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May 25, 2015

To: All Local Unions

Greetings:

Re: The Local Union Task Force

I am pleased to inform you that Unifor's Local Union Task Force is now ready to proceed, and that Town Hall meetings in local communities on building strong local unions will commence in the coming weeks.

The Local Union Task Force is a central and defining process in the life of our new union. In the first 18 months of Unifor we have focused on building our new Councils and aggressively stepping out onto the public stage to build our profile. We will now fulfill our commitment made at the founding convention of Unifor to devote time and resources to reaching our potential by building and strengthening our local unions.

The plans and documents for the Task Force have now been adjusted to take into account the responses and advice of Unifor Local Union Presidents who met April 10-12 at a national conference in Port Elgin. The Local Union Presidents discussed the mandate, format, schedule, outreach to activists and members and documents to guide the Task Force Process. As agreed in Port Elgin, the revised plans and documents were reviewed and approved by the National Executive Board.

The Presidents' conference overwhelmingly agreed with a need for a Local Union Task Force. While there were many priorities and issues of concern discussed by our Local Union Presidents, the challenge of increasing membership participation and engagement was identified as a primary goal for the Task Force.

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The Local Union Presidents also agreed that the Task Force will provide an opportunity to examine how local unions can cooperate, share resources and learn from each other's experiences to better serve our members. Indeed, the Local Union Presidents made quite a number of recommendations at the conference on how to do just this.

The Presidents' Conference demonstrated that we have a wide diversity of Local Unions with many issues in common as well as very distinct and unique issues and problems. Strong local unions can be large or small, amalgamated or single unit, community based, provincial or national in scope. The Task Force will work with all Local Unions to find the most practical ways to improve membership participation and communication and to build union power at the Local Level. This is your Task Force.

The Task Force will be chaired in each region by the respective Regional Director or the Quebec Director: Sister Joie Warnock, BC Region and Prairie Region; Sister Katha Fortier, Ontario Region; Sister Lana Payne, Atlantic Region; and Brother Renaud Gagné, Quebec Region.

Brother Ken Lewenza will serve as "National Advisor" to the Task Force Process and he will attend Town Hall meetings across the country. Brother Michel Ouimet will act as "National Advisor – Quebec." We will be asking members of the NEB to participate in their areas.

The Task Force will also be aided by my Assistant Jenny Ahn and staff from our Research and Communications Departments.

Unifor Local Unions are urged to participate in the work of the Task Force in several ways:

Discussion Paper:

The discussion paper for the Task Force, "Building Stronger Local Unions Together: Reaching our full potential", is now posted online at www.unifor.org. I encourage you to circulate the paper to Local Union Executive Board members, committee persons and stewards. Please post the discussion paper on your Local Union web site. The discussion paper raises several key issues about Local Unions' function and the challenges we face. It is intended to be a basis for discussion in your Local Union to help you identify issues and make recommendations to the Task Force.

All members of Unifor are invited to join in a discussion about the issues raised in the discussion paper. This discussion will be hosted on the Unifor Facebook Page at <https://www.facebook.com/UniforCanada>.

Please post this information widely for your members and invite them to join the discussion!

Surveys:

Two surveys have been prepared to inform the Task Force.

The Local Union Survey will assist the Task Force learn more about your Local Union and its needs. We request that you complete the survey as soon as possible, ensuring that the information provided is up to date and reflecting the collective views of your Local Union leadership. The information or views provided in the Local Union Survey is for the Task Force and will not be published. Please take note that only one Local Union Survey for each Local Union should be completed. The Local Union Survey can be completed online at these links:

English : www.unifor.org/localunionsurvey

French : www.unifor.org/sondagesectionslocales

The Unifor Member Survey is for any member of Unifor to provide their views on their Local Union and the services provided by Unifor. All Member Surveys received will be copied to the Local Union for their information. The member surveys will be available to complete by a link from www.unifor.org.

Town Halls:

The dynamic part of the Local Union Task Force Process will be a series of Town Hall meetings in local communities as close to our members and Locals as possible. Over 50 Town Hall meetings will be organized in the coming months.

The Town Hall meetings will bring local union leadership and interested members together to discuss these questions in an informal setting.

1. What are the key challenges you face as a Local Union?
2. How can we build stronger member support and engagement in our Local Unions?
3. Are there some best practices and good ideas from your Local Union that you can share?
4. What ideas do you have for working with other Unifor Local Unions in your community?
5. What do you need to do to strengthen your Local Union?

In addition to these general questions, the Town Hall meetings will be a place where concrete problems and issues specific to your Local Union can be addressed. If there are practical solutions to Local Union problems that can be identified, every effort will be made to act on these solutions immediately.

Please find below a preliminary list of communities where Town Hall meetings will be organized. You will receive follow up information from your Regional Director/Quebec Director about the dates, times, venues and other information related to the Town Hall in your community or regional area.

Atlantic Region:

Newfoundland: St. John's, Marystown, Corner Brook

Nova Scotia: Halifax, Antigonish, Cape Breton

New Brunswick: Saint John, Edmundston, Moncton

PEI: Summerside

Quebec:

Bas Saint-Laurent and Gaspésie : Rimouski

Outaouais : Gatineau

Centre-du-Québec and Mauricie : Trois-Rivières

Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean : Saguenay

Abitibi-Témiscamingue : Rouyn

Montréal

Québec

Ontario:

North: Thunder Bay, Timmins, Sault Ste. Marie, Sudbury

Southeast: Ottawa, Peterborough, Belleville, Oshawa

Southwest: Sarnia, Windsor, London, Woodstock, Kitchener

GTA and surrounding area: St. Catharines, Oakville, Brampton, Barrie, Toronto

Western Canada:

Manitoba: Winnipeg

Saskatchewan: Regina, Saskatoon

Alberta: Edmonton, Calgary, Fort McMurray

BC: Victoria, Nanaimo, Kamloops, Prince George, Kitimat, Vancouver

As the Town Hall meetings will proceed over many months, some locations and dates may change, and additional Town Hall communities may be added. Please watch for further information by mail or posted on www.unifor.org. Unifor members can also follow the discussion taking place at Town Halls across Canada by checking the reports that will be posted on the Unifor Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/UniforCanada>.

It is our hope that a critical mass of Local Union Leadership and as many rank and file members as possible will participate in a Town Hall over the coming months. Please make sure that as many members as possible are informed well in advance of the Town Halls, and help us carry the message to our members that the Task Force is about how to make their Local Union stronger and more effective.

In order to hear from our Local Unions and members across Canada, the Town Halls will continue until early 2016. The report and recommendation of the Task Force will then be submitted to the National Executive Board at its March 2016 meeting, and subsequently to Convention 2016 in Ottawa.

Thank you for your careful attention to this information. I am very excited about using our Local Union Task Force to make Unifor stronger in our workplaces, communities, regions and nationally. And I am looking forward to hearing from you on how we realize this potential.

In solidarity,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jerry Dias".

Jerry Dias
National President

FW/JD/lmc/cope-343

cc: National Executive Board, National Representatives