

It has been approximately 9 years since both Local 35, Local 127 Committees, along with the National Union Representatives, began meeting with Navistar Corporation in an effort to solidify a Collective Agreement for the Navistar members in Chatham.

Over the next couple of years, while we were all on lay-off, the Local Committee's met at the Union Hall, in garages and wherever else we could, in an effort to write a variety options into a Collective Agreement that would resolve the hurtles that the Company put before us, so that all of us could go back to work. We met time and time again with this Corporation, nothing we offered satisfied them.

On July 28, 2011, Navistar formally announced a "Closure" at the Chatham Plant. After six years of Legal Actions, the Union winning all of them, we are here today at this Navistar Victory BBQ to recognize the struggles of the former workers, and the victories of the Union. The Pension and Severance matters have come to a close. For many of us this meant substantial increases in our Pension and the payout of our long overdue Severance.

For those who are here today, we ask for a moment of silence to remember our Sisters and Brothers who passed on during this long fight, those who are unable to enjoy the satisfaction of the final resolve.

Since 2001, the Navistar Corporation has dragged this Membership through turmoil, locked us out, hired goons and attempted to bring in "Scab Labour". Through the media, the Company threw mud in our faces, had our neighbours and friends questioning us, not the Corporation.

Our fellow Union Members from near and far supported us through these troubled times. In 2009 we again found ourselves on the street, No Collective Agreement, No Closure Agreement, No Severance, and very little Pension for many of us. This was a planned, calculated action against the very people who took pride in building Navistar Trucks.

It became clear to us that Navistar was not only unwilling to negotiate, they felt they had the power to change Canadian Law! Navistar, the worst kind of Corporate Citizen that a workforce and a Community could possibly have to deal with!

Through all of these ordeals, for all of these years, our National Union stood with us. Today we celebrate what solidarity truly means! Without the support of the C.A.W, now Unifor, we could not, as individuals, been successful in winning this fight.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to Brother Bob Chernecki who led us through some very tough times, along with Brothers Ken Lewenza, Brother Jim Mitchell and Brother Peter Kennedy.

To President Jerry Dias and Brother Bob Orr, Secretary Treasurer of Unifor, thank you for your constant involvement and continued support.

A special thanks to Brother Jeff Wareham and Brother Lewis Gottheil. We would never have been successful without your wisdom, knowledge and patience. Brother Doug Wright who stood with us until the final chapter, and also Brother Sonny Galea. All of you, a terrific team to work with!

Thanks to all of you, the membership, for your patience and stamina. Your ability to endure is appreciated! It has been an honour to work with all of you!