

NATIONAL DIRECTOR'S

UPDATE



SEPTEMBER 2018

Our International Strength



Over the summer, I had the pleasure of attending and offering remarks at a number of union member

gatherings that highlight USW's strength and solidarity as an international union.

The USW is a proud partner with Unite the Union and I spoke at Unite's policy conference in the U.K. in Brighton. USW and Unite formed the international union Workers Uniting in 2011 to build global union activism. And we are using the strength of that partnership to fight back against unfair employers – in Canada, in the U.S. and globally.

Recent examples of our solidarity include USW members in Canada mobilizing at the Great West Life shareholders' meeting in Toronto to protest the company's attempts to

strip away the defined benefit pensions of Unite members at Irish Life.

Steelworkers locked out by ABI in Bécancour, Que., since January have received international support including from Mexico's national miners' union Los Mineros and global union federation IndustriALL.

I had the chance to bring the Canadian worker's perspective to the USW District 12 conference in San Diego and the District 4 Conference in Atlantic City. Steelworkers in Canada and the U.S. are on the same page when it comes to unfair global trade deals and predatory trade practices that kill good jobs and hurt our members in both countries.

We stand for fair trade that prioritizes the lives and jobs of working people. Fair trade that creates a level playing field for countries. Fair trade that has a place at the table

for labour. Fair trade that defends workers' rights and the health of the planet.

Workers in Canada are engaged in many struggles – bargaining agreements, resolving grievances, voting to strike or being locked out in fights to preserve fairness for workers. Nationwide and internationally, our members are dealing with the effects of tariffs, trade disputes and economic uncertainty.

Our strength as an international union is fundamental to winning these struggles for workers. We must stand together. We must not allow greedy corporations and right-wing governments to distract and divide us from our solidarity.

In solidarity,

Ken Neumann
National Director



uswmetallos



@SteelworkersCA



United Steelworkers Canadian National Office
800 – 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto, ON M4P 1K7
Tel.: 416-487-1571 Web: usw.ca Email: info@usw.ca





Western Unity & Strength District 3 Conference

Steelworkers from across Western Canada will gather in Kamloops, B.C. from Oct. 30 to Nov. 1 for the District 3 2018 Conference: Our Unity. Our Strength. The conference's theme highlights the work done by USW members every day to strengthen our union and fight for better working conditions.

"This is an opportunity for Steelworkers from every local and from every workplace we represent across District 3 to come together and learn from one another," says Stephen Hunt, District 3 Director.

In conjunction with the Conference, there will also be meetings for Women of Steel, NextGen, SOAR, Health Care Sector Workers, Veterans of Steel and the Aboriginal Working Group.

"This is your union. It belongs to you and I encourage all locals to participate in the conference," Hunt says.

More information, including registration is available at: www.usw.ca/district3. ■

ONTARIO ELECTION • ONTARIO ELECTION •

Two Steelworkers Added as NDP

Cuts and chaos are underway in Ontario as the new Conservative government shows its mean side with attacks on children and our most vulnerable while interfering in municipal elections.

Steelworkers are standing with Andrea Horwath's Official Opposition NDP to fight back.

"The NDP continues to be the strongest voice for workers, and we will stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our political partner to resist the cuts to health care and education and the job losses and privatization that will come with a Doug Ford Conservative government," said USW District 6 Director Marty Warren.

The NDP doubled its caucus of MPPs to 40 members, including five elected Steelworkers.

Jamie West (USW Local 6500, Sudbury) and Guy Bourgouin, (USW Local 1-2010, Mushkegowuk-James Bay) credit the union for their political involvement.

Jamie is now welcome anywhere in the halls of Queen's Park nine years after being kicked out as part of a Steelworker protest during the Vale strike.

"I wouldn't be able to do this if I wasn't a Steelworker," Jamie says, referring to his new role.

Three USW NDP MPPs were re-elected: Gilles Bisson (Timmins), Michael Mantha (Algoma-Manitoulin) and Paul Miller (Hamilton East-Stoney Creek). Although unsuccessful, we're super proud of Steelworker Jana Papuckoski who ran for the NDP in Northumberland-Peterborough South.

