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VOLUME 4, NO.25

WWW.UNIFOR.ORG

DECMEBER 15, 2016



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Ontario Regional Council delegates join Decent Work Sing-along at Toronto's Dundas Square to draw awareness to the Fight for \$15 and Fairness Campaign.

Ontario Council fights inequity

In her inaugural address as Ontario Regional Director, Naureen Rizvi told Ontario Regional Council that Unifor has done great work to build stronger communities and improve conditions for working people across the province, including the successful Detroit Three auto talks.

"Unifor does not and will not accept the argument that full-time jobs with decent pay are a thing of the past," Rizvi said.

Rizvi pointed to several victories, including unionizing the first Sobeys grocery store in the province, groundbreaking improvements for school bus drivers, and the union's leading role in the Ontario government's Changing Workplace Review to advocate for reform and enhanced rights for all workers.

Unifor determined to change electoral politics

By getting more women elected to political office and by changing the voting system, Unifor is working on several fronts to improve Canada's democracy.

"People want their vote to

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Defend pensions – stop Bill C-27

A new threat to pension security has emerged with the introduction of Bill C-27 by the federal Liberals. The legislation, if passed, would retroactively change pension rules for all federally regulated employees, directly impacting Unifor members in rail, media, air transportation and telecommunication.

"It is a smoke and

mirrors scheme that opens the way for employers to attack good defined benefit pension plans in federally regulated workplaces," said Unifor National President Jerry Dias

Bill C-27 amends the Pension Benefits Standards Act of 1985 and was quietly tabled in the House of Commons in late October. The Bill establishes a

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Regional Council elections

During the recent Regional Council meetings elections for a three year term on the executive and standing committees occurred.

In BC, former Political Action Committee Chairperson Ben Williams, L 333BC, was selected as Chair. Jean Van Vliet, L 3000 was elected Vice-Chair and Bill Gaucher, L 114 was elected Secretary-Treasurer.

View the complete BC Council and Standing Committees list at: unifor.org/BC-Council

Elections also took place in Ontario. Delegates affirmed Dino Chiodo L 444, as Chair, Candace Lavalley, L 7-O, as Vice-Chair, and Tullio DiPont, L 2458, as Secretary-Treasurer.

The Ontario Council and Standing Committee members can be found at: unifor.org/ON-Council

Bell craft bargaining

After eight weeks of negotiations, the 4000 member Bell Canada craft bargaining unit headed into conciliation on December 6.

The situation is evolving quickly. Stay up to date by visiting unifor.org/bellcraft or check Unifor's Facebook page.

Sponsored families building new lives

Four families from Syria, sponsored by Unifor and the union's Social Justice Fund are building new lives in Canada with the aid of local members.

"The volunteers from the Unifor Locals have worked incredibly hard to get the families settled in their homes," said Mohamad Alsadi, Unifor Director, Human Rights and International Department. "Now that most of the logistical work has ended the focus is shifting to longer term goals such as improving language skills and finding employment."

Two families, the Babatj's and the Alomar's both arrived in Toronto in August before making their way to Ottawa, where they were introduced to their new Unifor family at the National Convention. The Sabbagh and Alassaf families arrived later in the fall.



The Alassaf family at their North York, ON home with their Unifor sponsors.

After fleeing conflict and violence, the families now look forward to spending the new year in a free and safe environment thanks to the group of dedicated Unifor members who volunteered their support.

Recalling his personal experience of being displaced with his family during the Gulf War, Local 2002 member Anees Munshi stepped forward to volunteer as a sponsor for the Alassaf family. "I want to ensure that the family that we're helping settle get the same

opportunity that I got," said Munshi. All of the family members are permanent residents in Canada now and are currently residing in the Greater Toronto Area. In total they have 11 children who are attending local schools and making new friends in their communities.

The endeavor to bring and welcome the families to their new homes has been documented in a bilingual video created by a member of the Canadian Freelance Union. Watch it at: youtube.com/UniforCanada.

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count, and we should have a government that reflects the hopes and desires of the people," Unifor National President Jerry Dias told Ontario Regional Council.

This fall Unifor has been actively campaigning for proportional representation. Changing the electoral system is a vital step, but there is work to be done to change electoral politics.

Currently, only 26 per cent of MPs are women, something Dias said must change if we hope to build a better Canada. In a project with Equal Voice, the union is actively developing and encouraging women to run for political office.



Daughters of the Vote participant Antu Hossain addresses Ontario Regional Council.

Daughters of the Vote will send 338 women to Ottawa next March, where they will sit in the House of Commons to represent their communities and express their vision for Canada.

Along with providing training, Unifor is arranging transportation through

Air Canada and Via Rail to program participants, including Antu Hossain, who spoke at Ontario Council.

"I encourage you all to engage in ally-ship," Hossain said. "You are the strength of our movement."

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"Ontario Council fights..."
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Unifor National President Jerry Dias told Council delegates the union will continue to be active on many fronts, from boosting the number of women in politics, to being active in elections and advocating for a \$15 minimum wage, to working hard at the bargaining table on behalf of Unifor members.

Throughout the two days of meetings, the theme of equity remained constant in both speakers and the resolutions that passed by delegates.

Following an emotional video about Unifor's efforts to help Syrian refugee families, newcomer Tareq Hadhad told his family's story of losing everything

and rebuilding their lives in Nova Scotia, including restarting their chocolate business, Peace by Chocolate.

