

Labour Reporter

The voice of Saskatchewan's working class since 1956



WINTER 2019

ON THE MOVE!



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Hurry!

Registration is open.

www.sfl.sk.ca/events



Labour Reporter

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

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WINTER 2019

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By Kent Peterson



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By CUPE, SEIU-West, and SGEU



P8 | New strategy

By Kent Peterson

Cover photo: SFL President Lori Johb
Article: SFL on the move!



SFL President Lori Johb

KENT PETERSON

SFL 'on the move' at 64th annual convention

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) held its 64th annual convention in Saskatoon from October 23rd to 25th. The convention theme was On the move!, and highlighted the many ways Saskatchewan's labour movement is going forward, gaining momentum, and tackling challenges facing working people.

"This is an exciting time to be a union member," said SFL President Lori Johb, "we are engaging working people, building partnerships with community groups, and trying new things. We are on the move to make life better for our working members, their families, and their communities," she added.

The federation hosted a KAIROS Blanket Exercise the evening before convention started. The Blanket Exercise

is an interactive learning experience that teaches Indigenous rights and history. The exercise covers over 500 years of history in a one-and-a-half-hour participatory workshop. Participants take on the roles of Indigenous peoples in Canada. Standing on blankets that represent the land, they walk through pre-contact, treaty-making, colonization and resistance. They are directed by facilitators representing a narrator (or narrators) and the European colonizers. Participants are drawn into the experience by reading scrolls and carrying cards which ultimately determine their outcomes. By engaging on an emotional and intellectual level, the Blanket Exercise effectively educates and increases empathy.

"Being on the move, and going forward, means walking the path of reconciliation," said Johb, "the federation of

labour, our affiliated unions, and our working members all have an important role in seeking truth and justice for all Indigenous people," she added.

The convention featured many different speakers and presentations, such as a federal election debrief with Professor Larry Savage, an update from Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation president Patrick Maze, and a keynote address from Anne McGrath who worked closely with Rachel Notley during her time as premier of Alberta.

In recognition that equity-seeking workers and community members face additional barriers, there were several agenda items relating to those challenges. Aasiyah Khan, from the National Council of Canadian Muslims, gave an inspirational presentation on combating Islamophobia. Ron Rousseau, president of the Yukon Federation of Labour, gave a powerful address about organizing on stolen land and reconciliation. Melissa Coomber-Bendtsen, CEO of YWCA Regina, talked to delegates about an upcoming event for survivors of residential schools and their families. Throughout convention delegates spoke about the need to recognize and celebrate LGBTQ+ students in schools, especially in light of Trustee Katherine Gagne and her friend defeating a motion about Pride at a Regina Public School Board meeting.

"Our members represent the entire spectrum of human diversity. Our members consist of people who are women, trans+, Indigenous, gay, and queer. They have a variety of abilities; they are bisexual, two-spirited, and Muslim. They are lesbian, workers of colour, and young," said Johb, "we cannot move forward as a labour movement unless all of our members come with us. We need to represent, honour, and celebrate diversity in the House of Labour," she added.

Changing economies was also a highlight of this year's convention. Matt Wayland, IBEW Canada's Executive Assistant to the International Vice-President and Canadian Director of Government Relations, gave an insightful presentation about just transition. Additionally, there was a panel on precarious work that focused on the need for unions to be creative and innovative when organizing in a new economy. Vanessa Kelly, from the Art Babbit Appreciation Society, and Pablo Godoy, from UFCW, both talked different aspects of precarious employment.

"Coming out of convention, I am feeling energized and excited about the work ahead," said Johb, "delegates enjoyed the speakers and panels, the resolutions, and took ownership over their federation of labour. We really are on the move!" she added. ■

KENT PETERSON

Letter from the editor

The federation of labour represents nearly 100,000 working members across the province in almost every sector imaginable. While there are many challenges facing unions and their members, the labour movement in this province is not accepting the status quo. At the recent SFL convention, members took ownership over their federation of labour and committed to pushing forward a progressive, worker-focused agenda.

Our members fight for equal pay, childcare, and an end to gender-based violence. We envision a future where no worker is ever injured or killed on the job. We demand our dignity, and a \$15 per hour minimum wage. We refuse to do nothing in the face of a climate crisis – ensuring no worker is left behind. We work towards reconciliation, we combat racism, Islamophobia, homophobia, transphobia, sexism, ableism, and all forms of hatred.

Saskatchewan's labour movement is on the move, and leading the way. ■

SFL convention rally – on the move!



Photos by: Kent Peterson







CBO workers presenting petitions to NDP MLA Nicole Rancourt. Photo source: CUPE

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY CUPE, SEIU-WEST, AND SGEU

CBO workers submit petitions to government

Frontline workers representing CUPE, SEIU-West and SGEU were at the Saskatchewan Legislature today to present petitions calling for multi-year funding for Community-Based Organizations (CBOs). Nicole Rancourt, NDP MLA for Prince Albert Northcote and Opposition Critic for Social Services and Community-Based Organizations, introduced the petition with over 1,300 signatures gathered from residents across the province. Rancourt also pressed the government on the issue during question period.

“For several years, we’ve been calling on the government to take action and now we’ve submitted the first batch of petitions in support of stable, reliable funding for CBOs in Saskatchewan,” said Carmela Verwimp, Unit Chair of Variety Place and member of SEIU-West. “It’s clear that

we have support from our communities for this important investment in the people of Saskatchewan.”

CBOs provide vital services to some of the most vulnerable people in our society. However, programs can get reduced or dropped completely due to funding that only guarantees one year of operation.

