

NEWS@6

WINTER 2020

Marty's Message

Rising to the Challenge

Steelworkers,

Over the last several months, I have been inspired by the response of our union and our members in confronting the enormous challenges of these unprecedented times.

In the pandemic's early stages, thousands of Steelworkers in District 6 and across our country lost their jobs. While most of those jobs have returned, many have not and these members and their families continue to face undue hardship. That's why our union has fought every day for improved government support programs and for an economic recovery based on policies to reverse growing inequality, put workers first and create sustainable, long-term jobs.

Our activists and members have risen to the challenge during the pandemic to prove once again that the USW is THE health and safety union.

USW members working in every sector have persevered throughout the pandemic to keep our communities and our economy functioning. I cannot say enough about the courage and dedication of thousands of Steelworkers who are front-line and essential workers who put themselves at risk every day. I commend the District 6 Health-Care Council for its unrelenting efforts to protect our members and the vulnerable people they serve.

Our activists and members have risen to the challenge during the pandemic to prove once again that the USW is THE health and safety union.

Steelworkers have been demanding that employers and governments provide greater health and safety protections for our members and all workers. USW locals and activists have stepped up to purchase and even manufacture personal protective equipment for our front-line members and other workers.

Throughout District 6, Steelworkers are still negotiating the best-possible collective agreements for our members. Our union also has been overcoming pandemic-related hurdles to help workers in every sector of the economy organize and join the USW.

Our union and our members are making a tremendous difference in our communities in these difficult times. From donating to and volunteering with health-care providers, hospices, food banks and homelessness services, to outfitting children with the gear and supplies they need for school, every day our members show that Steelworkers care for their neighbours.

Friends, as the pandemic's second wave takes hold, I know the solidarity, resourcefulness and generosity of Steelworkers will continue to help our members, working families and the most vulnerable in our communities. I could not be more proud of you.

In solidarity,



Marty Warren
USW District 6 Director

Long-term Fixes for Long-term Care

USW MEMBERS WORKING IN LONG-TERM CARE have been sounding the alarm for years on problems in their sector, issues that are now familiar due to COVID-19: low wages, staffing shortages that worsen already heavy workloads, workers holding part-time jobs at multiple locations.

As this is the caring sector, it's mostly women who do these jobs – undervalued and underpaid.

Long-term care is underfunded. Add to that, many of the facilities are owned by for-profit companies that make understaffing part of their business model to drive profit and dividends, compromising resident care.

During the pandemic, workloads have increased and Doug Ford's Conservative government has extended

employer powers under emergency orders laws that override collective agreements, making working conditions worse in some cases.

Many bang pots and pans on our doorsteps to honour our long-term care and health-care heroes who are caring for our elderly.

They are often too busy working to hear the support. Employers used the emergency orders to force them to give up vacations, so they've had no chance to recharge. And now the second wave is here.

it's insulting that the government's temporary wage enhancements are not permanent.

Worker-led Solutions for Long-Term Care

USW District 6 members working

in health-care and long-term care are part of the District 6 Health-Care Council.

"The council is a way to share experiences and work on strategies for addressing problems in the sector," said Audra Nixon, President of the District 6 Health Care Council, and Unit Chair at Maxville Manor where staff belong to USW Local 9211.

"We welcome new Steelworker members. If you work in health care or long-term care, please join our council," said Audra.

The council met virtually in September to continue its work on proactive solutions.

Training and Recruitment

The Health-Care Council initiated a pilot project with an employment



During a break in their meetings last year, members of the District 6 Health-Care Council visited Conservative MPP Lisa MacLeod's office, Minister for the Status of Women at the time, to press for care for long-term care.

are Workers

agency in Eastern Ontario to recruit and train more workers for long-term care. The project secured funding to cover tuition costs for the certificate most employers require.

Bargaining

As essential workers without the right to strike working in a sector where employers have outsourced negotiations to third-party corporations, it's increasingly difficult to build local momentum for change. The council plans to re-introduce traditional bargaining preparation including surveys and issue campaigns to put employers on notice and build member and public support for improvements.