Sam Snyder from the Ontario Workers with Disabilities Caucus said the committee has done great work, but much remains to be done to improve the lives of those living and working with physical or mental disabilities to ensure equal access.

Barbara Schlifer Commemorative Clinic Executive Director Amanda Dale spoke to Council and said that on any given night more than 3,400 women and 2,700 children escape violence in a women's shelter, and another 300 are turned away.

"All this violence can only mean one thing. Women are



Ontario Regional Director Naureen Rizvi tells delegates that members across the province are engaged in both political campaigns and social activism.

not equal, despite what the laws on the books say," said Dale.

Nearing the end of the second day Mental Health Educator Victoria Maxwell enlightened delegates with

a live performance, and led a well-attended mental health workshop on the final morning. Updates on Council proceedings will be posted shortly at unifor.org/ON-Council

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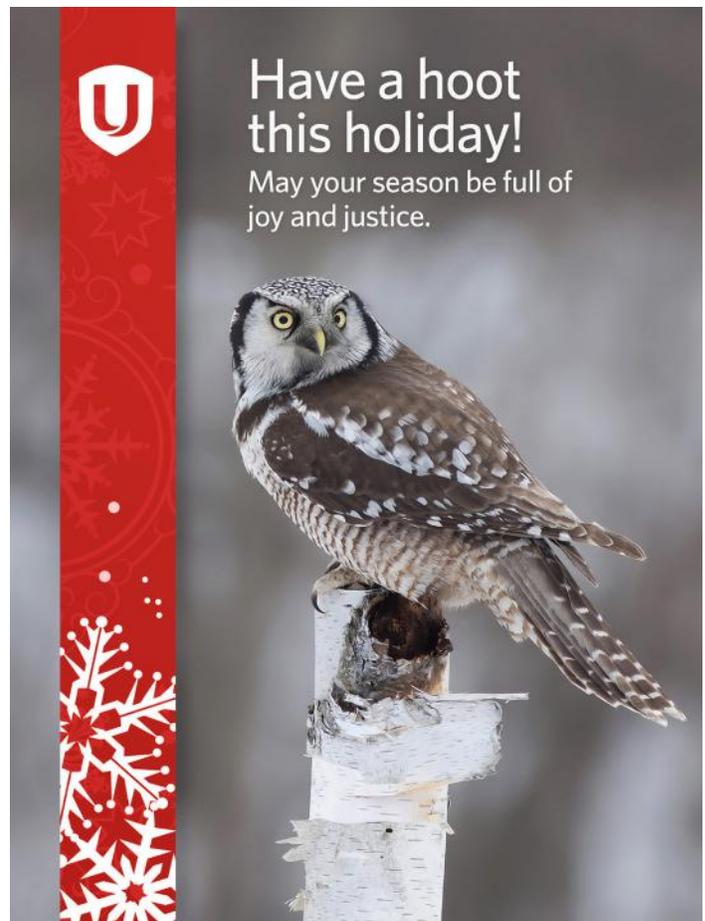
framework for single-employer target-benefit pension plans (TBPs) in the federal private sector and for Crown corporations. Federal employers with defined-benefit (DB) pension plans would no longer have the legal obligation to deliver promised and already-earned benefits.

Under C-27, workers and retirees could see their accrued defined benefit pensions converted to target benefit pensions. The concern is that the conversion may reduce current and future pension payments as virtually all financial risk is shifted from the employer to plan members. Even retiree pensions could be reduced.

When the Harper government proposed a similar pension grab Justin Trudeau clearly promised in writing that he would oppose this exact change and Unifor will hold the Prime Minister to his words.

All Unifor members can help to defend pension security. Let the government know that changing pension rules will reduce the benefits that pensioners rely on and will result in weaker pension plans for workers across the country.

Take action! Write to the federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau, and also to your local MP to demand withdrawal of C-27. Visit unifor.org/stopC27 for a draft letter and email information.





Unifor and CN contribute to Indspire scholarship

A scholarship and bursary program for Indigenous students, set up with contributions from Unifor and CN, will help advance the academic outcomes of Indigenous post-secondary students across Canada.

The union and the railway will each contribute \$125,000 to the program, with matching funds from the Federal Government of \$230,000. Including an emergency fund of \$20,000 funded by Unifor and CN, that's a total of \$480,000. The contribution was presented at Unifor's recent Ontario Regional Council.

"Unifor is a social union, committed to helping make Canada a better place for

all people. Issues such as Indigenous education and opportunities for Indigenous people are central to that goal," Unifor National President Jerry Dias said.

Unifor represents approximately 4,000 CN employees. The contribution to Indspire's Building Brighter Futures: Bursaries and Scholarship Program comes out of contract talks last year between Unifor and CN Rail, which included a provision for a jointly run fund that would focus on women and Aboriginal causes.

"The generous contribution of Unifor and CN will help Indigenous students overcome many

IN THIS ISSUE: Regional Council elections. Ontario Regional Council calls for social justice and political action. Unifor takes up the fight against new threat to pension security. Sponsored Syrian families begin lives in Canada. The push to change electoral politics and more!



Unifor and CN Rail partner to create scholarships for Indigenous youth.

of the barriers they face as they pursue post-secondary studies, especially lack of financial resources," said Roberta Jamieson, President and CEO of Indspire.

Indspire's program will use the money to provide bursaries of \$2,500 to

about 190 Indigenous students over the next two years. There will also be an emergency fund of \$20,000 to help students with unexpected costs involved with their education – such as family or personal emergencies.