

Bargaining Achievements in the Saskatchewan Education Sector 2012

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CUPE Research

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Summary

Saskatchewan Wage Settlement Trends 2011-2012

- Average weekly earnings grew by 4.9% in the first half of 2012. Average weekly earnings measures the earnings of all paid employees (union and non-union), and includes overtime pay.
- Negotiated wage settlements (unionized) have been lower than increases to average weekly earnings: an average of 3.0% in 2011 and 2.6% for 2012 to date.
- In last few years, private sector negotiated settlements have been higher than public sector increases. In 2011, the average private sector employee saw a negotiated wage increase of 2.8% compared to 2.3% for the average public sector employee in the province.
- Public sector wage increases have tended to be lower than increases in the cost of living. In the twelve years from 2000 to 2011, average public sector wage increases exceeded the increase in the CPI only six times. Average private sector wage increases were above or the same as increases in the CPI ten times over the same period.

CUPE Education Settlements

- CUPE represents almost 6,800 support workers in Saskatchewan's Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system.
- CUPE has 25 collective agreements in the Pre-K to 12 education sector.
- There were ten (10) CUPE settlements in the education sector reached between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012. The ten agreements cover almost 1,500 education workers.
- For the settlements reached in the last year, the average wage increase per settlement was: 4.0% for 2011, 3.2% for 2012, 2.8% for 2013, and 3.3% for 2014.
- Four locals took strike votes in the past year: Locals 650, 3766, 4643 (Regina Public) and Local 5252 (Prairie Valley SD). The locals mounted pre-strike campaigns but were able to reach settlements without going on strike.
- Local 5252 (Prairie Valley SD) achieved wage parity with non-union staff that provides for 13% to 37% increases for various classifications. The weighted average increase per employee is 5.1% in each year of the four-year agreement.

INTRODUCTION

In Saskatchewan, CUPE represents almost 6,800 support workers in the PreK-12 education sector (Pre Kindergarten to Grade 12). CUPE members work in a variety of jobs in Saskatchewan schools such as educational or teaching assistants, secretaries and administrative assistants, library assistants and technicians, caretakers, maintenance and trades workers, bus drivers, information technology specialists, social workers, community school coordinators, speech assistants and workers in many other classifications.

As of September 30, 2012, CUPE had 25 collective agreements in the PreK-12 education sector, down from 58 agreements in 2006. The number of collective agreements in this sector has been reduced by more than one-half in the last five years as a result of rural school division amalgamations that came into effect on January 2006. Since then, rural CUPE education locals have merged into one local per new school division and have bargained one collective agreement with their new employer. This required the amalgamation of up to six collective agreements in some cases.

This is the fourteenth year that CUPE Research has produced this summary of bargaining achievements in the Saskatchewan education sector. When the first Bargaining Achievements report was written, there were over 60 bargaining units in the education sector. The Education Workers' Steering Committee requested a report to help track bargaining trends and successes among the vast number of settlements each year in the sector. Since then, the number of settlements occurring each year has gone down as the number of bargaining units have been reduced as a result of amalgamations.

This year's document reports on ten (10) education settlements, covering almost 1,500 education workers. The agreements were ratified in the period October 1, 2011 to the end of September 2012.

The information in this report is based on the collective agreement settlement reports completed by the CUPE national representative assigned to the education local. CUPE's Research Representative uses that information and supplements it with additional information from the representative or by reviewing collective agreements.

This report also summarizes wage settlement trends in the province and major settlements in the public sector.

I. Saskatchewan Wage Settlement Trends 2011-2012

Saskatchewan has a booming economy, the second lowest unemployment rate in the country (5.2%), and the second lowest provincial public debt. Private financial forecasters expect the economy to grow by 4.0% in 2013, the highest growth in the country.

With such a positive economic outlook, one would expect the average workers would be doing well. Average weekly earnings grew by 4.9% in the first half of 2012 (Sask Trends Monitor, August 2012). Most of the growth in wages, however, has been in the private sector. Average weekly earnings measures the earnings of all paid employees, including overtime pay. With an active resource and construction industry, average weekly earnings increased 3.8% in 2011 and 5.2% in 2010.

