

Labour Reporter

The voice of Saskatchewan's working class since 1956



Autumn 2023

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SEPTEMBER 30 NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

***“Children are the great hope of
reconciliation.”***

-Cindy Blackstock



Labour Reporter

Labour Reporter is proudly published seasonally by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour. It is sent directly to the homes of working people and to the offices of their unions.

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SFL President Lori Johb.

'Hot labour summer' at home & abroad - what's next?

The struggle of working people is top of mind lately.

Strikes. Unions. Labour. Those words are coming up everywhere: in headlines, on the radio, and in casual chatter in cafes and restaurants. It can't be ignored: the labour movement has captivated the conversation in Saskatchewan, across Canada and North America.

For the record, a recap on what some are calling a hot labour summer--

In July, 7500 ILWU dock workers were on strike for nearly two weeks, while south of the border, actors joined writers in the largest Hollywood labour dispute since 1960.

In August, as thousands of grocery store workers were picketing across Toronto, ninety-eight percent

Strikes. Unions. Labour. Those words are coming up everywhere: in headlines, on the radio, and in casual chatter in cafes and restaurants.

of UNIFOR members at a trio of major automakers voted for a strike mandate.

Earlier hints suggested summer might be like this. One was when 155,000 federal workers walked off the job in the spring, in one of the largest job actions in Canadian history.

Another was the giant Ontario education workers' strike last fall, where workers bravely defied the Ford government's draconian attempt to impose a collec-

tive agreement by fining striking workers.

Although 'summer' is over and we're headed into fall, more job action is happening here at home.

At the time of press, UFCW 1400 members have been locked out of their work at the Heritage Inns in Moose Jaw and Saskatoon, with an employer dead-set on eliminating all benefits and offering literal pennies over a proposed seven-year contract.

As I write, City of Prince Albert employees have walked out and are on strike. Mayor Greg Dionne and P.A. city council recently gave themselves hefty pay raises paid for by taxpayers, while CUPE 882 workers get their disdain.

The rise of trade unionism right now is no coincidence.

Emerging from the pandemic, we find ourselves in challenging economic conditions: rampant inflation, sky-rocketing cost of living, and a redefined understanding of how & where we work.

The full impacts of the Bank of Canada's onslaught of rising interest rates have yet to be seen. As mortgages renew at percentages double or triple in the coming months, these costs will leave more homeowners and renters struggling to

make ends meet.

While these economic realities aren't news to anyone, the moment begs the question – where do we go from here?

I'm excited to see more and more working people in Saskatchewan finding strength in their union. Each job action builds credibility in unions for the next one. This heat from a hot labour summer must continue through the winter to build our economic power.

***United, we ensure
what we've earned
is not eroded, and
stand a chance to
earn even more.***

And let me be clear - it's also about political power. Governments and legislators have a role to play in the economic conditions workers face.

Recently, the SFL was gifted the bound copies of Proceedings of CLC Conventions from the 60s and 70s. I was reading the now-famous address Tommy Douglas gave at the 1968 Convention. While considering next steps for our movement, this passage hits particularly close to home, some fifty-five years later:

"We have now reached a time in our history when the trade union

movement cannot afford to be unconcerned about who sits in the law-making bodies of our land. Why? Because with a stroke of a pen, those who have their hands on the levers of power can wipe out in a few days all the gains you have made at the bargaining table and on the picket line."

All levels of government have a stake in the plight of workers, but none so much as the provincial government. To use Tommy's words, those on the levers of power here in Saskatchewan have us fighting to keep what we've already earned.

The Sask Party is dismantling public medicare and eroding family medicine, all while denying workers paid sick leave. They try to distract us with culture wars, instead of coming to the bargaining table in good faith.

Whether it's economic power or political power, the silver bullet is the same: solidarity. And we know solidarity can only be achieved if we focus on what unites us all, rather than the repugnant attempts to divide us.

United, we ensure what we've earned is not eroded, and stand a chance to earn even more. ||





Making noise & making history: 1000s show up to slam Sask. Party on education

With files from the STF, CBC, and the Leader Post

Saturday, April 29th, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation (STF) hosted one of the largest demonstrations in a generation on the steps of the Legislative Assembly in Regina. The Rally for Public Education drew a crowd of more than 3,500 people from every corner of the province, demanding the Saskatchewan Party government stop the cuts to education.

