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**SCHOOL BUS DRIVER WAGE INCREASE ADDRESSES ONLY PART OF THE CONCERN**

KITCHENER, ON and WATERLOO, ON, Feb. 16, 2018 /CNW/ - Unifor is pleased to see the recent announced wage increase for school bus drivers in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, but says that increases fall short of addressing the overall problems such as scheduling and the prevalence of unpaid work.

Student Transportation Services of Waterloo Region notified drivers that their hourly wage would be increased to \$17.50 per hours as of February 1. Sharp Bus Lines followed with an announcement of an increase to their charter rate to \$16.50 an hour effective March 1 and Voyago (a division of Voyager) issued an email to it employees implying a wage increase to \$17.50 for all work.

"We are glad to see that hard-working school bus drivers in the KW area are receiving a well-deserved increase in pay, but wages are only one part of our concern with the way that the sector is being managed," said Naureen Rizvi, Unifor Ontario Regional Director.

Wage increases do not always mean more money for school bus drivers as operators often reduce hours or change duties to offset the increases. Recent union organizing activities by Unifor in the area are suspected to be the reason for the wage increases by the three bus operators.

"There has been noticeable interest in joining our union recently by area school bus drivers," said Zoran Grgar, Unifor organizer. "School bus drivers would have their workplace needs better addressed with a collective agreement."

Unifor continues to lobby the industry and government on behalf of school bus drivers for a transparent procurement policy that would ensure provincial student transportation allocated funds meet the needs for a network that ensures the safety of the students and drivers.

Unifor is Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing more than 315,000 workers in every major area of the economy, including 2,000 school bus drivers across Ontario. The union advocates for all working people and their rights, fights for equality and social justice in Canada and abroad, and strives to create progressive change for a better future.

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