Legal challenges

The USW is part of the Ontario Federation of Labour's (OFL's) legal challenge

to Bill 124, the public sector wage control bill, arguing that the law interferes with the right to collective bargaining and violates the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Should the bill be overturned, the USW is negotiating the right to bargain wages in the middle of a contract's term, to ensure workers aren't short-changed.

Calling us 'heroes' is not enough! Government must take care of those who care!

The USW has also filed formal exemption requests on a case-by-case basis to stand up to employers that are abusing the emergency powers bill (Bill 195).

Advocacy

Unit chairs and Health-Care Council members have advocated with local federal and provincial politicians that long-term care be brought into the public health-care system while protecting union agreements. Our union completely rejects the creeping privatization of our treasured public health-care system.

The Steelworkers union supports the Official Opposition New Democrats'

call for a full public inquiry, not just a government review, of the tragic and deadly failures of our long-term care system during COVID-19.

The USW has called for greater federal and provincial investments to protect residents and staff, as well as a ban on paying dividends for corporations receiving public subsidies.

"For-profit corporations in the long-term care sector are being given millions in public subsidies and then turning around and handing out millions to their shareholders. The federal and Ontario governments appear to be just fine with this perverse situation," said USW District 6 Director Marty Warren.

Solidarity

Through the council, members know they're not alone and the network helps them share and support each other.

The council is working with experts and advocates like the Ontario Health Coalition and Olivia Chow's Institute for Change Leaders to protect our public health-care system and strengthen our members' collective voice.

Our seniors deserve better. Workers in long-term care deserve better. In their own words, "Calling us 'heroes' is not enough! Government must take care of those who care!" ■

www.usw.ca/d6hcc



Horwath Presents Long-Term Care Plan

In October, Andrea Horwath, Leader of the Official Opposition New Democrats, announced a comprehensive plan to overhaul long-term care over eight years, making the entire system public and not-for-profit. The plan includes funding training for Personal Support Workers (PSWs) and increasing wages and job security in the sector.



Unions Challenge Racism

Racism hurts people directly and holds all of us back as a society.

The Steelworkers union condemns racism in all its forms. Our union must be a force for good in confronting racism.

That's why Marty Warren and USW District 6 have endorsed the Ontario Federation of Labour's (OFL's) call to defund the police and signed on to the open letter urging the government to declare racism a public health crisis.

The OFL and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) are calling to end the police killings of Black and Indigenous people; to reimagine alternatives to police services, decriminalization, disarmament and demilitarization; to redistribute overfunded police budgets towards public services in the communities; and to explore community-driven, community-led solutions to community safety and well-being.

As the statement explains, "specific demands for change will look different from city to city, depending on the needs of the community. There is, however, an understanding that fundamental and disruptive change is required: defund the police."

Defunding the police is not radical – it's logical. Our society needs more compassion in policing. The needless killings of Black, Indigenous and racialized people by police must stop.

During COVID-19, it's harder to mobilize for change.

Despite this, District 6 Steelworkers came together this summer to resist systemic racism.

The Steelworkers Toronto Area Council and community organizations held a rally to pressure police to do more after Steelworkers Mark Austin and Candace Zinkweg were violently and racially

assaulted while walking their dog in their local Toronto park last June.

"It's time for us all to step forward and keep up the fight," Director Warren said at the rally.

Thanks to pressure from the union and the community, the police laid charges against those who attacked Mark and Candace.

In August, the community and the Steelworkers organized an art rally – United Against Hate – to take back the local park.

The United Steelworkers stands for collective voice and action. There are things we can do – as a union and as individual union members – to work to end racism.

Find resources at usw.ca and ofl.ca: search "anti-racism resources." \$

Forestry Campaign Making Progress on Softwood Lumber Dispute, EI Reforms

A favourable decision by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and changes to Canada's Employment Insurance program (EI) have been welcome news to USW members involved in the lobbying campaign Forestry Is for Everyone.

A WTO decision in Canada's favour was announced in August on the long-standing U.S. softwood lumber dispute. The dispute-resolution panel found that the U.S. Department of Commerce failed to provide a reasoned and adequate explanation for why the U.S. rejected Canada's proposed regional benchmarks for stumpage rates (in Canada, stumpage is the market value of standing trees that must be paid by companies for the right to harvest timber mainly on Crown land).

