

# NAFTA lobby report- October16-18, 2017

The week of October16th, myself along with approximately 20 other lobbyists from Unifor were in Ottawa to meet with MP's to discuss the renegotiation of NAFTA between Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. I was able to meet with eight different MP's (seven Liberals and one NDP) over the three days on behalf of the Skilled Trades and the auto industry.

I was pleasantly surprised at how educated most MP's were on the file of NAFTA but we were still able to educate them on the provisions that we in Unifor believe need to be in a better NAFTA agreement. Among the MP's that I was able to meet with were Tracey Ramsey representing Essex and is the Critic for International Trade. She is very knowledgeable on the file and was very interested in the points we made on the auto industry, Labour standards, and tariffs on auto parts. I also met with Andrew Leslie, from Orleans, who is the Parliamentary Secretary for Chrystia Freeland, the lead negotiator and the Minister of Foreign Affairs for Canada. He was well versed on the ongoing negotiations but we were still able to make points that he was unaware of. Labour rights and standards in all three countries need to be on the same playing field in a new NAFTA. Currently there is a side letter to the agreement on Labour standards but it has no teeth and there is no mechanism to ensure standards are adhered to. Most people think that Mexico is the biggest abuser on this issue, but you only need to look at southern U.S. right to work states to see that this is a larger problem. These states and Mexico need to recognize the labour rights of workers and if they do not there must be a mechanism to force them in to compliance or the companies doing business there need to pay a penalty. North American content on auto parts and vehicles must also be addressed realistically, not just talked about. The U.S. wants to see 50% American content and 85% North American content on vehicles. This could devastate the Canadian auto industry. The current tariffs on parts and vehicles is too low to force companies to build here. They need to be increased to match tariffs from other auto producing jurisdictions or the companies will just move off shore and pay the tariffs to import to North America. With the changes in technology over the past twenty three years, when NAFTA came into effect, there are many auto parts that are not even listed in content rules so they can be imported with zero tariffs and used in our vehicles. The tariff and content rules need to be enforceable and meet the ongoing realities of the industry.

I was able to share some personal stories on how devastating the current NAFTA agreement has been on my community with respect to the auto industry. GM is no longer a presence in Windsor, Ford is down to a fraction of its former self and FCA (Chrysler) is down to just one plant, with plant 6 closing as a direct result of no auto pact in Canada.

There is still a lot work to do but Unifor's voice is being heard in Ottawa. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be a part of that voice.

In Solidarity,

Paul Renaud  
Skilled Trades Chairperson  
Local 444