



## SKILLED TRADES COUNCIL – DELEGATES REPORT



The second Unifor National Skilled Trades Council of the year was held in St. John's, Newfoundland on the weekend of May 23-25, 2025. 129 Delegates and guest were in attendance.

After a brief land acknowledgment, the council began with the first speaker, Unifor's Director of Indigenous Relations, Gina Smoke. Gina discussed how to work towards reconciliation and her upbringing as a child of residential school survivors.

Atlantic Regional Director, Jennifer Murray, spoke about building tiny homes in New Brunswick and how the Atlantic council had to muscle their way onto the Newfoundland and New Brunswick government task force against tariffs as it was created with only government and business representatives. Jennifer will be competing in a 24-hour rowing competition to raise funds and awareness for New Brunswick Social Pediatrics. The Council approved a motion to donate \$2260 to her cause, which was later supplemented by the Toronto, New Brunswick, BGMO and British Columbia councils all donating \$500 each in support.

The welcome for this council came late as Local 2121 President, Robert Coady, was being helicoptered home after spending 21 days on the Hiberia Oil Rig. He arrived to the news that his local would be growing by 200 members as the newly organized Sea Rose Oil Rig workers voted to join Unifor.

Unifor Skilled Trades Director, John Breslin, was the next speaker. He talked about how the apprenticeship system in Newfoundland is not perfect, but like the way Ontario used to be, which is much better than what Ontario has now. He commented that employers don't understand that they need to hire apprentices, and that government must reform EI Benefits as apprentices can't afford to go to school.

Interim elections were held for Member-at-Large and Sargent-at-arms. Leanne Marsh & Scott Pearce were both acclaimed for these positions.



Len Poirier swears in Scott Pearce and Leanne Marsh

Unifor National Secretary Treasurer, Len Poirier, was in attendance and spoke about increasing women in trades and the \$500,000 donation to Sheridan College to expand the colleges Skilled Trades Training. Len commented on the unions Social Justice Fund and how important it is in this time of government cutbacks. He said "It is up to us to imagine it, to organize it, and to bring it to life"

In his Chairs report, Ken Anderson spoke about tough times due to tariffs, Supporting each other as Canadians and as a Union. We need to prepare to make a stand.

The Bob Chernecki Charity of Choice for this council was the Jacob Puddister Memorial Foundation. Kelsey Puddister accepted the Councils donation of \$4000. She spoke about her brother who died by suicide at the age of 21 on August 24, 2016. The foundations mission is to provide mental health resources to youth in Newfoundland and Labrador and to eliminate the stigma surrounding mental health.



Ken Anderson and Robert Coady hand cheque to Kelsey Puddister, Paul Renaud

Kaylie Thiessen from Unifor Research department gave a presentation on Tariffs and Interprovincial Trade. Ontario, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island have all signed Memorandum of Understanding for interprovincial trade. Kaylie mentioned that many in government talk about “Barriers” to trade, but our focus needs to be on “Bridges”. We need to build up standards not tear them down.

Many of the delegates reports spoke of slowdowns and layoffs that their companies were blaming on Tariffs, but there were a few reports of gains made for workers.



Local 673 Delegates Dragan Radakovic & Simar Walia