Wage increases in unionized workplaces have not increased as much as average weekly earnings. Table 1 on the next page shows that the average annual negotiated wage settlement for both the public and private sector was 3.0% in 2011 and 2.6% for 2012. The private sector settlements, however, have been somewhat higher, on average, than public sector settlements – 3.1% for the private sector compared to 2.8% for the public sector.

For 2012, the trend is showing higher public sector settlements (3.0%) compared to an average 2.3% per private sector settlement.

Table 1 also shows the average annual negotiated wage settlement per employee, a calculation that takes into account the number of employees in a bargaining unit. The average private sector employee received a wage increase in 2011 of 2.8%, compared to a 2.3% wage increase for the average public sector employee. For 2012, the trend is also showing higher wage settlements for private sector employees (2.5%) than for public sector employees (2.0%).

The wage settlement information shows a depressed trend in public sector employees' wage adjustments. In 2007, 2008 and 2009, average public sector wage increases averaged 4.0%, 4.9% and 4.0% respectively. From 2010 to 2012, however, public sector wage increases were reduced to 2.3%, 2.3% and 2.0%. Government wage guidelines of 5.5% over 3 years and a tougher bargaining climate created by essential services legislation resulted in much lower wage settlements for the public sector in the last three years.

The Labour Relations and Mediation Branch of the Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety monitors both public and private sector negotiated wage settlements in the province. The branch provided data on 16 settlements in 2012 to date, compared to a total of 63 settlements in 2011. The settlement data is based on voluntarily-submitted reports from unions and employers. The 2012 information is considered “preliminary” until all settlements that take place in 2012 are reported.

**Table 1 – Average Annual Percentage Wage Settlements
in Saskatchewan - 2000 to 2012**

Year	Total # of Settlements	% Increase per Settlement			% Increase per Employee			Sask CPI
		Total	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	
2000	52	2.4	2.2	2.4	2.6	2.3	2.5	2.6
2001	72	2.9	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	3.1
2002	63	3.2	3.4	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.8
2003	45	3.0	3.2	2.9	3.0	3.1	2.8	2.3
2004	42	2.5	2.4	2.6	1.2	0.8	2.8	2.2
2005	69	2.4	2.3	2.5	2.0	2.0	2.6	2.2
2006	48	2.8	2.6	3.0	2.1	2.0	2.9	2.1
2007	54	3.6	3.7	3.6	4.0	4.0	3.4	2.8
2008	24	4.1	4.3	3.9	4.9	4.9	4.2	3.3
2009	18	4.2	4.1	4.4	4.2	4.1	4.4	1.0
2010	43	2.9	2.6	3.2	2.3	2.3	3.3	1.4
2011	63	3.0	2.8	3.1	2.4	2.3	2.8	2.8
2012P	16	2.6	3.0	2.3	2.1	2.0	2.5	n/a