Thanks in part to the USW's third-party advertising, which included a heavy rotation of radio ads three weeks before the election started, the NDP was boosted in the polls early in the race as a positive alternative for voters tired of Kathleen Wynne's Liberals.

USW ran a robust member-to-member campaign

Northern B.C. Forestry Workers Provide Strong Mandate As Bargaining Continues

Steelworkers working in the forest industry in Northern British Columbia have voted 93% in favour of strike action as the union tries to bargain a fair collective agreement for more than 1,600 members.

Our members are seeking a fair collective agreement that respects the hard work they do every day to make their employers profitable.

USW Local 1-2017 President Brian O'Rourke says the members have provided a strong mandate to the bargaining team. "Our members are seeking a fair collective agreement that respects the hard work they do every day to make their employers profitable. With their very strong support, we will now look to get back to the bargaining table," says O'Rourke.

We are looking for improvements to our working conditions," says Bob Matters, USW Wood Council Chair.

"The employer is unwilling to discuss the most basic proposals. Our workers are demanding changes and we will fight for them. We are bargaining for 23 different worksites and it's time to send them a message," Matters said.

The union has proposed changes to the collective agreement that include leave for members struggling with domestic violence, union representation and pension funding improvement.

The vote follows several rounds of bargaining with the Council of Northern Interior Forest Employment Relations.

These negotiations cover operations in Prince George, Houston, Burns Lake, Fort St. James, Mackenzie, Fort St. John, Quesnel, Williams Lake and Lake City. ■

ONTARIO ELECTION • ONTARIO ELECTION

P MPPs at Queen's Park

featuring week-long Steelworkers Vote schools in four regions, sending crews of USW member volunteers to help local NDP candidates. All the campaigns where we got involved were successful!

Even as we fight back against Ford's attacks, we must continue to put forward positive and progressive alternatives. And electing such a strong team of New Democrats, including five Steelworkers, in the caucus is a great way to start. ■



Jamie West with NDP leader Andrea Horwath and USW volunteers.



Guy Bourguoin (centre) and Gilles Bisson (right) with NDP Leader Andrea Horwath during the campaign.

Battle to Defend Steel and

In mid-August (as we go to print), the Canadian government announced consultations on the possible imposition of steel 'safeguards' on a number of products coming into Canada. A welcome but minor step in the battle to protect the Canadian steel industry, communities and jobs.

For years, Steelworkers on both sides of the U.S. border have decried and battled the harmful and unfair dumping of steel and aluminum by countries, including China, South Korea and Turkey. We have insisted that this massive unfair practice is killing jobs and communities in the integrated markets of Canada and the U.S.

This trade war insanity means major increases in production costs for businesses on both sides of the border, threatening their viability and the jobs of American and Canadian workers.

However, when Donald Trump announced tariffs aimed at this dumping, he included Canada in his retaliation. On June 1st, the tariffs came into effect and Canada imposed counter-tariffs of equal value on a variety of U.S. goods.

Beyond the direct harm of the U.S. tariffs, the Steelworkers sounded the alarm of increased dumping from countries taking advantage of the tariffs and attempting to use Canada as a backdoor to America. From the start, USW called on the Canadian government to take strong and immediate action to protect our borders, while at the same time denouncing Canada as a target of the U.S. tariffs.

We are currently participating in seven cases before the Canadian International Trade Tribunal, all of which are targeted at the dumping of various steel products into the Canadian market. This action by USW is a key part of the effort to protect the Canadian market from the effects of the U.S. tariffs on steel.

There are real-world impacts of these senseless tariffs and counter-tariffs now affecting steel, aluminum and many other products crossing the Canada-U.S. border in both directions.

For example, manufacturers in New York State and elsewhere in the U.S. rely heavily on raw aluminum that is produced by Quebec Steelworkers at some of the most efficient and environmentally friendly smelters in the world.

This aluminum is traded between the U.S. and Canada by companies that follow trade rules. Workers are paid middle-class wages and have decent working conditions and safe workplaces.