"Now is the time to settle a dispute that has denied fair access to the U.S. market," said Jeff Bromley, Chair of the USW Wood Council, representing 14,000 forest industry workers across Canada.

"It is reassuring to see that the WTO agreed with almost all aspects of Canada's appeal," said Bromley.

"We have always maintained that softwood lumber duties are based on erroneous logic and that the U.S. refuses to understand how the Canadian industry operates."

Since the U.S. imposition of softwood duties in 2017, Canada is estimated to have paid more than \$4 billion in duties.

EI changes need to be permanent
The forestry campaign got more good news with proposed Employment Insurance changes.



"Some of the EI changes came forward in earlier interim orders and all of the changes will make it easier for our 14,000 forest industry members to access EI benefits – at least in the short term," said Bromley.

"We welcome the orders that ensure workers will not be held back from EI benefits if they receive negotiated severance packages or have outstanding vacation pay when they are laid off."

An earlier interim order also reduces the number of eligible hours workers must have before making an EI claim. This is particularly problematic when workers are in a cycle of multiple rounds of layoffs.

Bromley said the drawback is that these are all one-time or temporary access changes to the Employment Insurance Act.

"To make them work and make income protection more secure, these provisions must become permanent," he said.

The forestry campaign outlines a total of five issues that will sustain the industry into the future, including using the billions of dollars in duties being held in limbo at the Canada-U.S. border to backstop loan guarantees to forestry companies. Many smaller mills are suffering from weak cash flow. Quebec has already provided such a loan guarantee.

"However, this support to companies has to come with the condition that jobs be maintained and created in Canada – for Canadians," Bromley stressed.

You can help

Several USW members in the sector have participated in Zoom calls with MPs when they are able. Forestry members in District 6 who are interested in doing their part in this campaign can reach out to Jeff Bromley by email at jbromley@usw.ca, via the campaign website at:

www.forestryisforeveryone.ca/
contact or by calling him at 604-205-1110. ■





Seeking Justice for Occupational Disease

It began with a single case and soon expanded into a huge undertaking to bring justice to workers suffering from occupational disease and their families.

Earlier this year, USW Local 2020 was asked to help a former employee of Neelon Casting, a Sudbury foundry, to file a claim for workers' compensation benefits for a work-related illness.

The worker, in palliative care for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, had pursued compensation benefits, without success. The foundry shut down years ago, making it near-impossible to obtain information, placing the onus on the worker to prove his disease stemmed from exposure to toxic substances such as carbon monoxide, silica, lead and asbestos.

Enter the Steelworkers, who represented employees at Neelon Casting

It is so important that these workers and their families get some recognition and justice.

– Jessica Montgomery, USW Local 2020 WSIB worker representative.

when the foundry was producing brake pads and other auto parts. As union representatives set about helping the worker pursue his claim with Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), they began to come across other stories of occupational disease victims from the same plant.

"We even found that there was a Facebook group of former workers who were suffering from these illnesses. We heard about a lot of workers who had died," says Jessica Montgomery, USW Local 2020 WSIB

worker representative.

As the stories piled up, Montgomery and Local 2020 went public, turning to local news and social media to seek other former employees of the foundry suffering illnesses, as well as family members of deceased workers. The local also held an online "intake clinic" in October to allow former workers and families to provide vital information needed for compensation claims.

As of mid-October, Montgomery had registered 122 claims with the WSIB on behalf of former workers of Neelon Casting, which also was known in the

Workers at Neelon Casting, a Sudbury foundry that shut down years ago, were exposed to numerous toxic substances. USW Local 2020 is helping former workers pursue compensation benefits.



ease Victims

plant's later years as Dana Brake Parts and Affinia Canada.

The WSIB has recognized the important work being done by Local 2020 by agreeing that, in addition to advocating for former USW members, the union also can represent former non-union and contract employees from the foundry – a first in Ontario.

"It's definitely become a big project, but it is so important that these workers and their families get some recognition and justice," Montgomery said. The union is still seeking other workers and surviving family members who may have legitimate claims, she added.

Former workers of Neelon Casting/Dana Brake Parts/Affinia Canada, or family members, can contact Montgomery at 705-675-2461, ext. 228, or affiniaintake@uswsudbury.ca.



