

Labour Reporter

The voice of Saskatchewan's working class since 1956



SPRING 2019

FIGHTING FORWARD



P2 | Diversity

P4 | Fairness

P8 | Woman leading



**Become an
SFL Summer Camp
supporter!**

A Supporter is a union member, retiree, or anyone else that makes a donation in support of the SFL Summer Camp by August 2, 2019.

All Supporters will be recognized verbally at camp, as well as thanked in the Fall Edition of the Labour Reporter. Donations go directly to paying for recreational activities, learning sessions, and camper meals.

Donations can be dropped off or mailed to the SFL office: 220-13th Avenue, Regina SK S4P 0W1. Make cheques payable to the SFL, with “Camp Donation” as the memo.

We recommend a donation of at least \$31, in recognition of this year’s 31st annual SFL Summer Camp.

For details on this year’s camp, visit: www.sfl.sk.ca.

Labour Reporter

Labour Reporter is published quarterly by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. It is sent to working people and to unions.

Editor
Kent Peterson

SFL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

President
Lori Johb

Secretary-Treasurer
Julee Sanderson

Vice-Presidents
Jessica Boyer Henrion
Bob Bymoen
Barbara Cape
Muna De Ciman
Denise Dick
John Donohoe
Dana Faul
Dodie Ferguson
Tom Graham
Glen Green
Paul Guillet
Judy Henley
Pat Horbay
Yvonne Hotzak
Michelle Lang
Aaron Laughlin
Jason Monteith
Brett North
Elizabeth Quinlan
Sean Taylor
Rhealene Wagner
Lavina Watts
Kim Wilson
Sheena Yaw
Tracy Zambory

Representatives on Council
Wanda Bartlett
Janice Bernier
Kelly Harrington
Stacey Landin
Shobna Radons
Darren Smith



CUPE
4828

UNIFOR
Local 75-G

SPRING 2019

FEATURED CONTENT



P2 | Diversity and inclusion By Kent Peterson



P4 | Fairness is the story By UFCW Canada



P8 | Women leading By Kent Peterson

Cover photo: Mojdeh Cox, CLC Director, Anti-Racism & Human Rights
Cover photo source: Kent Peterson



Mojdeh Cox, CLC Director, Anti-Racism & Human Rights

KENT PETERSON

SFL takes leadership on diversity and inclusion

On February 21, 2019 *Fighting Forward – the SFL Equity Conference* took place in Regina, bringing together 100 union and community participants to talk about diversity and inclusion.

“I’m excited for today and I hope you are too. This conference was a long time coming. The last time the SFL held an equity conference it was 2013 – six years ago. When I was elected in October, I said union education, equity, and advocacy on human rights were priorities for me – I’m so happy to now be able to officially open our equity conference,” said Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) president Lori Johb at during the conference’s opening remarks, “the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour represents nearly 100,000 workers across the province. Workers that are trans, Indigenous, gay, lesbi-

an, workers of colour, bisexual, women, young workers, workers of different abilities... people that experience barriers not just on the job, but throughout their lives,” she added.

“It’s our responsibility, as a movement, to make sure we are fighting forward on human rights and equity.”

“It’s our job to make sure we create inclusive unions, workplaces, and communities. Learning from others and equipping ourselves with the tools to make change is ex-

actly what I hope we will accomplish today,” said Johb.

After SFL Solidarity and Pride Vice-President, Jessica Boyer-Henri-son, and SFL Young Workers Vice-President, Sean Taylor, read the harassment-free statement, the one-day conference opened with a blessing from Kookum Brenda, an Indigenous Elder, who talked about the necessity of relationship-building and what it means to be on Treaty 4 land.

Participants were treated to a panel on success stories – *journey through adversity*. The panel was moderated by Canadian Labour Congress Prairie Region Director, Darla Deguire, and included Kendra Weenie, Grandvicfel ‘Vic’ Euraoba, and Kate Hart.

