

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

SEIU-West

June 2010



Welcome to new staff:

We have hired a few new staff members since the last update and would like to introduce them to you:

- In the Swift Current office, Danielle Banadyga is our new Office Administrative Assistant, taking over for Sherri Spetz who assumed her new role as one of our financial staff.
- In the Moose Jaw office, Don Black has been hired as a Staff Rep.
- In the Saskatoon office, Cam McConnell has been hired as a Staff Rep.

We haven't finalized the staff assignments as of yet, but a memo will be going out to all the affected units. Please join me in welcoming these new members of the staff to SEIU-West.

Collective Bargaining and Contract Enforcement:

- We continue to battle with SAHO and the Government about our provincial healthcare collective agreement. There have been many rallies, updates to the membership, letters, e-mails and phone calls to the MLAs, as well as general information meetings for members. This is two years on, and still no collective agreement. We have another series of meetings scheduled to talk with members about our best offer - put forward on May 11 - and what the SAHO offer means for the membership. Documents are posted on the website outlining what we put forward. The schedule of the information meetings is also on the website . . . please encourage your members to attend.
- Extendicare members in 5 homes throughout Saskatchewan are still waiting for the provincial SAHO agreement to be settled. Extendicare Canada Inc (ECI) has traditionally taken a 'wait and see' approach to provincial negotiations - they wait and see what is settled by SAHO and then basically mirror that agreement with minor changes. This is hugely frustrating for Extendicare members! We had asked for ECI to be at the provincial table, as did ECI, but were given a specific set of parameters by which they could participate - it is our understanding that this was not acceptable to ECI and so they declined the opportunity. Members covered by the Extendicare collective agreement are welcome to attend the information meetings being held for the provincial SAHO agreement.
- A tentative agreement was reached for the Chinook School Division Caretakers - in the Swift Current area. CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BARGAINING TEAM AND MEMBERS! It is a 2-year agreement with significant improvements in both wages and working conditions. The details will be released once the ratification vote is complete.
- Bargaining continues for the Education sector members in the South East Cornerstone School Division. This is a particularly difficult set of negotiations because of the merging of school divisions. We have 3 collective agreements that are being merged into one. The School Division met with the bargaining committee to request the merging of the agreements and explain why. Further dates have been set up and the bargaining committee has finalized their proposals.

- A tentative agreement was reached for the members of West Central Abilities based in Kindersley. This is a day program for adults with special needs. CONGRATULATIONS TO THE BARGAINING TEAM AND MEMBERS!
- The work on the Member Resource Center (MRC) has begun!!! A company based in Winnipeg, called Unionware, has been contracted to develop this program and database needed to tie together the 3 union offices in Moose Jaw, Swift Current and Saskatoon. They will be working with us to develop the processes and protocols needed so that we can provide up-to-the-minute responses to members, activists, Unit Executives and staff looking for assistance and answers to workplace questions. We will still have staff reps to assist the units with their issues. We are hoping to have everything in place and ready for launch by December of this year.

Political Action and Education:

- We have done extensive Shop Steward Educationals across the province in the last 6 months in an effort to provide up-to-date information to new shop stewards. There will be more educationals forthcoming, including an advanced Shop Steward course. If you are interested, please ensure that you contact the union office closest to you to add your name to the wait-list.
- A new education program has been added to the 'union curriculum'; it is a Leadership course that has several modules designed to teach skills to the Unit Executive members on such things as how to hold a meeting and what the role of the Unit Executive is. Interest has been quite high and another session will be held in the fall to accommodate schedules for all members.
- An audit of the Units has been conducted to determine what other education is needed by our Unit Executives and activists within each unit. If you have not yet been contacted about this audit, please contact the Union office closest to you to contribute your thoughts on future educational opportunities.
- We have sent members to the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour Equity Conference, Spring School, Organizing Institute and Prairie School for Union Women. Upcoming schools from the SFL include the Occupational Health and Safety Conference in September; further information from the SEIU-West Worker Safety Committee is included in this package, as well as on our website. The OHS conference is a great opportunity for OHS activists within the workplace.
- SEIU-West has trained 10 activist-educators to provide sessions on Labour Issues affecting all workers. The sessions are divided into modules on such issues as recent labour laws and healthcare. There will be an opportunity at the upcoming Unit Chair Council meeting in September to share this information with the Unit Chairs and to set up a session for your facility.
- Empowering the membership, stewards and Unit Executive members in their own workplaces puts 'the Union' back into the workplaces and allows for a voice for the membership on a daily basis with their employers. This also prepares all of us for the introduction of the Member Resource Center and how our work can be enhanced by this new servicing/organizing model.