Gayle Wannan, left, widow of rubber worker Lynden Wannan, met with McIntyre Powder Project founder Janice Hobbs Martell during an intake clinic for former workers suffering from occupational disease as well as surviving family members.

Fighting for Benefits for Former Miners, Rubber Workers

The Steelworkers' efforts to seek justice for former foundry workers is an extension of the union's effective advocacy for former miners and rubber workers suffering from occupational disease.

The USW is a founding partner of the Ontario Rubber Workers Project that advocates for justice for former workers diagnosed with cancers and other illnesses, as well as family members of deceased workers.

After months of advocacy by the union and its allies, the WSIB confirmed last year that it would review more than 300 previously denied claims from rubber workers, as far back as 2002. The project included information sessions in Kitchener – once Canada's rubber capital – to help former workers and family members submit claims and learn about the review process.

The Ontario Rubber Workers Project is a collective of retired rubber workers, their families, the USW, the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees, Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW), the Office of the Worker Adviser and the Rubber Town Workers Alliance Group.

The USW also is a key partner in the McIntyre Powder Project, a long-running initiative documenting health issues of miners and other workers who were exposed to McIntyre Powder aluminum dust in their workplaces. The union also has helped organize intake clinics to assist former workers and family members in pursuing benefits claims.

In June this year, the project achieved a major victory when the WSIB recognized that Parkinson's Disease is a direct result of exposure to McIntyre Powder. The decision will allow more workers and surviving family members to seek compensation benefits.

The union is advocating for compensation boards across Canada to recognize the link between Parkinson's and McIntyre Powder and for continued study into links between McIntyre Powder and lung diseases, cancers and cardiovascular conditions.

The USW and OHCOW are partners in the McIntyre Powder Project along with its founder, activist Janice Hobbs Martell, whose father was a miner who was exposed to the powder and who died with Parkinson's in 2017. ■

www.rubberworkersproject.ca

www.mcintyrepowderproject.com

BARGAINING SUCCESSES



New Pattern Agreement Reached for Over 10,000 Security Members

Thousands of USW members in the security sector recently achieved a four-year pattern agreement in collective bargaining with the industry's largest employers. The agreement covers more than 10,000 members of USW Locals 5296, 9597, 2020 and 5481, working for security firms GardaWorld, Paladin Security and Securitas in Ontario.

Improvements include total wage increases of 9% over the term, increased footwear allowances, provision of stab vests for employees and a \$3 premium for workers using their vehicles for shelter.

The pattern agreement also set the stage for successful bargaining of new contracts for USW members employed by smaller security firms in the province, including ASAP Secured Inc. in Port Colborne, Milton and the Greater Toronto Area, Black Light Investigation Service in Midland and Commissionaires operations in Windsor and Hamilton.



Nuclear workers improve contracts in tough bargaining

Local 4096 members at Canadian Nuclear Laboratories (CNL) in Chalk River, Ont., ratified three-year collective agreements that provide annual 2% wage increases retroactive to June 30, 2019, when their previous contracts expired. Two contracts, one for office and clerical workers and the other for utility and contamination monitors, will be in place until 2022 and include improvements to contract language.



Hawkesbury Steelworkers reverse two-tier wage system

Local 6565 members at Montebello Packaging in Hawkesbury ratified a four-year collective agreement that reverses a two-tier wage system, provides 2% annual wage hikes, additional increases for many employees ranging from \$3 to \$7 per hour, as well as benefit improvements. Reversal of the two-tier wage system was negotiated to improve recruitment and retention of new workers. Montebello manufactures aluminum, laminate and plastic packaging for pharmaceutical, personal care, cosmetics, household, industrial and food products.

BARGAINING SUCCESSES



Car seat makers settle into 3-year agreement

Members at the Leggett & Platt Inc. manufacturing plant in London, which produces seating support and comfort systems for the auto sector, reached a three contract providing across-the board total wage hikes of 5%, a \$3-per-hour up-front increase plus an additional 3.5% for skilled trades workers, improvements to vision care and work boot allowances as well as new provisions on maternity and parental leave.



Water heater manufacturers warm up to new contract

Members at A.O. Smith in Stratford, Ont., who manufacture water heaters and boilers, achieved numerous improvements in a three-year agreement. The contract provides 2% annual wages hikes, improvements to the defined-benefit pension plan, life insurance and AD&D benefits, increased safety shoe and clothing allowances and improved bereavement leave.