"The reality in classrooms is that this is not growth that works for everyone. Each year, more supports and services that students rely on are taken away," said Samantha Becotte, president of the teachers' federation. "While we appreciate Minister Duncan's comments on our organizational skills, had he accepted our invitation to the rally, he would have seen the large crowd of parents, students, trustees and concerned citizens standing alongside teachers

and other education workers demanding better for students."

Figures from the STF show that to return per-student funding to what it was a decade ago, at least \$400 million more is needed for public education each year.

Attendees also heard from Laura Walton, president of the CUPE's Ontario School Boards Council of Unions, Jenny Regal from the Canadian Teachers Federation and Lori Johb of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, as well as several local university and high school students.

Opposition leader Carla Beck, joined by six other party MLAs, also addressed the crowd.

"If the government doesn't know by now the impact that their cuts are having, they are being wilfully ignorant," she said. "By the reaction here today, people aren't going to stand for that much longer." ||

Spring budget session disastrous for workers

At the end of May, Premier Scott Moe and the Sask. Party government closed yet another disappointing session of the Legislative Assembly.

"After ten weeks and hundreds of hours of debate in the Legislature, Scott Moe once again did absolutely nothing to help working people get ahead," said SFL President Lori Johb. "No wage increases. No utility rollbacks. No jobs plan. No relief for health and education workers."

Saskatchewan people are struggling more to make ends meet than anywhere else in Canada, all while the government stashes away a bil-

**"No wage increases.
No utility rollbacks.
No jobs plan.
No relief for health
and education."**

lion-dollar surplus. Instead of helping the people they are elected to serve, the Sask. Party are distracted by their own pet projects and corporate interests.

Through the disappointing spring session, Johb noted that the increasing solidarity among working people keeps her optimistic. Johb was also pleased to see how the

Opposition NDP held the Sask. Party's feet to the fire. "I won't forget how Carla Beck stood her ground when defending Steelworkers in the Legislature – even if it meant getting kicked out of the chamber."

"The spring session will not be remembered for what was achieved in the Legislature, but how Scott Moe's incompetence brought working people together," said Johb.

The next session of the Legislative Assembly - and the last before the 2024 election - is set to reconvene with the Speech from the Throne on October 25, 2023. ||

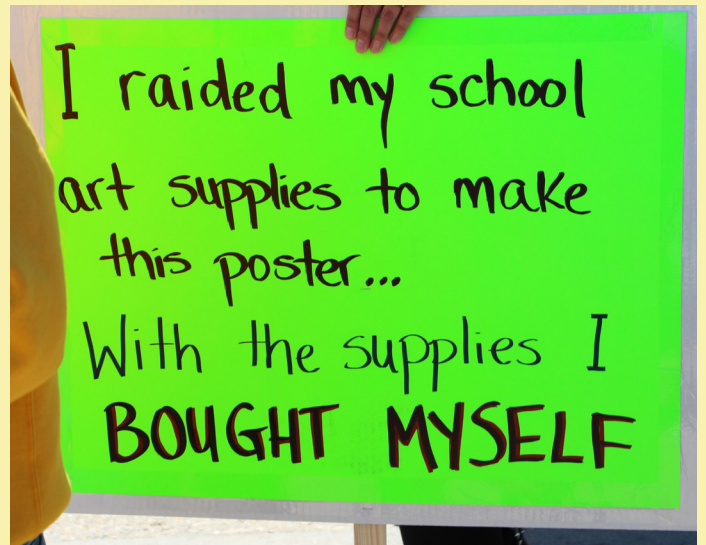


DEMAND
fair treatment for
public education

IN PHOTOS

Education rally, April 29





Perspectives: Workers reflect on Filipino heritage

June was Filipino Heritage Month, which acknowledges the rich history of Filipino Canadians and their contributions to Canada.

Filipino Canadians also have a rich and growing history in Saskatchewan's labour movement, most notably for their contributions to the healthcare sector. In recognition, the *Labour Reporter* is pleased to share perspectives from two Filipino trade unionists, albeit a bit late, in celebration of Filipino Heritage Month:

Joahn O, *SEIU-West member*:

I am working as a CCA at Saskatoon City Hospital. I was born and brought up in the Philippines. I learned lots of valuable things in the Philippines that help me do my job well.



