could do but the Ford PC Government reversed this after they were elected. This leaves many temp and foreign workers vulnerable.

Mike Yam – National Representative, Research Department and Roxanne Dubois – Director, Strategic Planning and Development gave a presentation called "Ontario Transformation & The Ford Fight Back Campaign". They said Ford faked the deficit to support his cuts, which was proven by the Globe and Mail. They have used tax payer's money to fight Cap and Trade and made cuts to education, tutors in classrooms, class sizes, legal services, Autism, etc.... The Ford government's popularity is at an all-time low. He is back-tracking on many of his cuts because of public and Union pressure.

Kayla Weiler – Canadian Federation of Students Ontario said the Ontario government cuts are hurting students. The students took the government to court because there is legislation that the Premier or the Education Ministry can't make some of the changes. The students won in court.

Elections were held for the ORC. These elections are held every three years as per the constitution. The elections went as follows: **Ontario Regional Chair** – Scott McIlmoyle, **Vice Chair** – Stephanie Haskell, **Secretary-Treasurer** – Tullio DiPonti, **Members at Large** – Debbie Montgomery, Tim McKinnon, Jamie Martinez, Carleen Finch, Lisa Tucker, James Stewart, Pearl Almeida, Jim Fling, **H&S Standing Committee** – Emile Nabbout, Brian Lowery, Sandra Auger, **Political Action Committee** – Jodi Nesbitt,

Shayne Fields, Jacqueline McIntosh, **EI & CPP Standing Committee** – Lisa Contini, Dan Cushenan, Kelly Janes, **Workers Compensation Standing Committee** – Ashok Venkatarangan, John Harte, Kathleen Brooks, **Employment & Family Assistance Program Standing Committee** – Jessica Ridgwell, Jeff Ramackers, Bruce Malcolm.

Frank Graves – Founder & President EKOS Research said the country would have a different Prime Minister if not for the Labour movement. In the spring, it looked as if the PC Party would have a comfortable lead but Doug Ford's actions hurt the PC Party in the Federal vote. Doug Ford is 11% down in the polls and the leaderless Liberals are ahead of them.

Jerry Dias – National President started his address by saying we are living in a divided world. He said we want to be champions in equity and equality. December 6 is the 30th anniversary of the Montreal massacre when the women were lined up and shot because they were women. Jerry asked why are we so against the PC government? We do it because of the policies that the PC government puts in place. This year we raised \$130,000 for the Halton Women's Shelter to replace the \$120,000 that was cut by the Ford government. He said this Ford PC government has made cuts to autism, attacked our education system by cutting 10,000 teachers, making our class sizes larger and saying kids need to be more resilient. This PC government says they can't afford a 2 – 3% wage increase for teachers but voted to increase the salary of the Deputy Ministers by 14%. This government made 70 cuts in 1 year, including a 30% reduction in WSIB, froze Work Inspectors, cut student initiatives which the courts ruled against the government, cut Bill 74 Health Care – The People Health Care Act, cuts to Autism and only reversed because of the out cries from the public, increased class sizes eliminating teachers, lied about the amount of spending on students, cancelled Canada Day celebration at Queen's Park, cut \$14.8 million in violence against women programs and shelters, overturned the biggest Labour reform in 25 years with a stroke of a pen. Ford criticized Unifor for fighting against the GM cuts and said "that ship has left the dock". He said we were giving the GM workers false hope. We ran commercials during the Oscars, Golden Globe Awards and the Superbowl. There is still nothing to celebrate as thousands of our members lost their job but we were able to maintain some work and to keep that facility open. We were told to work hard, get educated and the jobs will be there, but that is not the case. Jerry talked about how in 2016 Unifor put a competitive agreement together and the work still went away. He said in 2020 perhaps it would be better to put an uncompetitive agreement in place and the work should just fall into our laps. He said there are many here attending their last council because their jobs have disappeared. He said we have 2 ½ years left of Ford and the Ontario PC government and we have 2 choices. Do nothing and Ford gets re-elected and hope he leaves us alone or we do everything we can to make sure he isn't re-elected. Jerry talked about the Federal election. He said things are not perfect under Trudeau but Trudeau said he would repeal the anti-Union Bills that the previous PC Government had put forward and he did. He rolled back the OAS eligibility age to 65. Jerry said, he knew if Andrew Scheer and the PC government were elected that it would all be back on the table. Jerry talked about the "member to member" campaign informing over 100,000 of our members what the PC government would do. Unifor concentrated on 34 ridings and won 29 of those. In Ontario, the Federal PC government only won 5 of 61 ridings because of what the Ford government has done. The Ford government closed for 5 months so they didn't interfere with the Federal Election. It didn't help, Ontarians are too smart for that. Ontario is rejecting his policies. Andrew Scheer doesn't believe in Women's rights and refused to walk in the Pride Parade. Jerry said, we need universal pharma care and we will not stop until it happens. He said, he is so proud of the work our Skilled Trades members are doing rebuilding women's shelters. There should be no need for shelters in today's world but we still do. We need to end violence against women. He said, in the spring we will be launching our boat to drag the Red River in Winnipeg and walk Highway 16 looking for murdered and missing indigenous women. Jerry said he asked Doug Ford to spend 8 hours in a long-term care health facility to see the disrespect our seniors suffer. Jerry spoke about Co-Op in Regina that has

locked out our members while flying in scabs and housing them on the property. Co-Op is making \$3 million dollars a day and attacking our member's pensions. He said, he wants a meeting with the company and he is going to tell them to google Oshawa, Goderich, Gander and Thunder Bay and see what type of fight back campaign we put on. Jerry ended by talking about the teacher's strike with all 4 of the teachers' Unions giving a speech, saying they need our help and the help of the Labour Movement. They are all under attack by the Ontario Ford government. They are in a legal strike position but have not acted on it.

During the council there were ten committee reports from the Women's Committee, Worker's with Disabilities, EFAP, Health and Safety, Young Worker's, Aboriginal and Workers of Colour, Political Action committees, LGBTQ, WSIB, and EI/ CPP committee.

Throughout council, there were six Recommendations presented, discussed and voted in favour. Three Resolutions presented, discussed and 2 voted in favour with one voted non-concurrence. 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