The three unions believe multi-year funding would help CBOs stay on solid ground financially and ensure that they can recruit and retain valuable staff resources to provide the many programs that are needed in communities across the province.

“I believe our clients would benefit greatly from knowing that their programs aren’t subject to a time limit and that staffing levels are consistent to ensure their needs

are always met," said Annette Welsch, Chairperson of the CUPE CBO Workers of Saskatchewan. "Successful client outcomes may take years to obtain and multi-year funding would help better support clients."

"We're fortunate that we get to see the tremendous success of our work every day as we deal with a variety of clients served by CBOs," said SGEU member Trish Patey who works at Prince Albert Mobile Crisis and is the elected secretary of SGEU's Community Services Sector. "But when we have to tell someone a program is at capacity or has been cut due to lack of stable funding, it's demoralizing for staff and makes it very difficult for our clients to have the quality of life they deserve."

Saskatchewan people can add their voices for stable, reliable funding in the CBO sector by signing the petition or visiting SaskPeopleWhoCare.org to send an email to the Ministers of Social Services, Education, Health, and Justice.

CUPE, SEIU-West and SGEU represent Community-Based Organization (CBO) workers in approximately 80 agencies across the province and have been working together for more than a decade to support and promote workers in this sector. CBOs are non-profit groups that fill in the gaps when direct government programs don't meet the needs of Saskatchewan people. ■

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED BY SASK NDP CAUCUS

NDP raises alarm over death in ER and growing wait times

After reports that a patient died in a Saskatoon emergency room because of overcapacity pressures and armed with new numbers showing Emergency Room wait times continuing to climb in Saskatoon and Regina, NDP Health Critic Vicki Mowat called for the Minister of Health to present a plan to address the emergency.

"Frontline workers are raising the alarm that our Emergency Rooms are so overtaxed that people are dying as a result," said Mowat.

"This government's failures are letting people down," she added.

Numbers obtained through written questions show a 22 percent increase in Emergency Room wait times in Regina and a 20 percent increase in Saskatoon. Meanwhile, tabled com-

mittee documents show the amount of time patients spent waiting for an inpatient bed rose from 18.7 to 20.9 hours in Regina and 27.2 to 30 hours in Saskatoon.

Recently, Saskatchewan Health Authority officials reported 150 patients in Saskatoon were receiving care in inappropriate spaces.

"This government would rather point fingers or tout decade-old spending numbers than actually act to address the crisis today," Mowat said. "We need a government committed to putting people first by addressing the overcapacity in our Emergency Rooms," she added. ■



Image Source: WorkSafe Saskatchewan

KENT PETERSON

New strategy good first step to safer workplaces

Nearly a year to the day since the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL) first called for a robust strategy to address workplace deaths and injuries, the new strategy released by WorkSafe Saskatchewan is a good first step to safer workplaces.

“While it took longer than we had hoped, the federation of labour is happy to see the release of this new strategy,” said SFL President Lori Johb, “working people were consulted throughout the process of developing the new strategy, and I truly believe the professionals at the Saskatchewan WCB really do want to address the crisis we are seeing in workplace deaths and injuries in this province,” she added.

Based on a new WCB internal definition of a serious inju-

ry, 22,594 Saskatchewan workers suffered a serious injury from 2010-2018. In that same time period, 354 fatalities were accepted by the WCB.

“No worker should ever be killed or injured as a result of their job.”

“We have a long way to go; it’s our hope this strategy will point our province in the right direction,” said Johb.

While the new strategy includes many aspects to be optimistic about, there are a number of things the provincial government can do right now to help create safer

workplaces:

- » Publish all incident and investigation reports online;
- » Require OH&S committees to file meeting minutes with the OH&S Division;
- » Review how WorkSafe's Mission: Zero enforces its Health and Safety Leadership Charter;
- » Update and expand the Young Worker Readiness Certificate course, and move the course from being from online to being delivered and tested in-person, and;
- » Expand rights to include the right to refuse unsafe work on behalf of someone else. ■

KENT PETERSON

Labour council hosts Photos with Santa Day

On November 23rd, the Weyburn and District Labour Council held its second annual Photos with Santa Day at the Weyburn City Centre Mall.

In addition to getting a free photo with Santa, kids got a gift bag of items donated by several different unions.

“Unions, our labour council, and workers are part of the community.”

“Photos with Santa provides an opportunity for kids and parents to have some fun; it’s a way for us to say thank-you to everyone who buys the goods and uses the services that our working members provide,” said Weyburn and District Labour Council president, Wanda Bartlett, “and it’s a good way to collect donations for a worthy cause in our community,” she added.

The labour council collected voluntary donations as part of the event, and ended up raising \$385 for the Weyburn Humane Society. ■

CALENDAR

Dec. 1	World AIDS Day
Dec. 3	Int’l Day for Persons with Disabilities
Dec. 6	National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women
Dec. 10	Int’l Human Rights Day
Jan. 4	World Braille Day
Jan. 24	Int’l Day of Education
Feb. 20	World Day of Social Justice
Mar. 1	Zero Discrimination Day
Mar. 4-6	CUPE SK Convention
Mar. 8	Int’l Women’s Day
Mar. 11	SGEU Int’l Women’s Day Dinner
Mar. 21	Int’l Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Mar. 22	World Water Day

SFL

WORKERS' SUMMIT

ON

POLITICAL ACTION

DATES

APRIL 29, 2020	BREAKTHROUGH TRAINING
APRIL 30, 2020	WORKERS' SUMMIT - DAY 1
MAY 1, 2020	WORKERS' SUMMIT - DAY 2

LOCATION

DOUBLETREE HOTEL, REGINA

MORE INFO

WWW.SFL.SK.CA/EVENTS/CONFERENCES

