Weekly bulletin from
UFCW Canada National President
Wayne Hanley

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UFCW your VOICE at work CANADA

DIRECTIONS

Year of delay adds to Harvest of Death

One year and 23 deaths later, the Alberta government continues to exclude farm workers from health-and-safety work-

place protections, despite public inquiry recommendations. UFCW Canada, the union that has led the campaign for the rights of agriculture workers, is calling once again on the Alberta government to act without further delay to implement the recommendations of Justice Peter Barley's inquiry a year ago that called for the protection of farm workers under the province's health-and-safety laws.

"Justice Barley delivered straightforward recommendations that would undoubtedly reduce Alberta farm worker injuries and fatalities," says UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley. "What doesn't make sense is that a year later the Alberta government continues to drag its feet while Alberta's harvest of death continues."

It was just more than a year ago – on Jan. 28, 2009 – that Justice Barley made his recommendations following an inquiry into the death of a farm worker who was crushed by tons of spilling grain. He called on the government to bring the province's farm workers under the Alberta *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), implement a farm workplace safety training and education system, and extend the worker compensation system to cover agriculture workers.

To date, none of these recommendations has been instituted.

"One year and 23 deaths later, there is no defence to further delay in providing Alberta ag workers the same workplace safety rights other Alberta workers have," National President Hanley says.

In 2003, UFCW Canada launched a *Charter* challenge against Ontario's similar exclusion of agriculture workers from that province's OHSA. In 2006, the UFCW Canada action led to securing OHSA coverage for Ontario farm workers.

"It has saved lives and prevented accidents on Ontario farms," National President Hanley says. "We would urge Alberta to also act, without further delay, to stop the discriminatory exclusion of agriculture workers from basic health-and-safety protection."

UFCW CANADA

Workplace rights 'Around the Corner'

For many Canadian workers, radio is making a big comeback; and for many others, it never stopped being an important part of their daily lives. At least that's the impression UFCW Canada activist Pablo Godoy is left with after successfully launching his new radio program, *Barrio Nuevo – La Esquina,* which is Spanish for "The New Neighbourhood – Around the Corner."

"Most *La Esquina* listeners are Latino Canadians who work in precarious arrangements, so this show provides them with an avenue where they can get more information about their rights in their own language and in a medium to

which they are culturally accustomed," says Godoy, who, in addition to being host of the show, is a spoken-word artist, youth activist, and UFCW Canada organizer.

La Esquina is an hour long call-in program that, in addition to labour rights, features Latino music, poetry, current events, and special guests from Canada's Spanish-speaking community. It currently reaches a south central Ontario audience that includes listeners in Bradford and Virgil, where the Agriculture Workers Alliance (AWA) together with UFCW Canada operates two of its 10 national support centres for migrant farm workers.

"The response to *La Esquina* has been so positive that we're going to double the number of shows from once a month to every other week," says Godoy. "And starting in March, the show is going global by partnering with the AWA website – www.awa-ata.ca – to provide listeners with live

streaming and free podcasts of the program."

Until then, Toronto-area workers can experience *La Esquina* by tuning in to 1610 on the AM dial where the show airs the first Saturday of every month from 4 to 5 p.m.

Leading the way in workers' rights

UFCW Canada recently was at the forefront of a national forum in Toronto, *Rights Watch 2010: Tracking Canada's Civil Liberties and Human Rights Landscape*. The two-day symposium brought together legal academics, law students, and lawyers from across the country to meet, discuss, and make presentations on the current state of constitutional litigation and human rights in Canada.

"There is a fundamental and practical requirement to reinject organized labour into the present discourse that is occurring in the halls of academia and immigration advocacy," says Naveen Mehta, UFCW Canada's director of Human Rights, Equity & Diversity. "Given the strides UFCW Canada and its local unions have made in decreasing the level of suffering for many thousands of migrant and immigrant workers in Canada, it is natural that it falls to the union to push those needs forward."

The event was presented by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA), one of Canada's leading organizations on constitutional law and litigation. In December 2009, the CCLA was also an intervenor on the side of UFCW Canada in the case heard by the Supreme Court of Canada, *Ont. v. Fraser,* regarding the Ontario government's continuing violation of the *Charter* rights of Ontario agriculture workers to form unions.

At the weekend forum, Mehta, in conjunction with Joshua Phillips, counsel for the CCLA at the December hearing, presented a workshop, *Freedom of Association and Protection for Marginalized Workers.*

"A unionized environment that is trained to address the particular concerns of migrant and immigrant workers is better prepared to address their needs," Mehta says. "We are able to achieve the goal of residency for migrant workers, as just one example."

More federal election schools

The month of January saw four more sessions successfully delivered to dozens of rank-and-file members getting set to volunteer in political campaigns in an anticipated federal election.

"UFCW Canada is lucky to have so many member activists willing to step forward and give their time to the important work that takes place during an election, from knocking on doors to running phone banks to crunching numbers to determine areas of support," says UFCW Canada

National President Wayne Hanley. "We are also lucky to have seasoned political veterans on our national staff like Bob Linton, Andrew Mackenzie, and Brian Noonan, who are able to share their experiences and expertise through these schools."

Pictured with the three facilitators are two groups who received training in Niagara Falls, Ont., in January – mainly members of Locals 175 & 633 and Local 1000A. Other schools were held last month in Winnipeg and Halifax.

Final print edition of DIRECTIONS

This issue of *DIRECTIONS*, vol. X no. 5, is the final planned printed version of the publication. Beginning with issue 10.06 with the publication date of Feb. 15, 2010, *DIRECTIONS* will be published only online in an electronic version. If you are not already on the email notification list – which will link you each week to the latest news – please drop a line to directions@ufcw.ca in order to subscribe to the email list.

Calendar

Feb. 9: *SAFE Work: WCB & the Provincial Initiative* presentation, MFL Occupational Health Centre, Union Centre, Winnipeg
Feb. 14: Memorial March for Missing & Murdered Women (locations across Canada; see www.ufcw.ca/memorial)
Feb. 15: *DIRECTIONS* launches online-only publication
Feb. 15: Family Day (Alta., Sask., Ont.); Islander Day (P.E.I.); Louis Riel Day (Man.); Heritage Day (celebrated elsewhere)

For more information, please visit us at www.ufcw.ca

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