

# **A Better Way, A Fair Way**

## **PROVINCIAL BARGAINING FOR SASKATCHEWAN SCHOOL BOARD SUPPORT WORKERS**

### **CUPE School Board Workers**

- ◆ In 1997, CUPE represented 2, 800 school board support workers in half of the school divisions in Saskatchewan.
- ◆ Today, there are 6,200 CUPE members in the school board sector.
- ◆ CUPE now represents 70% of all school support workers across the province.

### **Current Bargaining Structure**

- ◆ CUPE education locals in Saskatchewan must bargain all issues in separate local contracts.
- ◆ Currently, CUPE has 58 collective agreements in the school board sector and is negotiating seven first contracts.
- ◆ Time-consuming – most school board negotiations require 10 to 15 bargaining sessions spread over 2 years.
- ◆ Costly – the negotiations of school board contract requires 500 – 1,000 union and employer bargaining representatives.

### **Wage & Benefit Inequities**

- ◆ The current bargaining structure has produced significant wage and benefit inequities across the province.
- ◆ Many school board workers are making \$5 to \$7 an hour less than their counterparts who do the exact same work in other school divisions.
- ◆ School board locals across the province must negotiate wages and benefits separately with each individual school division.
- ◆ Nearly half of CUPE school board workers have 100% employer-paid extended health and dental plans. The remainder are paying half the costs of the premiums or receive no coverage at all.

### **STF Bi-level Bargaining**

- ◆ In Saskatchewan, teachers have enjoyed provincial bargaining rights for wages and benefits since 1973.
- ◆ The *Teacher Collective Bargaining Act* established the composition of bargaining committees and outlined the items to be negotiated provincially and locally under the new bi-level bargaining structure.

### **CUPE's Proposal**

- ◆ The current 58 contracts would be replaced by one provincial collective agreement covering all classifications in both the public and separate school systems.
- ◆ Bargaining would occur at one central table.
- ◆ Where necessary local agreements and Letters Of Understandings addressing local issues would be negotiated at the school division level.

- ◆ Provincial bargaining rights for school support staff would be enshrined in legislation.
- ◆ A provincial agreement would eventually standardize job descriptions, classifications, wage rates and benefits for support workers across the province.

### **Closing the Gap**

- ◆ Standardized wages and benefits for all CUPE school board workers would be a key element of a provincial agreement.
- ◆ Provincial government could commit funds to close the wage and benefit gap among school support workers.

### **Provincial Benefit Plan**

- ◆ The government could establish a provincially funded benefits plan that would cover the full cost of premiums for school support staff, like it does for teachers and other public sector employees.

### **Advantages of One Agreement**

- ◆ Provincial bargaining would produce significant cost savings, since only a fraction of the bargaining representatives would be required to negotiate one agreement.
- ◆ Provincial funding for benefits and wage parity would free up resources for school boards to spend on other priorities.
- ◆ One provincial agreement would be far easier to administer than multiple local agreements.

### **Fairness for Support Workers**

- ◆ An educational assistant or secretary in one school division can be paid up to 70% less than their counterparts in another school division who performs the exact same work.
- ◆ A teacher in one school division receives the same salary and benefit coverage as their counterparts working in other school divisions.
- ◆ Every school employee should be paid the same wage rate for doing the same work.

### **Supporting Rural Communities**

- ◆ Rural school board workers tend to receive lower wages and typically have to pay half the costs of their benefits, if they have any at all.
- ◆ Wage adjustments resulting from a provincial agreement would be spent at local businesses which would help support rural communities.

### **Provincial Bargaining – It's Time**

- ◆ The current bargaining structure is costly, time-consuming and inefficient.
- ◆ Addressing the wage and benefit inequities is a matter of fairness.
- ◆ Provincial bargaining would have a positive impact for workers, school divisions and communities across the province.