
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 5, 2010

Education workers meet to discuss EA cuts and bargaining plans

SASKATOON: Education workers from across the province are meeting in Saskatoon today and tomorrow to discuss the impact of education assistant cuts on student learning, review bargaining gains and develop the next steps in their union campaign to secure provincial bargaining rights.

CUPE, which represents about 80 per cent of school support workers across the province, wants the right to bargain one provincial agreement for all 6,500 CUPE members working in pre-K to 12 education – a right teachers have enjoyed since the 1970s.

Education assistants, secretaries, school bus drivers and other school support workers represented by CUPE are currently covered by one of 26 collective agreements with local school divisions, down from 58 contracts prior to school amalgamations in 2006.

“Local bargaining is a big problem because it creates significant wage and benefit disparities for our members,” says Brigitte Scott, Chair of the CUPE Education Workers Steering Committee.

The wage difference for education assistants or school secretaries can be as much as \$5.00 an hour from one division to the next, she explains. In addition, some school workers have 100 per cent employer-paid extended health benefit plans, while others only have partial coverage.

A new [research document](#) by CUPE shows school mergers have resulted in significant wage and benefit improvements for education workers. Scott applauds those gains, but adds: “We still have a long way to go to achieve parity across divisions.”

Both the NDP and the Saskatchewan Party supported “exploratory discussions” about provincial bargaining during the last election. But the Saskatchewan Party government reneged on that commitment.

In addition to provincial bargaining, participants at the conference will discuss the impact of the government’s plan to cut education assistants in the classroom.

More than 100 school support workers are registered for the two-day conference which gets underway at 1 p.m. at the Sheraton Cavalier.

- 30 -

For more information contact: Brigitte Scott at 230-2647

COPE 491