Wheel makers rolling along with 5-year deal

Local 8748-22 members at OTR Wheel Engineering in Sault Ste. Marie negotiated a five-year agreement beating back concessions and securing total wage increases of 10% over the contract's term. The deal includes a significant improvement in vision care as well as gains in other medical benefits, vacation entitlement and union orientation provisions.



Labour stability at explosives manufacturer

Local 2020 members at Orica Canada, a Sudbury, Ont., manufacturer of explosives and blasting systems used in the mining industry, reached a three-year collective agreement providing total wage increases of 6%. Other gains included language improvements, shift premiums increases and a \$1,750 signing bonus.



Cement workers reinforce their CBA

Members at Federal White Cement near Woodstock, Ont., ratified a three-year settlement providing total wage increases of 5.5% over the term. The contract includes improved shift premiums, additional paid sick leave and an increased safety boot allowance.



Talc miners absorb improvements

A three-year contract provides numerous gains for members working at the Penhorwood Mine operated Imerys Talc southwest of Timmins, Ont. The agreement includes 6% total wage increases as well as improvements in travel allowances, shift premiums, work boot allowances, vacation entitlement, tool allowances and union leaves, as well as a new provision for company-paid doctors' notes.



Gold miners extract labour peace for 10th straight time

Wage and pension improvements are among gains made by Local 7580 members in a three-year agreement with Goldcorp Canada Ltd. in Timmins. The new contract includes total wage increases of 8% as well as improvements to pension bridging provisions and full coverage by the employer for workers' safety boots and safety clothing. Ratification of the new contract marked the 10th successive collective agreement reached without conflict between the union and Goldcorp.



Municipal firefighters continue to make progress

Municipal firefighters in the southern Ontario community of Port Hope continue to improve their conditions, five years after negotiating their first collective agreement. The latest contract between Local 7175-08 and the Municipality of Port Hope, covering dozens of volunteer firefighters, includes total wage increases of 10%, as well as language improvements. ■

ORGANIZING SUCCESSES

From manufacturing to child care, from railways to firefighting, unorganized workers in virtually every sector of the economy are joining the Steelworkers to give themselves a meaningful, collective voice to improve their working conditions. Recent USW organizing successes include:

Child-care workers: Employees of Labrador West Child Care, serving the communities of Labrador City and Wabush, N.L., succeeded in a campaign to join the USW which required mail-in voting due to pandemic-related restrictions.

Firefighters: New members are part-time firefighters, working out of fire stations in the communities of L'Orignal and Vankleek Hill, part of the municipality of Champlain Township in eastern Ontario.

Retirement home workers: New USW members at Seasons Dufferin Centre, a private, for-profit retirement home in Trenton, Ont., include care providers and staff in maintenance/housekeeping, dietary/kitchen services and resident activities.

Roofing and cladding manufacturing: Manufacturing workers at Vicwest Building Products in Stratford, Ont., joined the USW in October. The workers manufacture steel roofing and cladding for commercial, residential and agricultural use.

Youth shelter workers: New USW members are social workers and intake workers at the Kingston Youth Shelter in Kingston, Ont. The workers provide a variety of services and programs to help homeless/precariously housed youth between the ages of 16 and 24 to work towards their goals for independent living.

Rail workers: New members at Labrador Western Rail Services include engineers, conductors and track maintenance and repair workers. They operate rail services for iron ore mines in the area, including the Tacora Mine in Wabush, N.L., and the Lac Bloomer mine in nearby Fermont, Que.

Structural steel manufacturing: Employees at StelCrete Industries in Fort Erie, Ont., joined the Steelworkers, following workers at other operations of the company who are USW members. StelCrete manufactures reinforcing and structural steel components and wire mesh assemblies.

Office and clerical workers: New members include office and clerical employees at Bellwood Health Services in Toronto. Bellwood Health Services is a treatment and rehabilitation centre for addiction and related mental health disorders.

