

**Education Workers' Steering Committee
Staff Advisors Report
Annual Conference
November 17 & 18, 2009**

In the year since our last conference we have seen some unprecedented changes in the field of education. Some of those changes hold promise while others threaten many of our members. The EWSC executive has maintained a watchful eye on developments while at the same time working to lay the groundwork for a stronger, more effective bargaining structure. The executive understands that whether we are dealing with a friendly or a hostile government, Education Workers need to move forward to ensure fair and equal compensation across the province.

Education Taxation

On March 31 the government passed Bill 89 establishing new powers for the province over education taxation and removing those powers from the school boards. These changes to taxation and funding for school boards will have a profound effect on school boards.

Under the amended legislation, school boards must submit a final statement for the next fiscal year to the Minister of Education that will include details of items and amounts of expenditures for the next fiscal year along with estimates of revenue from taxes, grants, fees, receipts and any other sources that are anticipate for the next fiscal year.

Boards must also submit a written statement of program objectives for the next fiscal year accompanied by an estimate of revenues and expenditures for that same period. The minister's approval is required. If the minister does not approve, he or she may direct the school board to make any changes that the minister considers appropriate or in the public interest.

School boards are then required to abide by the approved estimates for that period of time. Failure to do so can result in the stoppage of previously approved payments of funds.

Under this amended legislation, school boards will not have the power to tax as they have in the past. This will result in a shift in economic power away from the individual boards and transfer it to the province. How will this affect our members when bargaining occurs? Will our bargaining committees be dealing with decision makers or will the decisions on monetary items be dependent on an outside authority that is not present at the bargaining table?

The answers to these questions will emerge as locals go to the bargaining table.

This would appear to strengthen our arguments for provincial bargaining. After all, if the boards lose their economic authority they cannot be said to be able to bargain fairly with us. By rights we should be bargaining with those in authority to make decisions and under this new legislation that is only the provincial government.

Provincial Bargaining

The efforts of your Steering Committee executive to further the cause of provincial bargaining were seriously impaired when the SSBA refused to continue discussions with CUPE and the provincial government. However, the executive continued to look for ways to collectively strengthen our bargaining committees. To this end, the executive has renewed its lobbying efforts.

The executive has also promoted coordinated bargaining in this province. In the absence of a provincial bargaining structure, coordinated bargaining will bring education locals closer together by providing more uniform collective agreements. If all our collective agreements are similar, the move to provincial bargaining is that much easier.

Meeting with the Minister

Members of the executive accompanied by Staff Advisor, Lois Lamon, National Representative, Bill Robb, Research Representative, Cheryl Stadnichuk and Regional Director, Melanie Medlicott met with Minister of Education, Ken Krawetz on September 30th. Those in attendance were very positive about the discussions that took place. The Minister stated his support for equal pay for equal work and will be recommending the resumption of meetings between his department, SSBA and CUPE. The EWSC will continue to work on building good working relationships with the Education Minister and his department.

Labour Relations Board

We are still waiting for the decision from the Court of Queen's Bench on their review of the LRB decision on Local 5506's application for a certification order that would include all non-management workers in the Prairie South School Division that are not represented by STF. Once this decision is received we will either proceed to have all the pending applications heard or we will consider a further appeal.

In the Sun West SD, CUPE applied for an all employee vote. The LRB ordered such a vote but the employer filed for judicial review. The vote went ahead and CUPE was successful. We now await the decision of the court. CUPE will continue to press for all employee votes where appropriate. The LRB is now considering written submissions *in camera*.

Organizing

While CUPE represents a clear majority of education sector workers, there are still unorganized workers in many school divisions. National Representative, Bill Robb has been working with the EWSC to formulate a strategy to go out and bring those workers in. Although the LRB decisions will have some impact on how we do this, we must proceed according to the current legislation. It is important to include as many workers as possible to ensure that we can do the best possible job for all.

All locals will be called on to assist organizing efforts around the province.

Staff Changes

CUPE staff in Saskatchewan continues to change to meet the needs of the members. Sister Ann Riley (formerly Ann St. Denis) has moved into the Health Care Sector. They will benefit from her considerable skill and experience.

Sister Lois Lamon has moved over from the post-secondary sector where she worked with the University workers. We will benefit from her considerable skill and experience.

This has been an interesting and eventful year for education workers in Saskatchewan. We have experienced another level of change implemented from this government and will wait to see how this will affect our members. However, we will not be idle while we wait.

We must lobby members of the legislature to ensure that our voices are heard. We must go out to talk to workers in this sector and bring them into the CUPE family. We must continue to work hard in our school divisions to protect our members from job loss due to employer initiatives.

Much thanks are owed to all the National Representatives servicing education locals in this province. They are continually consulting with each other on developments in their assignments and providing assistance and support to each other and CUPE members. We are very fortunate to have the participation of Beth Smillie, Communications Representative and Cheryl Stadnichuk, Research Representative. Their contributions far exceed their professional advice and service. They are committed activists and regularly

go beyond the requirements of their jobs to give CUPE members the best chance to succeed in achieving their goals.

Saskatchewan Regional Director, Melanie Medlicott, supports all the staff in the province, but has a special place in her heart for education workers. She has been invaluable in moving the provincial bargaining agenda forward.

Finally, thank you to the EWSC executive. They have spent many hours in discussion and debate to plan and execute their mandate. They have never lost sight of their duty to represent CUPE members.

In solidarity,

Lois Lamon
Staff Advisor
EWSC

Malcolm Matheson
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