

Weekly bulletin from  
UFCW Canada National President  
Wayne Hanley

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# DIRECTIONS

## **Vigil held for TFWs killed on job**

On Jan. 7, UFCW Canada activists joined more than 200 other labour and community allies for a candlelight vigil at the base of a Toronto apartment building where a Christmas Eve construction accident killed four temporary foreign workers (TFWs), and left a fifth migrant worker with critical injuries. The vigil was organized by the organizations *Justice for Migrant Workers* and *No One is Illegal – Toronto*.

Alexander Bondorev, Aleksey Blumberg, Fayzulla Fazilov, and Vladimir Korostin fell more than 13 storeys to their deaths on Dec. 24 after the suspended scaffold from which they were working collapsed. Dilshod Mamurov, who also fell from the scaffold, remains in a Toronto hospital with a broken spine and two fractured legs.

None of the workers were wearing safety harnesses, and it is as-yet unclear if the non-union company that had contracted their labour had supplied them with any safety training or equipment. All five victims – from Latvia, Ukraine,



and Uzbekistan – were working in Canada under the federal government's Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW) program.

"Those men who died falling from that building died solely because they were migrant workers," Naveen Mehta told the crowd gathered in front of the North York highrise. Mehta is UFCW Canada's director of Human Rights, Equity & Diversity. "They had no status to be able to complain, go to the government, or go to their employer and say, 'Hey, this is unacceptable!'"

Jim Wright, a national health-and-safety specialist at UFCW Canada, says, "Foreign workers in non-union settings often aren't told about their health-and-safety rights, including the right to refuse dangerous work. And even if they had concerns, migrant workers often work in such desperate conditions that many are afraid to report it because they might get fired and deported."

"It doesn't have to be this way, and it shouldn't be," says

UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley. "There are thousands of UFCW Canada members across this country who are migrant workers, and who don't face such risks because this union would never allow it.

"A worker is a worker is a worker – regardless of where they come from. Migrant workers need greater protections given the vulnerable nature of their status in Canada."

A photo album and video from the vigil is currently available on the UFCW Canada *facebook* fan page, located at [www.facebook.com/ufcwcana](http://www.facebook.com/ufcwcana), as well as on our website.



## **Workplace violence bill becomes law**

2010 promises to be a safer year for UFCW Canada members across Ontario thanks to the lobbying efforts of their local unions and the UFCW Canada National Office. On Dec. 23, 2009, Bill 168 – *An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to violence and harassment in the workplace and other matters* – passed into law, adding Ontario to a growing list of Canadian jurisdictions that recognize the importance of such legislation.

The UFCW Canada WSIB Working Group (WSIB is Ontario's worker compensation system), which includes benefits representatives and health-and-safety activists from every UFCW Canada local union in Ontario, played an important role in shaping Bill 168. "All UFCW Canada local unions in Ontario, along with the National Office, worked very hard to ensure that Bill 168 became a law that enhances safety, dignity, and respect in the workplace," says UFCW Canada national representative Jim Wright.

"This legislation will benefit all UFCW Canada members, especially the many who work in demanding service sector jobs where the threat and occurrence of abuse is especially high," says UFCW Canada Locals 175 & 633 benefits representative Sherree Backus, who also chairs the union's WSIB Working Group.

The new law is scheduled to be in full force by June 15, 2010. At that time, workplaces in Ontario where more than five workers are regularly employed will be required to have the necessary policies, programs, measures, and procedures in place.



## **New resource for new parents**

UFCW Canada members who are new or expectant parents will have some new help this year in trying to figure out what their rights and entitlements are as workers and new parents. The *UFCW Canada Guide to Maternity, Paternity*



& *Parental Leaves from Work*, initiated by UFCW Canada's National Women's Advisory Committee, was recently made available to help members make sense of an often-complicated benefits system.

"As Canada's most youthful union, many UFCW Canada members are new or soon-to-be parents," says Nancy Quiring, UFCW Canada's regional director for the Western Provinces, who

also chairs the national committee. "The committee coordinated the development of this guide in order to help UFCW Canada members understand and access the benefits that were established to help people create a healthier balance between their home and work lives."

The guide is available in French and English, and is fully accessible to all UFCW Canada members through the committee's webpage, located at [www.ufcw.ca/women](http://www.ufcw.ca/women).



### **Celebrating International Migrants Day**

UFCW Canada, together with the Agriculture Workers Alliance (AWA), *Migrante Ontario* (affiliated with *Migrante International*), and CHRY – a progressive community radio station based out of York University in Toronto – sponsored an International Migrants Day celebration in December by joining with community allies at a forum that focused on co-operation and the different ways social justice groups can work together to make Canada a more just place for its most vulnerable workers – both migrants and immigrants.

In addition to UFCW Canada organizer Alexes Barillas (pictured at the event) – who spoke about the union's 20-year social, political, and legal battle on behalf of migrant workers – forum participants heard from activists repre-



sending *Migrante Ontario*, *Migrante Youth*, and the *Filipino Migrant Workers Movement*.

"International Migrants Day is a day to reflect upon our collective successes with community allies and the road still left to travel," says Naveen Mehta, UFCW Canada's director of Human Rights, Equity & Diversity. "At the end of the day, we all strive for the same result: justice and respect for immigrant and migrant workers. By combining our efforts, we will get there a lot faster."

A photo album from the International Migrants Day forum is currently featured on the UFCW Canada facebook fan page at [www.facebook.com/ufcwcanada](http://www.facebook.com/ufcwcanada) as well as on our website.



### **YIP sessions announced for 2010**

Last year's successful shift in the rollout of UFCW Canada's highly-successful national Youth Internship Program (YIP) – moving to several regional sessions instead of a single, multi-session national program – will continue in 2010.

"The new format allows us to bring a larger number of young activists into the program, and increases the opportunities for young members to get the skills and background they need to move ahead in their union involvement," says UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley.

Since its inception in 2000, YIP has provided a launch pad for young union activists, many of whom have gone on to become staff and officers of their local unions, as well as national staff. "The program has proved to be a valuable resource for all UFCW Canada members, in that we are able to find some of the best and the brightest early in their careers and help them move forward in helping other members," says National President Hanley.

Four regional sessions are scheduled for the Youth Internship Program in 2010. The first, for Ontario members, will take place in Barrie, Ont., March 21-26. It will be followed by an Alberta & British Columbia joint session in Harrison Hot Springs, B.C., April 18-23. A Saskatchewan & Manitoba session will take place in Gimli, Man., Aug. 22-27, and an Atlantic Provinces session will be held Oct. 24-29 in Memramcook, N.B. Posters and flyers are being sent out to local unions in each region for distribution to members, and details of the program and applications are available online at [www.ufcw.ca/yip](http://www.ufcw.ca/yip).



### **Calendar**

- Jan. 25-26:** UFCW Canada Election Training, Niagara Falls
- Jan. 28-29:** UFCW Canada Election Training, Halifax
- Feb. 4:** Ontario byelection, Toronto Centre
- March 8:** International Women's Day

For more information,  
please visit us at  
[www.ufcw.ca](http://www.ufcw.ca)



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