In the afternoon participants attended two out of a possible three workshops: Building Consent Culture with Bilan Arte, ReconciliAction with Sandra Ahenakew, and Toolbox for Radical Change with Deena Kapacila and Kent Peterson.

Following a brief presentation by NDP MLA Warren McCall, the conference’s keynote speaker, Mojdeh Cox, delivered a powerful address about tackling racism in the Labour Movement. Cox is the Director of the Canadian Labour Congress’ Anti-Racism and Human Rights Department. ■

KENT PETERSON

Letter from the editor: how we fight forward

Fighting forward is about change; it’s about actively working to achieve progress. Change that benefits working people and their communities is never just given, or provided by some benevolent overlord because folks asked nicely. Social and economic progress have always been purposefully and strategically fought for, and won, by activists ready to do the work required.

We, as working people, face major challenges: man-made climate change, precarious work, corporate-funded rightwing governments, union-busting, and the list goes on.

One of the ugliest challenges we face is the current rise of rightwing, hate-based populism. To quote the keynote speaker at the SFL’s recent equity conference, Mojdeh Cox, “people are trading in their white robes and hoods for yellow vests”.

Racism has always existed in Saskatchewan’s and Canada’s structures, systems, economy, and society. But there is a noticeable willingness of racists and bigots to be louder, viler, and more visible. The so-called ‘Yellow Vest Movement’ that Cox referenced is just one example of the new-found boldness that rightwing

extremists have gained. Their anti-immigrant, misogynist, transphobic, and conspiracy-based drivel risks becoming public policy, as rightwing provincial and federal politicians pander to the lowest common denominator.

The Labour Movement’s response must be to lean into progressive ideals of inclusion and empowerment. That’s the context in which the SFL organized its equity conference, *Fighting Forward*. We refused to be bullied by bigots and silenced by sexists. Now, more than ever, are conversations about expanding human rights so necessary. But we wanted to do more than just talk about diversity and human rights, we wanted to equip conference participants with the tools to fight for, and win, progressive change. This is just one step towards a larger goal of expanding consciousness and taking action. It’s now up to individual unions and community members to take the leadership needed to fight forward against the hatred and division of the Right. ■

Fairness is the story

As United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1400 members continue to strike for a fair future at Saskatoon Co-op, news stories and op-eds suggest the call for fairness is resonating.

Members have been on strike since November 2018, fighting back against their employer's abandonment of co-op principles. The strikers are asking for a fair and equitable agreement, and it appears their message is connecting with local media and members of the community.

In a Leader-Post op-ed, U of S associate professor Charles Smith and U of R associate professor Andrew Stevens argue that the "Co-op labour dispute (is) a struggle worth supporting" and that we "should expect more of a co-operative." They point out that the Co-op members' campaign for pay equity and a fair wage scale is essential not only to fighting inequality and wage inequity within the bargaining unit, but also in the community.

"Working people are falling further behind while the value from their labour is increasingly going



Source: UFCW Canada



Lucy Flack Figueiredo (right) accepting \$7,000 of donations from U of S student Deena Kapacila (left).
Source: UFCW Local 1400



Source: UFCW Canada

towards high wages and profits for Canada's wealthiest individuals and corporations," they write, while noting Federated Co-operatives Limited (FCL) reported \$1 billion in profits in 2018.

A CBC News Saskatoon article asks "How hard will the Saskatoon Co-op brand be hurt by the ongoing strike?" In the story, Edwards School of Business associate professor David Williams says the strikers are "fighting for exactly what the company stands for."

"They are a co-op, altruistic and caring," he says of the Co-op's image. "The ironic thing is that... symbolizes why the workers are on strike." He adds that because shopping habits are based on convenience and routine, the longer the strike goes on the harder it could be for the Co-op to get back customers they have lost.

Other stories from Global and CBC observe that the union is willing to negotiate and come to a compromise, but Co-op digs in its heels despite losing major revenue from the strike.

