

Bulletin from UFCW Canada National President Wayne E. Hanley • Vol. VIII No. 19 • May 12, 2008 • ISSN 1496-9009

Good enough to work here? Good enough to live here.

“People who come here in good faith to build Canada’s future should have the right to share in it,” says UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley who, along with other UFCW Canada activists, joined more than 300 labour and social allies at a rainy May 3 rally in Toronto to protest proposed changes to Canada’s *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA).

The changes, included as a rider in the Harper Conservatives’ *Budget Implementation Act* (Bill C-50), would give the federal government – in the person of the immigration minister – absolute and arbitrary powers to deport “non-status” immigrants, to expand the exploitation of temporary workers, and to “clean up” the backlog of family reunification applications by simply discarding them. Repeated NDP efforts to have the immigration measures to be evaluated on their own merits, and not included in the implementation act, have thus far been blocked.



“When it comes right down to it, the Harper government’s changes to the IRPA would sanction out-and-out exploitation of both status and non-status immigrants,” President Hanley says. “The amendments to the IRPA would also dash the hopes of thousands of immigrants now working and saving in Canada to bring their families here. It is wrong and discriminatory, and does not reflect the Canada in which we believe.”

For more on the Tory government’s proposed revisions to the IRPA through Bill C-50 as well as on the campaign to stop it, visit www.ufcw.ca/status.



Workers rally for labour rights

More than a thousand labour activists and supporters rallied outside the Saskatchewan legislature in Regina on May Day, May 1, to send a message to the right-wing Saskatchewan Party government of Brad Wall that its proposed Bills 5 and 6 eliminating many long-entrenched labour rights are unacceptable and must be withdrawn. A somewhat smaller rally held the same day in Saskatoon was also strongly supported



by UFCW Canada activists, says national representative Chris Dennis (pictured, holding flag).

“It was good to see so many UFCW Canada members and other supporters out here today, including many members of the province’s NDP caucus,” says UFCW Canada Local 1400 President Paul Meinema. “While the premier was hiding under his desk and refusing to meet the people of this province on their concerns about the radical changes he wants to make to labour laws that work, NDP MLAs were here with us to show they are listening to the people who elect them.”

Pictured following the rally are a few of the UFCW Canada members and staff who had been in attendance, including (l-r) Brothers Meinema and Dennis, Cory Cozart, Macy MacKenzie, Laurie Temple, Glenn Stewart, Kathryn Goodwin, Robert Klein, and Amy Price.



Firefighters warm to Leamington contract

Firefighters in Leamington, Ont., members of UFCW Canada Local 2002, have ratified a new three-year contract negotiated with the help of UFCW Canada Local 1993, which has a servicing agreement with the local. The 28-member Leamington Firefighters’ Association, which comprises Local 2002, has collective bargaining rights under Ontario’s *Fire Protection Act*, but is prohibited from striking.

Leamington, in southwestern Ontario, is Canada’s most southerly municipality and in the heart of the most intensive farm and greenhouse operations in the province. The members of the local supply firefighting services for the area of Mersea, more than 240 square kilometres including Leamington and Point Pelee National Park.



The new agreement is retroactive to December 2006, and expires December 2009. The previous two contracts between the local and the Municipality of Leamington were settled by binding interest arbitration. "This time, through our own efforts and the assistance of a conciliator, we were able to achieve a good memorandum of agreement with the employer," says Jim Wright, national representative in the UFCW Canada national operations department, who led the bargaining since January.

The 28 members of Local 2002 are classified as part-time firefighters. They are split into four squads, each scheduled to attend calls during a 13-week period. All firefighters are also required to be on standby year-round for full alarm calls if available. "This means that the doubling of standby money over the life of the new contract was an important step in getting to the agreement," says Wright.

In addition to enhanced standby premiums, the new agreement also includes a 3% annual salary increase, the creation of a new position in the unit of a full-time Fire Prevention Officer, and new premiums for Acting Captains.



McGuinty Liberals deny union rights

On May Day – a day set aside internationally to honour workers and their rights – the Ontario Liberal government of Premier Dalton McGuinty quashed a private member's bill put forward by NDP Leader Howard Hampton to restore card based union certification in the province.

"By voting down this bill, the McGuinty Liberals are condemning Ontario workers to harassment, intimidation, and even termination when trying to join a union," Hampton says.

At a press conference on April 30, prior to debate on his bill, Hampton was joined by two UFCW Canada Local 175 members – Sherwin Flight and Denise Cachia – who described the intimidation and harassment they faced from their employers when they were involved in organizing their workplaces. Both members also told the media how much better their working environment is now that they are represented by the union. "I can tell you that what these workers have gone through is not unusual," Hampton says. "Under the current union certification process, brought in by the Harris Conservatives in 1995, employer intimidation is more the norm than the exception."

For almost half a century, under governments of all

stripes, Ontario workers were able to unionize through a card based certification process, until Mike Harris's then-new right-wing government revoked the right in 1995. Although the McGuinty Liberals restored card based certification on a limited basis (applying only to the construction industry), the provincial government continues to refuse to extend the right to Ontario's most vulnerable workers working for low wages and without good benefits.

"This is about social and economic justice," says UFCW Canada National President Wayne Hanley. "Card based certification is good for workers, good for business, and good for the economy."

After the second reading debate on the bill, the McGuinty Liberals, including Labour Minister Brad Duguid, joined with the Conservatives to reject the bill.

"It is ironic that the McGuinty Liberals voted this bill down on May 1, the International Workers Day celebrating the social and economic achievement of workers around the world," President Hanley says. "Restoring card based certification in Ontario is a vital step in returning the province, and Canada as a whole, to a leading example of the respect for human rights governments must exercise."



EI claims drop in eight provinces

According to Canadian Press reports, the number of Canadians receiving Employment Insurance (EI) benefits is dropping, with February year-to-year figures falling by 7.5%. The largest declines were in Saskatchewan (down 20.2%) and Quebec (down 10.2%). On a month-to-month basis, Saskatchewan fell 7.1%, and Newfoundland and Labrador was down 2.3%.



Calendar

May 22-24: CALM conference, Delta Chelsea, Toronto

May 24-25: Returns for Leukemia Research bottle drive, The Beer Store locations across Ontario

May 26-30: CLC Convention, Metro Toronto Convention Centre

June 2-3: UFCW Canada national educators' conference, Hecla Oasis Resort, Riverton, Man.

June 9-13: B.C., Alberta regional youth internship program, Harrison Hot Springs, B.C.

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

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Wayne Hanley, National President, UFCW Canada
300-61 International Blvd Rexdale ON M9W 6K4
416.675.1104 • fax 416.675.6919 • www.ufcw.ca

DIRECTIONS

Research & Production: Michael Forman (michael.forman@ufcw.ca), Mike Freeman (mike.freeman@ufcw.ca), Josefina Moruz (josefina.moruz@ufcw.ca)
Québec Contact: Anouk Collet (anouk.collet@ufcw.ca)
Translation: Sylvia Waller (sylvia.waller@ufcw.ca)



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