

# Merger in Canada creates super union

**Two of IndustriALL Global Union's affiliates in Canada, CAW and CEP, have joined forces to form a new trade union, Unifor. The new Canadian super union represents 300,000 workers in industry and services. New president Jerry Dias pledges focus on organizing and communities.**

1 September 2013 saw the creation of Canada's largest private sector union when IndustriALL's Canadian affiliates CAW and CEP joined forces at a founding convention in Toronto to form Unifor. Unifor represents 300,000 members in a wide range of sectors including manufacturing, energy, forestry, services, telecommunications and transportation.

More than 2,500 elected delegates from the Canadian Auto Workers union (CAW) and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP) voted to create the new super union. The statutes received 96 per cent support from the founding convention. The convention elected Jerry Dias as national president, Peter Kennedy as secretary-treasurer and Michel Ouimet as Quebec director. Unifor's executive board has 25 members, of which 44 per cent are women. That is well over women's 28 per cent share of the membership.

Jerry Dias began his working life in 1978 at de Havilland Aircraft (now Bombardier Aerospace), and was elected shop steward later that year. He became the local president before moving to the national office in 1993 to coordinate the aerospace sector. Before he was elected president of Unifor, Dias was assistant to the CAW president.

**"We want a Canada that treats every person with decency, respect and security. A Canada that values the workers who produce the wealth, rather than devaluing and sacrificing us,"** Dias said in his keynote speech.

## Taking organizing policy to the next level

The convention adopted an innovative organizing policy. One new element is the introduction of "community chapters". Through these community chapters new groups of workers may join Unifor even if they do not yet belong to a recognized bargaining unit. The new trade union has plans for structures to allow students, retirees and unemployed to become members. Unifor will dedicate 10 per cent of its income, or 10 million Canadian dollars, annually to organizing new members.

Unifor will carry on the tradition of social unionism of the CAW and the CEP. This political action means broad engagement in communities, participation in issue campaigns, and involvement in elections to raise issues and support to candidates who agree with them.

The convention gave a rousing farewell applause to CAW president Ken Lewenza and CEP president Dave Coles who both retired.

In his greeting, IndustriALL General Secretary Jyrki Raina praised the tradition of global solidarity provided by the founding organizations:

**"In a globalized world without borders, we need to work together more than ever. I am confident that Unifor will continue to support our sisters and brothers in Colombia, Mozambique and elsewhere."**

COUNTRY:  
Canada

UNION:  
Unifor

## profile

TEXT:  
Petra Brännmark

PHOTO BELOW:  
Jerry Dias, Unifor President, at founding convention in Toronto 1 September 2013. Unifor



 @UniforTheUnion  
@JerryPDias

### UNIFOR

Since the merger between the Canadian Autoworkers Union, CAW, and the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, CEP Unifor is Canada's largest private sector union. The 300,000 members are found in communications, transportation, energy, resources, manufacturing, and services. Jerry Dias was elected as the union's first national president at the founding convention in September 2013.

More information is found on [www.unifor.org](http://www.unifor.org)