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December 16, 2016

Rail Sisters and Brothers,

Ken Hiatt President of Local 100 and I had the opportunity to represent Unifor by attending the International Transport Workers Federation Conference, Rail Sector, held in Brussels, Belgium on December 5 and 6, with a joint Rail and Road conference on December 7, 2016.

This important conference brought together 171 representatives from 84 unions representing road and rail workers in 42 countries. Together we addressed issues and strategies on topics including: the threat of railway privatisation; driver only operation; solidarity with Korean workers; the launch of an Our Public Transport campaign; the future of work; automation and the digital economy; safe rates and making multinationals accountable.

One December 5th, one of our first actions was to participate in a rally in central Brussels against the European Union and its "4th Railway Package" that could undermine worker protections and quality transport if the European Union is successful in changing the standards and authorisation for rolling stock; workforce skills; independent management of infrastructure; and the liberalisation of domestic passenger services in an attempt to reduce European rail subsidies.

On December 6, we met to discuss Railway Safety, the importance of the human factor, we identified arguments against a single-driver operation and cuts to the workforce as well reviewed case studies on railway accidents and investigations and developed proposals for union engagement with employers on railway safety.

On December 7th, we attended the Joint Rail and Road Transport session. During this session we discussed “Building Power through the 4 levers”, influencing lead industry players, consolidating Hubs and corridors, activating mass membership and following geographical patterns. In addition we discussed and debated violence in the workplace, major anti-union activities such as National Express in Durham USA, developed strategies for the improvement of Women working in the transportation industry and the need to develop public transport in the face of climate change. We were also given an address by James P. Hoffa General President, International Brotherhood of Teamsters on the campaign against multinationals and the way forward for unions.



Looking forward, Ken and I see the value of Unifor’s affiliation with the ITF, we recognize that our common goals to improve Rail safety, fight liberalization and privatisation, precarious work, and new technologies which risk undermining regulation and accountability, are objectives that we can win through our global alliance.

In solidarity,

Ken Hiatt

Ken Hiatt
President Unifor Local 100, NEB Member

Bruce Snow
National Representative

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