Much of Quebec's aluminum is shipped to American manufacturing plants for processing and some of these American products are shipped back across the border to facilities in Canada to be manufactured into auto components.

Many of these components are then shipped to U.S. auto plants, where they are used to build new cars and trucks. Many of these vehicles are exported to Canada to be purchased by Canadian consumers.

These are the good jobs and strong communities we are now fighting to protect.

This trade war insanity means major increases in production costs for businesses on both sides of the border, threatening their viability and the jobs of American and Canadian workers.

The tariffs and counter-tariffs between the U.S. and Canada do nothing to address the real issue of cracking down on the 'bad-actor' countries that break the rules and dump their products into the Canadian and American markets.

These countries don't allow their workers to join real trade unions or negotiate meaningful collective agreements. Their workers are exploited, forced into terrible working conditions with extremely low pay. Safety standards and environmental protections are lacking, or non-existent.

These bad-actor countries massively subsidize their industries, and then dump their steel, aluminum, paper, tires, and other products into our markets, either directly or indirectly.

This is why the USW supports tariffs and other sanctions against these 'bad-actor' countries. And it's why Steelworkers will continue to lead the fight for fair trade and against Trump's war on our jobs. ■

d Aluminum Continues

A photograph of a worker in a blue shirt, white hard hat, and safety glasses operating industrial machinery in an aluminum processing plant. The worker is positioned in the center-left of the frame, looking down at the equipment. The machinery is complex, with various pipes, valves, and structural elements. A large, curved metal pipe is prominent in the foreground. The background shows more industrial structures and a bright light source, possibly a window or a large lamp, creating a high-contrast scene. The overall tone is industrial and focused on the worker's activity.

Workers, Communities Need More Support

The Canadian government must consider greater assistance to workers and communities as the senseless trade war instigated by the Trump administration drags on, the USW says.

After announcing counter-tariffs on hundreds of U.S. exports to Canada in July, the federal government also promised assistance to Canadian industries affected by U.S. tariffs. However, support for Canadian workers and communities will be lacking if the tariff war continues, USW National Director Ken Neumann said.

"The announced assistance to industry via loan guarantees (\$1.7 billion) and innovation funds (\$250 million) will be helpful to the steel and aluminum industries," Neumann said. "The assistance to workers is unfortunately much more modest."

Changes to Employment Insurance rules are welcome but must go further, including reduced hours to qualify for EI and extending the total duration a worker can receive EI. Greater supports for training and mobility programs, such as grants to assist workers in relocating and accessing new opportunities, also are needed.

"It is important the community/workers' support measures are implemented immediately and extended as long as necessary," Neumann said.

The Canadian government must also pursue additional measures such as active monitoring mechanisms of the effectiveness of tariffs and stronger safeguards of our borders against products being dumped into Canada.

Photo: Steve Dietz

Locked out of their jobs for eight months, Steelworkers Local 9700 members in Bécancour, Que., are demonstrating overwhelming solidarity in the face of devious bargaining tactics by multinational aluminum giants Alcoa and Rio Tinto.

A contract settlement appeared to be within reach before Alcoa and Rio Tinto, co-owners of the ABI aluminum smelter in Bécancour, locked out more than 1,000 members of Local 9700 on Jan. 11.

In the ensuing months, the Local 9700 bargaining committee continued to negotiate in good faith, seeking resolution on the two key, outstanding issues – pensions and employee turnover. The Quebec government also appointed a special mediator – former Premier Lucien Bouchard – to help the two sides reach a settlement.

Rather than seeking a resolution to end the lockout, ABI has backtracked on its previous positions and introduced new demands for concessions.

Local 9700 members have responded with an emphatic condemnation of the company's tactics and with an overwhelming vote of confidence – more than 90% support – in their bargaining committee's position.

"We made overtures to resolve the outstanding issues, but the employer has responded by backtracking on its positions on several issues and piling on new demands, including workforce reductions in the neighbourhood of 20%," said Clément Masse, Steelworkers Local 9700 President.

