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Prairie Regional Council delegates hold signs to send a message of solidarity to striking members at Locals 597 & 1209.

Prairie Council Inspires and Educates

Delegates at the 2017 Prairie Regional Council were both inspired and educated during the three-day event, held in Edmonton April 5-7. The Council focused on the political battle against austerity, as well as social justice, health and safety, and fair treatment of workers.

In her report, Joie Warnock, Western Regional Director, told the 136 delegates, that “as employers push to cheapen wages, reduce benefits and eliminate good jobs, we too have a right to demand good, stable jobs that support our families and create strong communities.”

Warnock also reflected on several victories in the political battle against austerity measures implemented in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. “The next few years won’t be

Ford investment shows importance of unions

A \$1.2-billion investment by Ford in Windsor was made possible by Unifor’s successful negotiations that delivered results in contract talks with the company last fall.

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Second phase of Local Union Task Force begins

The Local Union Task Force was a process focused around strengthening local unions and creating better connections between Unifor members. Initial town hall meetings took place across the country at the end of 2015 and throughout 2016, and now, follow-up meetings are taking place to outline what the national union is doing to address

recommendations and members needs, and to determine what actions can be taken by local unions.

“When we originally met with locals across the region, members recognized there were many opportunities to build stronger community connections,” said Lana Payne, Atlantic Regional Director. “The task force

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Women deserve equal pay

On April 11, Unifor members wore red to mark Equal Pay Day – the day that women have earned the same income that men earned during the last year. Despite pay equity being the law in Ontario and five other provinces, women still make roughly 30 per cent less than men across the country, and workers facing racism and other forms of discrimination earn even less. It's time to close the gender wage gap in Canada!

Knowing that women make up 60 per cent of minimum wage and 70 per cent of part-time workers, members worked with the Equal Pay Coalition-Ontario to demand action. Closing the gap will require investments in public services and enforcement of labour standards. Universal child care, a \$15 minimum living wage, and clear paths to unionization are all steps that provincial and federal governments can take to close the gap.

Fight for pay equity for all workers at unifor.org/closethegap

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CTV sports cuts undermine local TV

National broadcaster CTV is cutting local sports and other programming at stations across Canada, undermining the value of those stations to their local audiences and demonstrating the need for urgent action on the crisis in media, Unifor says.

"People turn to local television to keep up on what is happening in their communities," said Howard Law, Unifor Media Director. "These cuts give people less of a reason to turn to local news. The CRTC is about to grant CTV a new license for local TV programming, and it had better be paying attention to this."

The 18 layoffs announced in Kitchener, London, Windsor, Calgary and Edmonton follow

a similar move by CTV earlier this year in Barrie, where local sports coverage was eliminated in favour of the CTV national sports feed.

With more cuts expected at CTV stations across Canada, Unifor is calling on the federal government to move quickly on the review of the industry outlined in last month's budget.

"There are some simple moves the federal government could make to help ensure the viability of this vital industry, including regulatory and tax changes," said Jerry Dias, National President. "Unifor will continue to push and be very active during the coming review of the industry."

A group of Unifor journalists and media workers were in Ottawa earlier this



year to meet with MPs and senior staff about the crisis in media. For more information, and to sign a petition to save local news, go to mediaactionplan.ca.

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"Unifor went into talks with the Detroit Three with one goal in mind – secure investment in the Canadian auto industry to ensure good jobs for future generations," said Jerry Dias, National President, who was in Windsor for the announcement.

"This investment shows the good things that happen for the entire community when there is a voice for working people at the table."

The collective agreement with Ford, ratified last November, called on the automaker to invest \$713 million in its Canadian operations over the next four years. Ford's investment will see its Windsor operations develop into a world-class



Federal and Ontario governments each contribute \$100 million towards \$1.2-billion investment by Ford in Windsor.

powertrain facility, while its Oakville Assembly plant will be upgraded and a \$500-million research and development centre will be established.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne were also at the announcement, and committed \$100 million each to the Windsor

operations.

"These announcements are a testament to the dedication and commitment of the workers at Ford," Dias said.