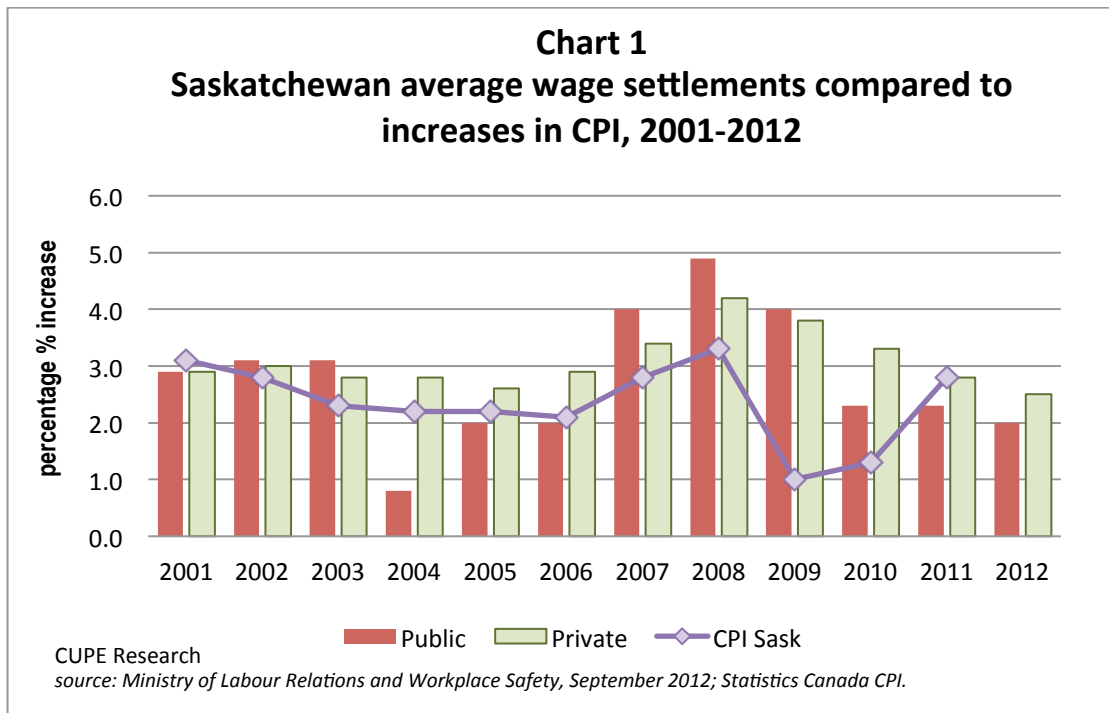
*Source: Ministry of Labour Relations and Workplace Safety, Wage Settlement Statistics, September 21, 2012
P: preliminary averages based on 16 settlements*

Consumer Price Index

Appendix IV of this report provides historical information on changes in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for Canada, Saskatchewan, Regina and Saskatoon. Inflation has been relatively low over the last number of years although Saskatchewan's CPI has been somewhat higher than the Canadian average.

How have Saskatchewan workers fared in comparison to increases in the cost of living?

Chart 1 compares public and private sector wage settlements to annual average increases in the Saskatchewan CPI. The chart shows that public sector wage increases have been, for the most part, below increases in the cost of living. In the twelve year period from 2000 to 2011, average public sector wage increases exceeded the annual increase in the CPI only six times. Average private sector wage increases, on the other hand, were above or the same as the CPI ten times over twelve years.



II. Public Sector Bargaining in Saskatchewan – 2012

There has not been much bargaining in the public sector in the province this year, except for in the health care sector.

The major provincial health care agreements – covering about 35,000 health care workers represented by the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN), CUPE, SEIU and SGEU – expired at the end of March 2012. SUN was quick to reach a settlement with the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) on April 26. The two year agreement (April 1, 2012-March 31, 2014) covers 9,000 registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses and provides for a lump sum payment in the first year equal to 2% and a 2% economic wage increase in 2013.

A similar agreement was reached between SUN and Extendicare Canada in mid-September. The two-year agreement with Extendicare in the province provides for a lump sum payment equal to 2% and an economic increase of 2% in 2013.

SGEU and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency reached a tentative agreement on September 21 of this year, after being without a contract since December 31, 2009. The terms of the tentative agreement for the 560 Cancer Agency workers has not been disclosed.

Provincial bargaining for the provider unions – CUPE, SEIU and SGEU – has taken place since May 8 with little progress at the table. SAHO has offered 1.25% for 2012 and 1.0%

for 2013 and tabled 20 concessions. CUPE's bargaining committee is working hard to remove the concessions and achieve a good collective agreement for its 13,000 health care members.

III. CUPE Settlements in Saskatchewan

There were 27 CUPE Locals in the province that concluded bargaining in 2012 as of the end of September.