Organizing:

- We have a campaign on-going with the Caleb group of retirement homes. The first target is Caleb Manor in Kindersley. One of the members, Val Lafortune, at this facility was fired for trying to bring a union into the workplace. We held a rally in front of the facility and were visited by the local RCMP detachment! Val has been heartened by the support shown during the rally and in our attempts to get her job back. ***It is illegal for an employer to fire anyone for their union activity.***
- A website has been launched (www.eyeoncaleb.com) to raise awareness of the organizing campaign and Val's situation. Please take the time to visit the website and provide your feedback.
- The Organizing department is also launching a summer billboard campaign to encourage people to join a union and talk about the benefits of being in a union. Please watch for these billboards on your summer vacation travels.
- The SEIU Locals in Canada have joined forces to hold an intensive Organizing Institute for new and 'seasoned' Member Organizers. The first one of its kind was held in Hull, Quebec in March. One part of these training sessions includes the opportunity to work on a current campaign by the hosting Local. The March Organizing Institute was instrumental in helping Local 2 in their organizing drive with building janitors, maintenance and custodial staff in the Ottawa-Hull area.

Administration:

- We are currently undergoing some changes with our telephone system. Sasktel is working with us on a province-wide phone system that will tie together our three offices in Saskatoon, Moose Jaw and Swift Current. These changes will result in a 4-digit extension being used for all staff in our offices. The Saskatoon office has undergone these changes, with Moose Jaw and Swift Current being done this summer - a poster detailing the new extension numbers for Saskatoon staff is included in this mailout. We appreciate your patience and understanding during these changes.
- As part two of this system-wide change, we will be tying our office internet & e-mail systems together. Currently, we are running separate systems in our 3 offices. The changes will save money for the Local and provide (hopefully!) a seamless system for the staff and membership that provides for better communication and information-sharing.
- Postings have gone out for an Information Technology Support Technician (provincial) and short-term relief for an Admin Assistant (Moose Jaw). We will need the IT person to assist us in implementing the changes to the internet/e-mail systems as well as the continued work on the MRC. These two positions should be in place by the summer.
- We continue our work on finding the financial institution that will provide us with the best rate of return on your dues investments, and can be accessed from our three office locations.
- Auditors from Hergott Stack & Duvall completed the annual audit of all three offices a few weeks ago. The audit went smoothly and we are now waiting for a final report from the auditors. Thank you to the SEIU-West Trustees who perform regular audits in all three office locations, as well as to our staff who deal with the Local's finances on a day to day basis, for keeping our financial records, files and processes in good order.

- We are pleased to report that Sherri Spetz, working out of the Swift Current Office, has assumed her new role as Administrative Co-ordinator for Staff and Operations, and Michelle Ottenbreit, working out of the Saskatoon Office, has taken on the role of Administrative Co-ordinator for Member Services. We are working on a transition to some new processes as Michelle and Sherri get familiar with their new roles and as we determine how to efficiently and effectively deal with the financial changes that are taking place in our new merged Local.
- Due to the increased numbers of staff working in all three offices, we will be doing some modifications of the offices. Modular offices are being set up in the Karen Warner room in the Saskatoon office, a new office space is being created for the Finance position in the Swift Current office and planning for long-term office space in the Moose Jaw office will begin next year. We are trying to keep the disruptions to a minimum for our staff and our members.

General:

- Andy Stern, our International President has retired effective May 9, 2010. The International Executive Board has elected Mary Kay Henry, formerly an Executive Vice President, to replace him until the next International convention in 2012, at which time there will be elections. Andy Stern has done a lot of work, some of it controversial, to change the face of the trade union movement on a national and international level. He has been granted President Emeritus status under the International Constitution. Mary Kay Henry is planning on building bridges between the various unions in the US as well as strengthening the relationship between Canada and the US labour movement.
- In regards to our legal challenge of the provincial government's Essential Services legislation, we continue to await a response from the Chief Justice of the Court of Queen's Bench in the scheduling of our court dates. We did have a date set in April, however the Chief Justice wanted to hold off our dates in order to deal with the issue of intervenors (or interested parties).
- The International Labour Organization (ILO), which is a committee of the United Nations, has ruled in favour of the complaints lodged in regards to the Essential Services legislation (Bill 5) as well as the changes to the Labour Relations Act (Bill 6). Their decision outlined the SaskParty government's lack of consultation with the people impacted by their legislative changes, as well as criticism about the sweeping Essential Services act and its chilling effect on bargaining (*don't we all know it!*). This decision couldn't have come at a better time and will form part of our case against the government and the health regions.

On behalf of the staff and Executive Board of SEIU-West, I hope that you all have a great summer. Spend time with family and friends, and be good to yourselves . . . you deserve it!

In Solidarity,

Barbara Cape
President
SEIU-West