University residence assistants: University of Toronto residence 'dons,' or resident assistants, voted to join the Steelworkers and the thousands of other university employees who are USW members. Residence dons act as a resource for students in residences and are responsible for community development, social/educational programming, crisis intervention, referrals, policy enforcement and residents' overall wellbeing. ■



Congratulations to USW Local 2859 members who make steam generator components for Bruce Power's Unit 6 reactor. USW District 6 Director Marty Warren attended BWXT Canada's Cambridge, Ont., facility to celebrate the completion of the last four steam generators for the project along with Peter Bethke, USW Local 2859 President and USW Staff Rep Matt McKeever.

NextGen T-shirt Drive Supports Men's Health

The District 6 NextGen Committee offered fun T-shirts for sale with proceeds going to Movember Canada to support men's health research. The project was super successful, raising over \$1,800. Members from USW locals across Canada and the U.S. are wearing the shirts (and, for some, growing their moustaches) in November. #USWMovember2020 ■



Leo Gerard Legacy Honoured at Laurentian University

Two Laurentian University students in Sudbury have been awarded the inaugural Leo Gerard Scholarship established in honour of the legacy of the USW International President Emeritus.

Mikaela Cheslock and Caitlyn Cross, fourth-year students in Laurentian's Workplace and Labour Studies program, received their scholarships in a virtual ceremony earlier this fall. Gerard, the Sudbury native who retired in 2019 after serving 18 years as USW International President and who received an honorary doctorate of laws degree from Laurentian in 1994, participated in the ceremony.

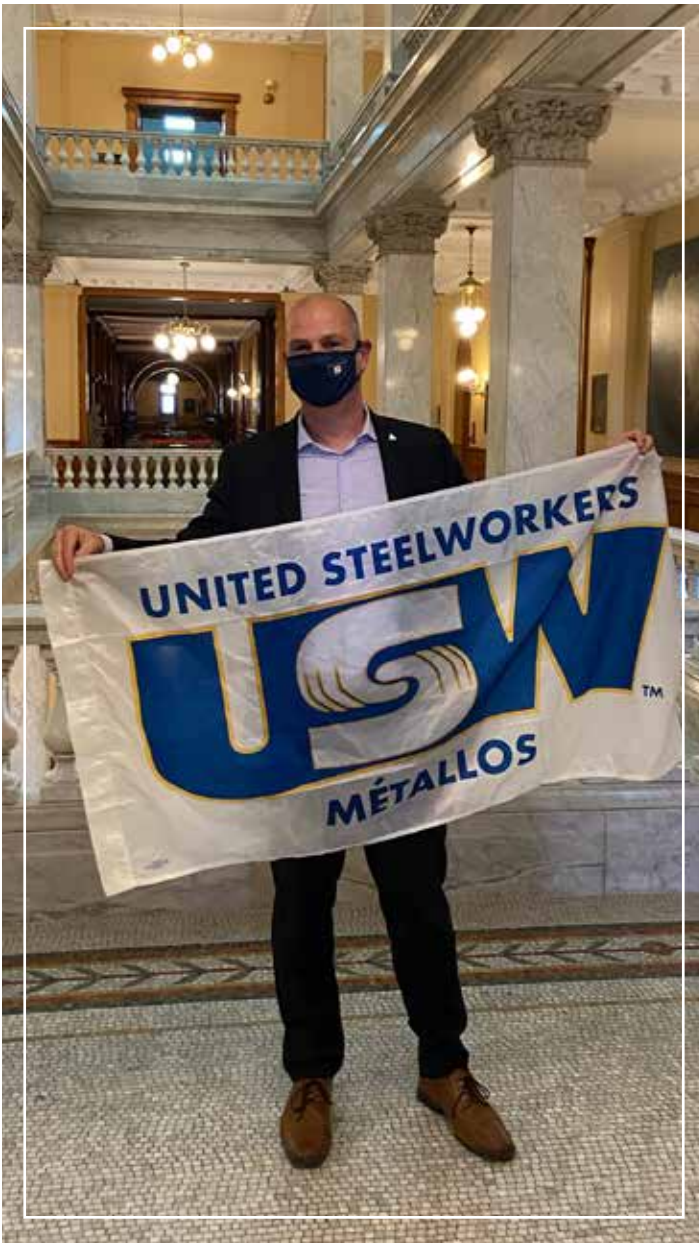
The scholarships are supported through the Leo Gerard Legacy Fund which was created with contributions from USW District 6, the Canadian National Office and Locals 6500 and 2020 in Sudbury.

