

# SEIU-West MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

March 2010

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## **MEMBER EDUCATION:**

Since our last update in January of this year, we have begun preparations to commence phase 1 of our strategic plan for member education.

SEIU-West will commence with new facilitator training opportunities during the last week of May. This will be followed up with the implementation of our new Leadership training program in early June. Subsequent training opportunities will follow our internal audit of membership needs.

We will have both internal and external resources available to provide education to interested members. A number of schools are offered annually by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress, including the following upcoming conferences:

- Shiftwork Conference – sponsor: SFL – status: full;
- Spring School – sponsor: SFL & CLC – status: full; and
- Prairie School for Union Women – sponsor: SFL – status: applications being accepted (see enclosed memo).

We will be announcing more conferences in the next update. If you are interested, please read the posters on your union bulletin board – directions on how to apply will be included.

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## **YOUTH COMMITTEE:**

The Chair of the Youth Committee is Nicole Harris. We've put a link on our website for those members who are 30 years or younger, and who might be interested in joining the committee. We want to build a committee for our youth members to participate in their union – a forum specifically designed for youth to add their voices to the union. How can SEIU-West respond better to the issues facing young people? What *are* the issues facing young people that the union needs to respond to? How can we build a union where young people feel included and free to participate? Who are our next leaders?

Nicole can be reached at ndharris84@hotmail.com or check the link at [www.seiuwest.ca](http://www.seiuwest.ca) for more information.

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## **RETIRES COMMITTEE:**

One of our retired members, Linda Flowers, is spearheading our Retirees Committee. The first event the committee is planning is a series of presentations on the Saskatchewan Healthcare Employees Pension Plan. There will also be information on Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS). The dates & locations for the presentations are:

- April 6 at 7:00 pm - Moose Jaw – SEIU-West Hall, 39 Athabasca Street West
- April 7 at 7:00 pm - Swift Current – SEIU-West office, 325 Central Avenue North
- April 8 at 10:00 am - Saskatoon – SEIU-West office, 314 Duchess Street
- April 8 at 7:00 pm - Saskatoon – SEIU-West office, 314 Duchess Street

Should you wish to attend any of these sessions, please contact your nearest union office to register.

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## **NURSING CARE COMMITTEE:**

We are still in the planning stages for the Nursing Committee. We have developed a basic outline of what we want this committee to accomplish and we will be calling for members interested in participating in this committee (please see enclosed poster). The committee will encompass all aspects & classifications of providing care including: Licensed Practical Nurses, LPN/ORT's, EMT's, Orderlies, Special Care Aides and Home Health Aides. If there are other classifications that should be represented, please let us know.

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## **COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS:**

Newly ratified Collective Bargaining Agreements are available for the following units: Canadian Blood Services (Regina & Saskatoon) and Elmwood Group Homes. If you would like a copy, please see your unit chairperson if you haven't already received one.

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## **MEMBER RESOURCE CENTER:**

We have finalized the provider of our database and IT systems for the Member Resource Center (MRC). It is the firm *Unionware* from Winnipeg. We reviewed providers from Ontario and New Jersey as well, but *Unionware* provided a Canadian-based solution with a proven track record of follow up services. Other SEIU locals have utilized *Unionware* (as have other unions) and the response has been quite positive. We are scheduled to begin the implementation process in the summer of 2010 – so I'm pleased to report that we are in line for take-off with this important initiative! Some of the

positive aspects of this initiative are that we will be able to track the issues most prevalent in our workplaces, provide immediate information to our members and staff; and keep all of our information housed here in Saskatchewan.

The MRC will be a call-in center where members can access a 'live' person – not an answering service – to get responses to their questions on their collective agreement, find out what activities the union is doing and learn how they can participate, and determine who their Unit executive is (so they can get on-site assistance) – among other things. It will be a support network for unit executives, shop stewards and members to get clarification and support on their questions. If you have any questions about the MRC, please don't hesitate to contact me for more information. We will continue to provide updates as this develops.

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### **POLITICAL ACTION RELATED TO OUR HEALTH CARE SECTOR:**

Thank you to all the members who have helped us in our ongoing lobby efforts. We have asked you to write one letter or email, and to make one phone call to your MLA in order to help us get a provincial healthcare collective agreement. We want you to continue to do this and please ask your family and friends to do this as well...we know that the more pressure we put on our elected officials to do the right thing, the more likely they will find the will to provide a positive response.

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### **EDUCATION SECTOR:**

The Ministry of Education recently announced a 'discussion paper' regarding the utilization of Educational Assistants. The controversy was evident in the media as it included a proposal to reduce the number of Educational Assistants being used in the classrooms of our schools dramatically and instead, introduce 'teams of professionals' to provide assistance to children who require more learning assistance.

We have written to the Minister of Education to gather more information on the status of the 'discussion paper' and to lobby for our members --- professionals who provide an invaluable learning assistance to children throughout the province. The 'discussion paper' has now been removed from the Ministry of Education website. The Minister of Education, Ken Krawetz explained that "it was just an idea".

We will keep on top of this issue to ensure that our members in the Education Sector are protected and maintain quality employment in this province.

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### **LEGAL CHALLENGE:**

*The Public Services Essential Services Act* affects a large number of our members throughout the province. As we announced in the last membership update, SEIU-West has filed a Notice of Motion in the Court of Queen's Bench to challenge the Act. Currently, the members who have been subjected to this legislation are those who work for the Regional Health Authorities across the province. However, this legislation could impact other SEIU-West members in the education sector, Extencicare Canada Inc., and addiction services, among others. We are launching a court challenge to this legislation for the betterment of all of our members.

This legislation takes away our members' right to strike in support of collective bargaining. It gives the employers all the power to determine essential services levels. Under the Act, the only right that the union has left is to challenge the numbers of employees 'deemed' essential. The employer can name the service that is essential and they can name those employees who are required to provide that essential service; all the power is taken out of YOUR hands without any recourse for negotiation.

We will continue to provide updates to our members as the court case progresses.

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### **Who is 'CLAC'?**

Recently, there have been ads in many newspapers across the province about a new union called CLAC – this stands for the *Christian Labour Association of Canada*. Some provinces do not even recognize CLAC as a union – because there has been a trend of employer interference with this group.

There have been concerns in the trade union movement about CLAC because of substandard collective agreements & collective agreements being negotiated without any input from the members, among other issues.

CLAC does not belong to the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour or the Canadian Labour Congress because of the history of raiding other unions of their members.

For more information about CLAC, visit the following website: [www.thetruthaboutclac.ca](http://www.thetruthaboutclac.ca).

Should you be contacted by anyone from this group, please contact your union representative immediately with the details you obtained from the contact person from CLAC.

In Solidarity,

Barbara Cape  
President, SEIU-West