Wondering how you can help? Send a message by visiting www.ufcw.ca. Tell them a fair contract means real compromise and an equitable agreement that provides fair pay for all Saskatoon Co-op employees. ■



Source: UFCW Canada



Source: UFCW Canada



UFCW Local 1400 rally at FCL headquarters.
Source: Global News



U of R students join the SFL Fight for 15.

KENT PETERSON

In January 1,000 people join the SFL Fight for 15

The campaign to win a \$15 per hour minimum wage in Saskatchewan got a lot bigger in January, as over 1,000 people joined the SFL Fight for 15.

“We worked with students on campuses in Saskatoon and Regina to help win the Fight for 15. I’m excited that nearly 1,000 students signed postcards to the provincial government, asking that Saskatchewan raise its minimum wage,” said Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) President Lori Johb, “the students, combined with dozens of online sign-ups, means the Fight for 15 gained over 1,000 members in January alone. This is in addition to hundreds of signatures that were collected on an earlier Fight for 15 petition. It’s clear Saskatchewan voters want a \$15 per hour minimum wage,” she added.

At only \$11.06 per hour, Saskatchewan’s minimum wage is the second-worst in Canada. After Nova Scotia increases their minimum wage on April 1st of this year, Saskatchewan will once again be dead last.

“Saskatchewan’s minimum wage is a poverty wage, and that’s not fair. Hard-working people should not be trapped in poverty.”

“It just isn’t right that a single mother working fulltime

at minimum wage still has to visit the food bank on her way home,” Johb added.

Raising the minimum wage benefits everyone. In Saskatchewan, 96,600 workers earn less than \$15 per hour – which is 20% of the entire workforce. Winning the Fight for 15 will help raise thousands of people out of poverty, and stimulate local economies. Provincially, about 40% of all workers earning minimum wage are between the ages of 15 and 19. However, workers between the ages of 35 and 64 constitute the second-largest cohort of minimum wage earners at 30% of the total.

“The Fight for 15 is about ensuring fair pay and decent work for all.”

“In Saskatchewan, huge corporations are paying low wages – not small businesses,” said Johb, “over half of all minimum wage earners in this province work for businesses with 100 or more employees. Corporations like Tim Horton’s, McDonald’s, Wal-Mart, Lowes, Cineplex, and Loblaws can afford to pay their workers a fair wage,” she added. ■

KENT PETERSON

Saskatchewan needs Fatalities Crisis Strategy

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) is calling on the Sask. Party government to take urgent action on the province’s current worker fatalities crisis, and has offered to host an emergency meeting with stakeholders to develop a comprehensive strategy to better protect workers.

“We need a comprehensive Worker Fatalities Crisis Strategy in Saskatchewan. The provincial government has not done enough to protect workers in this province.”

“The SFL is now taking on that leadership role. We hope the provincial government will join with us,” said SFL President Lori Johb, “if the pro-

vincial government will join with us to better protect workers, we stand ready to host an emergency meeting of worker organizations, the Workers’ Compensation Board (WCB), and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive plan to deal with the worker fatalities crisis we are facing,” she added.

Workplace fatalities jumped significantly in 2018. As of November 30, 2018, the number of worker deaths had already reached 48 – with many more workers having been injured on the job in that time.

In addition to joining with the SFL to develop a comprehensive Worker Fatalities Crisis Strategy, there are a few things the provincial government can do immediately to help protect workers and save lives:

- » Begin a widespread public awareness campaign to inform Saskatchewan people of the current worker fatalities crisis, and educate workers on their three fundamental occupational health and safety rights: the right to know, the right to participate, and the right to refuse;
- » Commit to publishing all incident reports in an accessible online format, as is done in British Columbia;
- » Commit to publishing all investigation reports in an accessible online format, similar to the process in Alberta. ■



SFL Secretary-Treasurer Julee Sanderson (left) and SFL President Lori Johb (right).