"I am honoured that the USW is supporting my hometown university in its mission to prepare graduates to address some of the world's most pressing issues, such as workers' rights, inequality and social justice," Gerard said when the scholarship fund was unveiled earlier this year. ■



Mikaela Cheslock, left, and Caitlyn Cross, recipients of the inaugural Leo Gerard Scholarship.

Jamie West at Queen's Park



JAMIE WEST is the Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) in the Ontario Legislature for Sudbury. He is a member of USW Local 6500 and is the NDP Labour Critic.

News@6 spoke to Jamie West at his Queen's Park office in Toronto.

What are some of the achievements of the Official Opposition Ontario NDP?

JW: The NDP is taking charge on long-term care. Our NDP plan to fix long-term care, Aging Ontarians Deserve the Best, will transform for-profit to public long-term care.

In the last decade, the three largest for-profit long-term care homes paid out \$1.5 billion to shareholders. We will take out the profit, get rid of the shareholders and make it public and invest that \$1.5 billion into the public system – increase the number of hours of hands-on care; hire more workers; pay personal support workers (PSWs) a fair wage.

What's the latest around workers' rights?

JW: Doug Ford until recently did very well in the polls through COVID-19. He did what I call "the Uncle Dougie" routine.

He would say, "Oh, PSWs, I would pay them more if I could." But he can! He's the premier!

They have also announced they are getting rid of seniority rights for teachers.

Any female-dominated profession, they seem to go after – teachers, nurses, all public sector workers. School-bus drivers are public-sector workers. They have capped them all at 1% wage increases, but inflation is higher than that, so they're losing money.

How can we keep working together, Steelworkers and the NDP?

JW: Steelworkers do education really well. Education opportunities are what led to me being here (elected).

More Steelworkers need to know the history of the NDP – that the Steelworkers union is a founding partner of the New Democratic Party.

Doug Ford says "I hate unions but I love the union members." Meanwhile, they are completely attacking the working class.

Steelworkers talk to members about how the employer might be taking advantage of you. But we need to talk about politics as well. A lot of things that we bargain for can be taken away, politically. ■

Follow Jamie West:

   **JamieWestNDP**



Talking Politics

Every Tuesday evening for five weeks this summer, the District 6 Political Action Committee (PAC) hosted an online discussion series on political topics.

Steelworkers Talk Politics launched in August with guest speaker Yolanda McClean from the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) to discuss Taking on Anti-Black Racism.

Participants were eager to hear from and talk to trade unionists about anti-racism. Yolanda talked about systemic racism and the role of unions and union activists in taking on these issues.

“This is good work. Let’s continue to do this work. We have to fight anti-Black racism that happens every day. Racism was always here. COVID exposed racism,” Yolanda said.

The series offered a chance for activists to exchange ideas at a time when we can’t meet safely in person. Meeting online also made events more accessible – for guest speakers and participants.

Andrea Horwath, Ontario NDP Leader and Leader of the Official Opposition, joined the series from Peterborough where she was on the road.

Andrea spoke of the Doug Ford government’s continued

failures in handling the pandemic and how the Official Opposition NDP has been holding the government to account for the needless deaths in long-term care.

Other guests included federal NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, YWCA Canada’s Anjum Sultana for the topic Taking on Women’s Inequality and political scientist and commentator Brandon Tozzo on Taking on Trump’s Politics in Canada.

“This series allowed us the opportunity to dig deeper into current political hot topics and provide a forum for conversation. By bringing out so many members, the PAC expanded member engagement with political issues. We want to continue providing spaces where political thought can be developed and grow. The series helped us accomplish that,” said Briana Broderick, one of the District 6 PAC Co-ordinators.

PAC members are now experienced online moderators and interested in continuing the conversation. The committee hopes to continue the series to stay in touch and build political activism in District 6.

Steelworkers members interested in getting more involved are invited to apply to join the committee if they have support of their local union: usw.ca/d6pac. ■

Steelworkers Make Great

USW Local 2724 Donations

USW Local 2724 in Sault Ste. Marie, representing office, technical and professional employees, shift co-ordinators, planners and front-line supervisors at Algoma Steel, celebrated its 25th anniversary in October by donating \$100,000 to local charities. Above, members present a \$25,000 cheque to the ARCH Hospice. Donations also went to Sault Area Hospital, YMCA, Women in Crisis, Group Health Centre Trust Fund and several other organizations.