Across the Detroit Three, Unifor negotiated \$1.6 billion worth of new investment from Ford, Fiat Chrysler and General Motors.

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easy, but we're a union built for taking the principled path, not the easy one."

A theme picked up when Jerry Dias, National President, said that he is inspired by the fight against austerity. Dias also reminded delegates that it's important for the labour movement to keep pressure on all governments. "Progressive governments do progressive things when pushed by progressive organizations."

Alberta's NDP government was well-represented as Minister of Labour Christina Gray, spoke about the upcoming review of the provinces labour laws. A delegation of MLAs, led by Unifor

member and MLA Eric Rosendahl, attended the Thursday night reception.

Health and safety was at the forefront with education on the dangers of Behavioural-Based Safety programs, which allow employers to sidestep responsibility by blaming the worker. Delegates were also inspired by safety advocate and double amputee Curtis Weber's story of survival following a life-changing workplace injury.

On the final day, Steve Tizzard of Local 2121 presented on mental health first aid (MHFA). The theme was carried throughout as speaker Victoria Maxwell shared her lived experience of mental illness and recovery, and Jim Demeray spoke of the work



Joie Warnock, Western Regional Director, tells Prairie Council delegates that the union's power comes from its members.

to remove mental health barriers by his organization UnderstandUs.

Prairie Regional Chair Christy Best wrapped up Council with a look to the future. "We have a lot of work ahead of us," said

Best. "Brad (Wall) and Brian (Pallister) need to be aware that we are coming with the full force of our union behind us."

View photos of Council at [Facebook.com/UniforCanada](https://www.facebook.com/UniforCanada)

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was a catalyst to build our union and now we're seeing locals take great steps to increase their involvement and work closely with their sisters and brothers in their communities."

Across the country, the task force heard from smaller locals who struggled to find enough members to build equity committees or to assist in the planning of activities like Labour Day.

"One of the big ideas brought up time and again was to gather locals in the same city or town where Unifor has member density to build committees and projects together," said Payne.

In one of the initial follow-up meetings in the

Atlantic region, members in Saint John, New Brunswick seem eager to do just that.

"We've got 11 locals in this city that operate individually, like a lot of locals do," said Mike MacMullin, National Representative. "At our meeting, the locals decided to form the Saint John Unifor Council and to meet twice per year to focus on strengthening Unifor's presence and capacity in Saint John."

More meetings will follow in the coming months and an official update on national union initiatives will be delivered at Canadian Council in Winnipeg this August.



IN THIS ISSUE Prairie Council focuses on political battle against austerity, health and safety and fair treatment. Unifor calls for immediate action to protect local television following additional job cuts. Massive Ford Canada investment announced. Equal Pay Day highlights in fight for gender parity and more!

Unifor helps with historical occupational illness claims

April 28, the National Day of Mourning recognizes workers who have lost their lives due to injury or occupational disease. As that day approaches, Unifor is actively assisting GE-Canada workers and retirees in Peterborough, Ontario who contracted job-related illness due to exposure to hazardous materials at the plant.

Currently 31 Unifor members have submitted claims to Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) for medical conditions, including several forms of cancer, that have emerged following employment at the plant.

"Unifor has worked diligently to collect records and scientific data to help support WSIB occupational disease claims at GE-Canada," said Sari Sairanen, Director of Health, Safety and Environment. "But the work of our union will continue because new information on historical workplace exposure could lead to successful appeals of previously denied claims."

Last month, Unifor joined WSIB, the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Office of the Worker Adviser (OWA) and Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. (OHCOW) to hold public information sessions. The sessions drew hundreds



Unifor aids GE-Canada workers and retirees who contracted occupational disease at the Peterborough plant.

of former workers, along with family members and residents of the community, to receive an update on the claims process and provide the opportunity to submit new claims. Unifor Local 524 Executive participated, led by President Bill Corp and Benefit Representative Shawn Menzies. "Unifor is reaching out to current

and former members who have or are considering an occupational disease claim and to those who received prior rejections," said Joel Carr, Unifor National Representative. "The union is here to support members through what can be a difficult process, especially for those who are battling illness at the same time."