The average wage increase negotiated per settlement were:

2011: 3.9%

2012: 2.6%

2013: 2.9%

2014: 2.7%

Of these settlements, there were nine (9) Community Based Organizations (CBOs) who negotiated, on average, 1.6% for 2012 mostly through wage re-openers. This low wage increase is mandated through government funding. There were also four childcare locals who reached agreements in 2012, with wage increases ranging from 0% to 2%.

After protracted and difficult negotiations, Local 1594 at the Regina Public Library reached an agreement providing 11% over four years. The previous agreement had expired December 31, 2009. The new agreement expires at the end of 2013.

Municipal settlements have been higher than in most sectors, although there have been only three settlements in 2012. Local 342 at the City of Yorkton achieved 13% over four years plus increases to premiums and health benefits. Local 1881 at the Town of Kamsack achieved 14.8% over three (3) years.

IV. Bargaining in CUPE's education sector

There were ten settlements concluded in the education sector between October 1, 2011 and September 30, 2012. The ten collective agreements cover just under 1,500 CUPE members.

The average wage increases (per settlement) for the education sector in the last year were: 4.0% for 2011, 3.2% in 2012, 2.84% in 2013 and 3.0% for 2014 (see Table 2).

The average wage settlements in education have been above the provincial average for public sector unions but there were minor gains in language or benefits. This was a difficult year for bargaining for the education sector with four locals having taken strike votes.

The three locals that bargained with Regina Public School Board (650, 3766, 4643) and Local 5252 (Prairie Valley SD) took strike votes and organized rallies and campaigns to pressure the employer for better wages. Fairness and equity with other employees was the common theme in both situations. Settlements were reached without the locals having to take strike action.

Regina School Division – Locals 650, 3766, 4643

The last collective agreements of Locals 650, 3766 and 4643 expired at the end of 2010. Bargaining began in the spring of 2011 and the locals were asking for the same wage increases that other groups of employees of the school division received. The teachers received an average of 8.63% over three years, and the Regina Board gave 8.63% to management and non-union employees. The Board, however, offered the CUPE locals less than what management and teachers received: 6% over three years.

In the spring of 2012, the three locals began to take action to pressure their employer. They held information pickets and rallies, conducted a postcard, billboard and newspaper campaign and attended the annual meeting of the Board *en masse*. After months of bargaining and pressure, the locals achieved a 6% economic increase over 32 months, or an equivalent 8.63% with non-economic improvements; a one-time signing bonus of 25% of retroactive pay, and a reduced work year by three days without a reduction in their annual salary. There were also some improvements in language on sick leave, duty to accommodate, bereavement, EAP and discipline.

Prairie Valley SD – Local 5252

At the end of their last round of bargaining, Local 5252 put their employer on notice that their goal for their next collective agreement would be to reach parity with non-union employees in the school division. Over previous years of bargaining, wage parity had been reached among the CUPE bargaining units that came from several legacy school divisions. The unionized employees, however, were paid less than the non-union employees in the school division doing the same job.

After months of difficult bargaining and an unyielding employer, the local took a strike vote and received overwhelming support. The local engaged in a media campaign with the slogan “Practice what you Teach”. Part of the media campaign included video interviews with members from different jobs telling their stories about what respect and fairness meant to them. The video clips were circulated through YouTube and some local radio stations even used the audio clips in their newscasts.

The campaign worked: the employer agreed to wage parity with the non-union counterparts. Wage parity will be reached in the final year of the agreement (2014-2015). Depending on the classification (the union/non-union wage gap varied among the classifications), the wage increases range from 13% to 37% over the four year agreement. The weighted average per employee is 5.1% in each year of the four year agreement.

The local also achieved five additional paid days for 10 month Administrative Assistants and a new Supplementary Employment Benefits (SEB) plan for employees taking maternity/parental leave. There were a number of increases to bus driver rates (charter, service and bus wash rates).

The bargaining stories of the CUPE Locals in Regina and Prairie Valley School Divisions are examples of great membership involvement in local campaigns.