Filipinos are known to be compassionate, respectful, caring, helpful, and generous, and have strong family relationships. Filipinos are also known to look after their par-



ents and their elders up to the end of their lives. This is why those with Filipino heritage have a great influence in Canada, especially in the healthcare industry. Our greatest asset are our people, who are working around the world.

I am fortunate to know these attributes. I practice this at work, and it's become natural for me to take care of my patients – to try to anticipate their needs and treat them with respect and dignity.

Catherine B, *SUN member*:

I am from Cauayan, Isabela from the northern part of the Philippines and a proud Ilocana. I graduated from Centro Escolar University with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing, working for a time in both the Philippines and Saudi Arabia. While working, I studied over the weekend to obtain a Masters of Science

in Nursing.

In 2008, I came to Canada as a grad nurse together with nine other Filipino nurses. Currently I am working as a full-time RN in a long term care facility since 2009, but have also worked as a Clinical Nurse Educator and acting facility manager. I enjoy lawn tennis, baking, and selling personalized gift items on the side if I am not working the floor.

Being part of a diverse community is important because it helps me understand between culture, background, and ethnicity. It helps me to be more accepting and inclusive of others and to treat everyone with kindness and respect, no matter what they look like or where they come from. I do believe that when people from different backgrounds, culture or experiences work together, they bring unique perspectives which lead to more creative problem-solving. ||

Celebrating pride & fighting hate

Editor's note: this statement was issued in June. Regressive, anti-2SLGBTQIA+ education policies were later announced on August 22.

The Saskatchewan Federation of Labour is firmly committed to equity and justice. This pride month, we stand and march together in solidarity for 2SLGBTQIA+ safety and inclusion.

Queer and trans issues are union

issues. Everywhere we look, transphobia and homophobia are on the rise. Rearing its ugly head at work, online, and across society. Infiltrating school boards, city councils, and political parties. We are obliged to fight back against this despicable hate.

Meanwhile, the provincial government seems disinterested in stopping the harmful rise of transphobia and homophobia in Saskatchewan. The continued provincial funding to private schools that espouse anti-2SLGBTQIA+ hatred and violence is particularly distressing.

We're very proud of the queer leadership at the Federation in senior elected and staff roles. However, far too many queer and trans people are still not represented in leadership within the labour movement and in our communities. We must commit to the continued work necessary to ensure these spaces are safe and supportive for all 2SLGBTQIA+ workers.

Let us not stand idly by as hate-filled extremists erode the hard-fought progress of queer and trans Saskatchewanians. The time to act is now. ||



Saskatchewan Union of Nurses delegation at Saskatoon Pride Parade, 2023.

Feds of Labour speaking up at July premiers' meeting



Federations of Labour presidents in Winnipeg with Canadian Labour Congress President Bea Bruske (Front-left).

This July, SFL President Lori Johb joined ten other labour federation presidents in Winnipeg. The meetings ran parallel to the summer gathering of the Council of the Federation, an organization comprised of Canada's premiers.

Together, the presidents agreed that working people continue to struggle through the health crisis, all while their pocketbooks are shrinking. Further, they noted concerns about job security as the economy shifts for the future.

"Workers and families are looking to Canada's premiers to work with the labour movement for con-

crete action to fix healthcare, make life more affordable and create good, union jobs in a changing economy," said Johb.

The cost for everything, from housing to groceries, continues to rise, while corporations and big banks continue to pull in record profits. Federation presidents agree: urgent action is needed - from all levels of government - to end this relentless economic attack on working people.

Working people have shouldered huge burdens to get Canada through the challenges of the past three years. Premiers need to set aside their differences, and put workers and families at the centre of the discussion. ||

Summer byelections signal political shift

Political activists were on the hustings this summer, in Lumsden-Morse and two ridings in Regina: Walsh Acres & Coronation Park. These midterm votes in three ridings - triggered by two MLA resignations and the death of Derek Meyers - served not only as a litmus test for the ruling Sask. Party, but a reflection of the evolving political climate.

Affiliated unions and leaders have been concerned about the direction of the province under Scott Moe: slashing public services, skyrocketing taxes and public utility rates, and embarrassing, backwards social perspectives.

Working people and their families deserve better, and the Federation had no choice but to get actively

involved and fight for workers.

"If the Sask. Party won't support workers, our labour movement will work hard to elect a government that will," said President Johb. "They've voted against paid sick leave. Their increases to minimum wage still leave Saskatchewan dead last."