KENT PETERSON

Women leading province's Labour Movement

At the SFL's convention in October 2018, two women were elected to the top table officer positions – for the first time ever. The following is an interview with SFL President Lori Johb and SFL Secretary-Treasurer Julee Sanderson.

» How and why did you first start in the Labour Movement, and did you have any femtors?

Lori Johb: I started working in the nursing home in LeRoy, becoming a union member for the first time (SEIU local 333). We were later forced to change unions due to healthcare reforms and I became a CUPE member. This was a very stressful, but powerful, time as I learned what being part of a union was all about. That's how I became an activist. I have to say that Jacquie Griffiths is one of my

femtors. Jacquie has always been a solid OH&S activist and a strong feminist.

Julee Sanderson: 20 years ago, I started as a postal worker. I had 3 children and I was desperate to find the security I needed to leave an abusive situation. Lana Schmidt became my femtor as she walked with me on my journey. Her influence has led me to take risks and develop my leadership style. Lana held the position of local president of the CUPW Saskatoon local prior to me.

» Have you ever felt – including present day – that you faced barriers in your union activism because you were a woman?

LJ: The barriers I have faced are about living in a rural community. Being a woman means takings on all the

responsibilities that go with being a partner and mother. I want to let women know, especially if you live in rural areas, try be as active as you can in your union – your voice is important.

JS: Women face barriers in all forms of activism. 100 years ago, the Manitoba Premier Sir Rodman Roblin said, “I don’t want a hyena in petticoats talking politics to me, I want a nice gentle creature to bring me my slippers”. It wasn’t until 1985 that Indigenous women who married non-status Indigenous men could vote in federal elections. As women we need to remember this history. A women’s fight is never over.

» This is the first time ever that both table officer positions at the SFL have been held by women. What message does that send?

LJ: These are challenging times for women all over the globe. Women stepping-up and taking leadership roles needs to be commended. Rightwing male politicians want to strip away our rights – women need to be in the forefront of the fight.

JS: The message it sends is that women have fight and grit, and know how to get things done.

» How can Saskatchewan’s Labour Movement do a better job empowering women?

LJ: It is important that we make space for women to move within our

movement. Encourage and support women to take on leadership roles. Schools and conferences, like Prairie School for Union Women, are perfect opportunities to build confidence and get the tools needed to run for positions.

JS: We have to focus on our collective needs. The consciousness of women will grow as we come together on common interests and struggles. We need to educate ourselves and others as to the status of women around the globe, whether that’s fighting for reproductive rights, pay equity, economic security, or for an end to violence against women.

» What do you hope to accomplish by the end of your term?

LJ: I want to grow our federation. I am committed to building relationships and ensuring each of our affiliates gets the support they deserve from their federation of labour. Solidarity is our most powerful tool.

JS: On average, every five days in Canada a woman is killed by her intimate partner. It is my hope that by the end of my term I will have been an advocate for women, and worked with our Women’s Committee and Sister Johb to expand union education opportunities available to members.

» Anything else?

LJ: I am proud to have the confidence of our affiliates to lead our

federation. I look forward to working with Sister Sanderson, our Executive Council, and our committees in the next two years to ensure that labour has a strong united voice. *Solidarity Forever For The Union Makes Us Strong!*

JS: I’m excited to work with affiliate leaders and rank-and-file members over the next couple years on all the challenges and opportunities facing our movement. ■■

CALENDAR

Mar. 8 Int’l Women’s Day

Mar. 21 Int’l Day for the Elimination of Racism

Apr. 10 Day of Pink

May 1 Int’l Workers’ Day (May Day)

May 6-10 SFL/CLC Spring School

May 17 Int’l Day Against Homophobia

June 9-13 Prairie School for Union Women

June 21 National Indigenous People’s Day

July 1 Canada Day

Aug 10-16 SFL Summer Camp



PRAIRIE SCHOOL

for union women

June 9 - 13, 2019

Waskesiu Lake, SK

Apply today:

www.sfl.sk.ca/events