USW Local 2724 members celebrate a \$25,000 donation to ARCH Hospice in Sault Ste. Marie.

Operation BackPack

New school supplies are exciting at the best of times. Maybe even more so in a pandemic.

Operation BackPack 2020 gave out 1,272 backpacks filled with school supplies to Hamilton-area kids in need just before back-to-school.

“The response from teachers told us the need was much greater, so we have been working very hard to grow the program to where we are today,” said Darren Green, President of the Hamilton Steelworkers Area Council.

This year’s edition was supported by USW Locals 5328, 16506, 4153, 1005 and 8782, the Steelworkers Humanity Fund, the Golden Horseshoe Credit Union and many other community sponsors.



Neighbours!



Making Masks for the Community

Looking for ways to help early in the pandemic, Paulette Benoit, President of USW Local 4096 in Pembroke, Ont., got buy-in from the local executive to recruit local sewers to make masks the local could buy and distribute for free to the community.

On a June weekend, members of the executive set up a clothesline of masks in a park by the marina. People lined up (physically distanced) to pick their masks to take home. The local gave away masks in four communities that day, distributing almost 800 masks – all locally made.

Prevention Link Award

Andy Ladouceur, USW Local 2251 in Sault Ste. Marie, received a Prevention Link Award for his commitment to advocacy for ill, injured and disabled workers. Andy is vital to the USW District 6 Health and Safety and WSIB Committee. Congratulations, Andy!



Camp Quality

This summer, USW Local 6500 in Sudbury presented a cheque for \$10,000 to Camp Quality – a national charitable organization devoted to providing free camp experiences and year-round programming for children with cancer and blood disorders. Responding to the pandemic, Camp Quality initiated virtual “Camp-Ins” and offered Camp-at-home activities to bring the magic of camp to campers and their families. ■



The Minimum Is Not Enough

Health and Safety During COVID-19

USW is the health and safety union. During COVID-19, Steelworkers stepped up where employers failed. We've become the PPE union – for personal protective equipment.

Members in the Niagara region got 3-D printers and figured out how to make face shields for our frontline members in health care and long-term care.

USW Local 1-500 members at Koolatron in Brantford, Ont., make refrigeration equipment. They also make face shields and are adding production of more PPE, including N95 masks, once the company gets federal approval.

Early in the pandemic, employers were not providing PPE, even to our frontline and essential workers in settings where exposure and outbreaks create higher risks.

Our airport screeners reported being told to “turn their heads sideways” to protect themselves from infection. This is clearly insufficient!

Sylvia Boyce, USW District 6 Health and Safety Co-ordinator, worked with

other USW staff and local unions to source, purchase and deliver PPE to our members who needed it.

Follow the Precautionary Principle

The Precautionary Principle came out of the SARS Commission: in the absence of science, err on the side of caution and provide the best protection possible. That's what our union has done.

As public health guidance evolves around COVID-19, the USW continues to push employers to do more than the minimum to protect workers.

For example, airport screeners at Halifax Airport, members of USW Local 5319, are demanding plexiglass barriers for the passenger screening areas, which the employer is delaying until January.

“Grocery stores, banks, anywhere you go, you'll see barriers. Why can't we have them for our screeners who process passengers?” said Boyce.

The Minimum Is Not Enough

“Even though we have laws, employers often only follow the minimum. Unions ensure employers are accountable. Unions ensure workers have the best protection and we fight for higher standards,” said Boyce.

Resources

Your first line of defence is your union steward or your health and safety representative. Reach out. More useful links:

New Brunswick: worksafenb.ca (click on COVID-19 What you need to know)

Newfoundland and Labrador: gov.nl.ca/covid-19

Nova Scotia: novascotia.ca/coronavirus

OHCOV Risk Tool: ohcow.on.ca/covid-19.html

Ontario's Directive 5 for Health Care and Long-term Care: usw.ca/directive5

Workers' Health and Safety Centre: whsc.on.ca ■

