



As Safe As Our Cargo: CAMPAIGN UPDATE

December 2014

Armoured car members at Unifor have been very active over the last year, pushing for important changes in the industry to make conditions safer for everyone - both the workers carrying out the critical job of keeping the economy moving, and the public in general. Here is a report back about our actions and successes so far.

Together, we're making a difference, not just for our own members, but for all workers within the sector.

National solidarity gets results

A rally of nearly 50 armoured car workers and supporters in Levis, Quebec helped bring results in a year-long campaign.

Armoured car workers, supported by other Unifor members in Quebec, held a rally on May 24 outside the constituency office of Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Steven Blaney, the minister responsible for regulations within the industry. The goal of the rally was to shed light on the danger workers face on the job and the risk to the public who get caught in the crossfire.

The action caught his attention and shortly after the rally, Minister Blaney committed, via a media spokesperson, to meet with the union over its concerns around the lack of safety standards in the armoured car industry (despite subsequent calls from the union that meeting has not yet taken place).



The union is calling on federal lawmakers to develop a comprehensive regulatory framework - to enhance safety and prevent crime by establishing minimum standards in employee training, vehicle specifications, crew compliments and safety equipment requirements.



“When we get a call or a message, how do we make sure we don’t forget it? We write it down on a piece of paper,” explained Martin Lambert, Unifor Quebec City area director. “So we took that piece of paper and we chained it to the Minister’s door on Saturday to make sure that he and his staff take these messages and return our calls.” Lambert organized dozens of Unifor members in Quebec to participate in the solidarity rally with armoured car workers and brought a giant Post-It for Blaney’s office.

“Unifor has once again demonstrated that our mobilization and our solidarity can bring about change,” said André Desjardins, president of Unifor Local 4266, representing Brinks employees in Ottawa. “We will now pursue our efforts with the Minister to make sure he understands our situation.”

Unifor meets with federal Public Safety department, affirms call for taskforce

Representatives of Unifor met with Director General of Policing Policy Mark Potter, from the office of the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, on June 5 over the union’s concerns about safety within the industry.

At the meeting, we repeated our call for a taskforce which would examine the lack of regulations within the armoured car industry and make a series of recommendations for improving safety - for both workers and the public. In the meeting, we focused on training - including the need for extensive training on the use of firearms and preventative measures around use of force.

In attendance were national representatives Mike Armstrong, national staff representative heading up the armoured car safety campaign; Andre Desjardins, Unifor Local 4266 President representing Brinks workers in Ottawa and Angelo DiCaro, Unifor research department.

“Higher safety and training standards in the armoured car sector are vitally important to ensure workers and the public are protected

against violent crime,” said Armstrong. “We had a very productive meeting with Mr. Potter, who was very receptive to our concerns.”

Potter’s office received a copy of the union’s policy research and recommendations and expressed that the issue warrants further attention.

Unifor has engaged in a year-long campaign to push lawmakers to develop a comprehensive regulatory framework to enhance safety and prevent crime by establishing minimum standards in employee training, vehicle specifications, crew compliments and safety equipment requirements. In addition to the May 24 rally, hundreds of petitions to Minister Blaney have also been signed by Unifor members within the industry.

Meeting with provincial government officials



Unifor met with Ontario Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services Yasir Naqvi on July 10 to convey concerns about safety in the industry. Attendees included Unifor National President Jerry Dias, Unifor Membership Mobilization and Political Action Director Roland Kiehne; Mike Day, Unifor Local 27; Gary Cunningham, Unifor Local 504; National Representative Mike Armstrong and National Representative in Research Angelo DiCaro.

Unifor explained concerns about safety in the industry, particularly around the use of small crew compliments (one and two-person crews), lack of regulations governing new business start-ups in the sector and the patchwork of inconsistent regulations across jurisdictions.

“Minister Naqvi clearly understood the connection between the workplace safety needs of guards and matters of public safety,” said DiCaro after the meeting.

Unifor officials also met with Chris Curtis, Deputy Director of the British Columbia Security Programs Division to discuss the province’s own armoured car industry regulations on November 12. Bruce Snow, Unifor National Representative, along with Gord McGrath and Maurice Mills of Unifor Local 114 participated in the meeting.

Unifor will engage in further dialogue with the appropriate Ontario and B.C. government ministries in the coming weeks and months, exploring ways to strengthen health and safety and industry standards.



Armoured car workers take their concerns to Parliament Hill

Unifor members in the armoured car sector went to Parliament Hill on February 13 to urge the Minister of Public Safety Steven Blaney and Members of Parliament to strike a taskforce on safety in the industry.

A number of lobby sessions were held with MPs.

In a landmark ruling released in January, two-person, one man all off armoured car crews were declared unsafe by a federal health and safety officer after an exhaustive investigation.

Unifor has four key recommendations on improving safety:

- Eliminate the incentive for firms to compete by lowering safety standards, including: Standardize firearms, use of force and heavy vehicle training, across the Canadian armoured car industry.
- Minimize the risk for armoured car guards by standardizing work practices, including: Mandatory 3-person crews, with driver in vehicle, for higher-risk public areas.
- Establish minimum safety requirements for vehicles, standardized across the armoured car industry, including: ensure all vehicles are equipped with proper communications and emergency equipment and undergo regular maintenance.
- Require all armoured car guards wear protective bullet-proof vests that are replaced regularly and adhere to the latest police standards.

Since 2000, there have been more than 70 attacks on armoured vehicles – with four incidents that captured headlines in the past year, including:

- ▶ **Jan 20, 2014:** Attempted robbery of armoured car at Fairview Mall in Toronto. Shots exchanged. Four men are later arrested.
- ▶ **Feb 2, 2014:** Robbery attempt of armoured car in Longueuil, Que. Perpetrator is fatally shot by guards.
- ▶ **June 19, 2014:** Three men ambush an armoured vehicle in Toronto's North York suburb. Multiple shots fired and guard seriously wounded.
- ▶ **August 21, 2014:** Masked robbers pepper-spray two guards in a carefully planned attack at a shopping plaza in Brossard, Quebec.

What's up ahead?

Unifor's *Safe as Our Cargo* campaign made great strides in 2014, and the next year promises to be even more eventful. There are a number of initiatives already scheduled for 2015 (see below), some of which will require the support and on-the-ground action of members – so stay tuned.

- The office of the Director General of Policing Policy is undertaking research on the public safety aspects of Canada's armoured car industry, aiming to conduct a multi-stakeholder meeting with labour, business and government in early 2015.
- Unifor will continue to work collaboratively with our sisters and brothers at the Syndicat National des Convoyeur(e)s de Fonds (SNCF/CUPE), representing armoured car guards in Quebec, to press for higher workplace safety standards.
- The 'Armed and Safe' petitions will be delivered to Minister Blaney – with or without his agreement to a meeting – in the coming weeks. Unifor armoured car campaign committee members will explore options for a second-round of membership and public engagement, in time for the 2015 federal election.
- Unifor local union representatives will continue to build on relationships formed in 2014 with federal and provincial government officials, and connect more closely with municipalities on matters of armoured car safety. Unifor Local 112 in Toronto is already taking on this work with the newly elected City Council.