"In recent months, they have all but flipped the bird to public sector workers. If they won't play fair at the bargaining table, we'll stick it to the Sask Party at the ballot box."

In Regina, two pro-union candi-

"If they won't support workers, our movement will work hard to elect a government that will."

dates were elected, after both ridings had been represented by Sask. Party government caucus members for several elections. Jared Clarke, a teacher and avid birdwatcher, was the victorious New Democratic MLA in Regina Walsh Acres. Regina Coronation Park was also taken by the NDP, electing driver instructor and community leader Noor Burki.

The SFL supported these two candidates directly. In addition to two SFL-organized labour canvasses, union leaders and SFL staff volunteered throughout the campaign.

"Combined with the NDP increasing their vote share by over 25% in Regina, and the surprising decline of the Sask Party in the rural byelection, the winds of change are really blowing," said Johb. ||



President Lori Johb & Secretary-Treasurer Kent Peterson join Steelworkers on a labour canvass for Jared Clarke and Noor Burki

State of the unions

Right to disconnect

The Ministry of Labour has published a discussion paper on employment standards provisions, and is taking responses from stakeholders until October 31, 2023. The SFL will provide response to the questions in the paper.

When asked recently by CBC about the 'right to disconnect,' President Johb reiterated that in any case, employees must not be at the beck-and-call of their employers when they are not expected to work and are not being compensated.

Curbing workplace violence

Over the last few months, the SFL has been working closely with the Amagamated Transit Union (ATU) locals in Saskatchewan concerning violence and safety issues at work.

Following round-table discussions over the summer led by President Johb, both ATU locals are now collaborating with municipal leaders to find solutions to increasing violence experienced by transit operators.

This comes on the heels of CUPE SK, who have undertaken similar efforts to address increasing violence faced by municipal library workers.

SFL Summer Camp

In August, the SFL welcomed dozens of campers aged 13-16 to the annual summer camp held this year at Shekinah, north of Saskatoon. The theme this year was "Youth Power: Changing the World for the Better."

Kent Peterson, Secretary-Treasurer of the SFL and camp counsellor, noted that the best event this year was the hilarious and empowering drag show, featuring local drag queens, Iona and China.

With another camp in the books, the SFL wished happy trails to summer staffer and camp coordinator, Bronwyn Heerspink. Bronwyn is off to Ottawa, continuing into graduate studies at University of Carleton.

DoMo set to retire

In mid-August, Sask Party MLA Don Morgan announced he will not be standing again for election in 2024. Morgan served over thirteen consecutive years as Minister for Labour Relations & Workplace Safety (LRWS) and the WCB.

The SFL and affiliates worked with Minister Morgan to make some progress for working people. The Minister that led the creation of the *Saskatchewan Employment Act*, he was also responsible for bringing Clare's Law to Saskatchewan, and making modest yet meaningful changes to occupational health and safety.

DoMo passed the reigns on the labour file to Minister Don McMorris.

Twelve simple words

On August 22, 2023, in response to new, regressive education policies, the SFL urgently released the following statement from President Lori Johb:

'Outing children as part of a political gamble is violent and despicable.'

PSAC on strike

Saskatchewan unions showed up in a big way for one of the biggest strikes in years. It was amazing to see the solidarity on the picket lines, undeterred by a late snow storm.

Johb notes a high point was joining hundreds of SUN delegates on a lunchtime visit to a Saskaton picket line - the looks of joy and surprise of PSAC picketers as the busses unloaded were priceless! ||



Clockwise from top left: PSAC picket line pooch in Saskatoon, Johb and SUN President Tracy Zambory at CFNU rally, SFL campers take in a drag show, memorable SFL press release, PSAC picket in Regina.



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Treaty 4 Territory

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
August 22, 2023

Statement from SFL President Lori Johb:

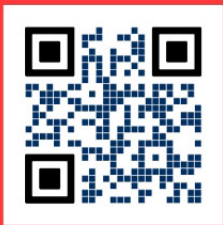
Outing children as part of a political gamble is violent and despicable.

This page is a poster - carefully tear off and hang on a union board, or give to a friend!

THE SFL PRESENTS:

SPEAK UP SASKATCHEWAN

SPEAKUPSASK.CA



We're building a coalition of people
across Saskatchewan speaking up for
good jobs, for better schools & hospitals,
and for a government that gets it.

JOIN THE MOVEMENT TODAY

