

# 11,000 WORKERS READY TO TACKLE BARGAINING WITH 'BIG THREE' GROCERY GIANTS



More than 11,000 Unifor grocery store members are preparing to take on Canada's Big Three grocery giants, Loblaw, Metro and Sobeys, in upcoming contract negotiations. The front-line supermarket workers are seeking pay increases, benefit improvements and more full-time jobs as bargaining begins next month. "Our grocery workers, like all

Canadians, know full well the steep price increases on essential food items and the corresponding record profits reported by the biggest supermarket chains," said Lana Payne, Unifor National President. "CEOs are laughing all the way to the bank while workers and their families continue to struggle. Our bargaining strategy aims to lift all grocery workers up no matter which CEO they're up against."

This round of bargaining begins when contract talks for 3,400 Unifor members across 27 Metro stores in the Greater Toronto Area kicks off on June 26. In total, Unifor represents

more than 11,000 front-line grocery store workers at the three large chains across Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Quebec.

The negotiations follow major labour disputes at both Loblaw-owned Dominion stores in Newfoundland and Metro's Toronto-area warehouse.

More than 60 local union presidents, bargaining committee members, workplace shop stewards, national union officers and staff met May 26-28 in Toronto to identify common priorities for upcoming rounds of bargaining. Over the next two years, Unifor will renew more than one dozen

collective agreements with the three grocery giants.

In prior rounds of bargaining, Unifor has negotiated significant improvements for supermarket workers, including new full-time jobs, part-time worker health benefits and inflation-guarded wages, although the industry is still notorious for unstable schedules, limited work hours and substandard pay and benefits.

"We know these companies can all afford to do more to create good jobs for grocery workers," said Gord Currie, Local 414 President, and retail sector representative on the Unifor

National Executive Board. "This is a profitable industry – in fact, it has never been more profitable. Workers deserve their fair share of that success."

Union leadership identified six core priorities for the upcoming cycle of negotiations, including significant pay improvements that reflect recent record-profits, greater access to health benefits, the elimination of pay disparities between workers, more full-time jobs and job protections for workers affected by tech change, among others.

Unifor members work under many store banners owned by

the Big Three supermarket chains, including at Metro, Dominion Stores, No Frills, Food Basics, Sobeys, Your Independent Grocer, Valu Mart, and Freshco.

Unifor is Canada's largest union in the private sector and represents 315,000 workers in every major area of the economy. 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.

## Stiles: 24,000+ signatures for Minden's ER, 400,000+ against privatization showing Ford is out of touch with Ontario

QUEEN'S PARK – Marit Stiles, Leader of the Official Opposition NDP, blasted Ford in Question Period for being out of touch with Ontarians' opinions on health care, as the Minden community races to save their emergency room and the Ontario Health Coalition (OHC) reveals deep opposition to Ford's privatized health care agenda.

"Whether it's voting to support public health care or an inspiring community push to save the Minden ER – Ontarians are fighting back against Ford's out-of-touch policies. And they are not alone – the Ontario NDP are with them every step of the way."

Just one day after Stiles tabled 24,724 signatures from Ontarians advocating to save the Minden ER, the Ontario Health Coalition revealed the results of their citizen referendum, which showed that over 400,000 people - 98% of respondents - think Ford's plan on health care is going in the wrong direction.

"The Minden community has been extremely united in their support for local health care, and now their voices are joined by the rest of Ontario," said MPP France Gélinas (Nickel Belt), Ontario NDP Health critic. "We know that Minden's ER closure is a warning sign for rural communities across the province - and that Ford is not looking out for the health and well-being of Ontarians."

"Ford's scheme is pretty obvious – break our health care system and pave the way for privatization," said Stiles. "I'm not buying it, and today it's clear that Ontarians aren't either. To everyone raising their voice today – know that it matters. Your voice is being heard. The Ontario NDP will keep bringing every petition you sign and vote you cast directly to Queen's Park."

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