Bouchard, the Quebec government's special mediator, recommended that the parties meet with Alcoa

officials in Pittsburgh, where the company has its head office. The prospects for such a meeting were not known as of publication time.

"Sooner or later, we will have to reach an agreement," said Dominic Lemieux, Assistant to the Steelworkers' Quebec Director. "The longer it takes, Alcoa and Rio Tinto lose more and more profits. They need to understand that the workers remain strong. How much more are they prepared to lose because they've misread the situation?"

USW locals can support the locked-out ABI workers by sending donations to:

MÉTALLOS SL 9700 F.D.P.

Syndicat des Métallos
8310, rue Desormeaux
Bécancour, Québec
G9H 2X2

ATTENTION: Éric Moore, Financial Secretary ■

ABI's Bad Faith

Alcoa, Rio Tinto bring new demands to impede settlement in ABI lockout



Historic Labour Victory

Landmark legislation in Quebec bans two-tier pensions, benefits



After years of relentless activism led by Steelworkers, landmark labour law reforms have been passed to prohibit employers from imposing two-tier pension and benefit plans in Quebec workplaces.

The new legislation, passed in June, bans two-tier plans intended to impose substandard pensions and benefits on new hires and young workers, compared to existing employees. Legislation banning two-tier wage schemes has been in place in Quebec since 2001.

"We are tremendously proud that the battles led by so many Steelworkers members have been successful, not only in terms of their individual collective agreements, but also in playing a key role in shaping labour law in Quebec," said Steelworkers District 5 Director Alain Croteau.

Along with the Quebec Federation of Labour, Steelworkers led the campaign to ban two-tier pensions and benefits through strikes, lock-outs and years of public advocacy and lobbying.

Many private-sector labour disputes in recent years have been provoked by employers' attempts to impose two-tier pension and benefit plans, Croteau noted.

"In 2007, our members at Rio Tinto Fer et Titane in Havre-Saint-Pierre led the way in resisting two-tier pension demands, going on strike for months rather than give up their defined-benefit plan," he said.

"In 2016, our members at Ciment Lafarge in Saint-Constant also rejected a two-tier pension plan. They were followed a year later by their fellow members at Resco and at Samuel et Fils," he added.

"In addition to these disputes, many, many other Steelworkers successfully fought back at the bargaining table to reject two-tier demands and to secure agreements that maintain the same pensions and benefits for all."

Dominic Lemieux, Assistant to the USW District 5 Director, worked for a decade to build support for a legislative ban on two-tier pensions and benefits, in his previous role as president of the Quebec Labour Federation's youth wing.

"This is a tremendous victory that refutes critics who like to imply that the union movement is disconnected from young people," Lemieux said. "We are now seeing the results of a union-led struggle that was fought for young people and with young people, for fairness and solidarity in our workplaces." ■

We Deserve Better!

In advance of the Oct. 1 Quebec election, Steelworkers are part of a coalition of labour groups that has launched the campaign One and the Same – We Deserve Better! The campaign, which includes signs being posted in several key ridings, urges voters to reject the austerity policies of the governing Liberals and the anti-union Coalition Avenir Québec party. The campaign encourages voters to support progressive candidates and parties in key ridings. ■



Mark your Calendar! USW Events

District 6 Conference

4-8 Sept. Collingwood, ON

International and National Women's Conference

14-17 Oct. Toronto, ON

District 3 Conference

30 Oct.-1 Nov. Kamloops, BC

District 6 Fall School

4-9 Nov. Orillia, ON

District 5 Annual Assembly

21-23 Nov. Charlevoix, QC

SOAR Conference

1 April, 2019 Vancouver, BC

NextGen Conference

1 April, 2019 Vancouver, BC

National Policy Conference

2-5 April, 2019 Vancouver, BC

Retirees First: Steelworker lobbyists met with more than 150 Members of Parliament over two weeks in the spring, looking for support to change bankruptcy and insolvency laws to protect workers' pensions and benefits. Two private member's bills are currently before the House of Commons.

Photo: Andrew Meade, CWA Canada

