



Labour Reporter

Saskatchewan's Voice of Labour

MAY 2010



Death by a thousand cuts

THE SASKATCHEWAN government continues to cut services and vital programming. The March budget reveals the government has badly overspent the last two years. Now they expect the people of Saskatchewan to pay the price for their fiscal mismanagement. Here's just a sampling of some of the cuts:

Saskatoon's Domestic Abuse Outreach Program: The program offered a unique range of services, from front-line advocacy to counseling and peer support for victims of family violence. Women and children in crisis have lost critical community support.

Aboriginal Employment Development Program: This program helped employers, unions, and Aboriginal groups develop partnership agreements to create a more representative workforce. Workplace education and training were key aspects of the agreements.

Saskatchewan Communications Network: Despite promises to maintain our Crown Corporations, SCN will be wound down, and its assets sold off. Nearly 70 percent of SCN's 2009 broadcasting budget stayed in the province to support local productions. SCN connected the people of Saskatchewan with educa-

tional broadcasting from nonviolent, commercial-free children's programming to televised K-12 and post-secondary education courses.

Quint Development Corporation: The government cut \$165,000 from Quint's budget, despite a promise to increase affordable housing. Quint is a community economic developer that helps low-income families purchase their own homes through co-operatives. It offers employment assistance and provides loans for small business startups.

At the same time, the Harper government closed the offices of the Human Rights Commission in Vancouver, Toronto and Halifax. Seventy percent of all complaints received by the Commission have been submitted through those regional offices.

Our governments are slashing programs that protect our human rights and that provide education, skills, affordable housing and safety to our communities. Labour and community – let's work together to keep our province strong and safe.

In Solidarity,

Larry Hubich



It's a fact:

■ Corporate tax rates are continuing to decline, even during this time of fiscal restraint. By 2013, 75 per cent of the projected federal deficit will be as a result of corporate tax cuts. That will cost 6.3 billion dollars per year.

Source: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives

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"The challenge of social justice is to evoke a sense of community that we need to make our nation a better place, just as we make it a safer place."

-- Marian Wright Edelman

Human Rights - Making the Links

SFL Equity Conference, February 2010

INSPIRATIONAL KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Reverend Carla Blakley described her struggle to break down barriers in the Lutheran Church when she decided to become a female pastor.

As a human rights activist within, as well as outside of the Church, she shared stories of her work on a wide range of equity issues. She had many words of wisdom, asking workers to resist the urge to 'other' people different from themselves.

Blakley proposed that equity work must be rooted in a place of compassion: "When you wear someone else's tears, it changes the way you think and the way you go about making change," she said.

Her message was that we make strong links between people from different backgrounds when we listen to one another's stories, and then take up action in solidarity.

Blakley co-chaired the "Missing Women: Decolonization, Third Wave Feminism and Indigenous People of Canada and Mexico" conference in 2008. It brought together Saskatchewan and Mexican elders and activists to work on a common issue of missing and murdered women.

Rev. Blakley has also organized and led groups to Mexico City for courses on global economics and diversity.

A particular passion for Blakley is her support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered youth. She helped to bring Camp fyrefly, an Alberta-based volunteer organization, to Saskatoon last year.

fyrefly is a leadership retreat for teenagers dealing with the emotional and social difficulties of coming out to family, friends and community.

"I have seen first hand that the camp literally saves young people's lives; we urgently need it because suicide rates among gay youth are 13 times the national average," she told delegates.

The 2010 fyrefly Camp takes place at Lumsden Beach Camp July 30–Aug. 2 (see www.fyrefly.ualberta.ca/ for more information.) Blakley closed by reciting a portion of Roosevelt's famous "Man on the Throne" speech.

She said human rights activists will face resistance and criticism, but courage and action are what bring about social justice. 🦋



Cutline: SFL human rights committee chair Rosalee Longmoore and keynote speaker Carla Blakley. Carla is senior pastor at Bread of Life Lutheran Church, located in the Living Spirit Centre in Regina.

*It is not the critic who counts;
not the man who points out
how the strong man stumbles,
or where the doer of deeds
could have done them better.
The credit belongs to the man
who is actually in the arena,
whose face is marred
by dust and sweat and blood;
who strives valiantly;
who errs,
who comes short again and again,
because there is no effort
without error and shortcoming;*

*but who does actually strive
to do the deeds;
who knows great enthusiasms,
the great devotions;
who spends himself in a worthy cause;
who at the best knows in the end
the triumph of high achievement,
and who at the worst, if he fails,
at least fails while daring greatly,
so that his place shall never be
with those cold and timid souls
who neither know victory nor defeat."*

— Theodore Roosevelt, April 23, 1910

THE SFL'S EQUITY COMMITTEES (aboriginal, human rights, solidarity & pride, women and youth) held half-day workshops for the 100 participants at the conference.

TOP ROW: Helen Hrynchak (left), Muna Deciman (centre), and Lesley Kitch (right) from SGEU facilitated the Anti-Discrimination Response Training workshop. Participants were taught the skills to empower bystanders who witness discrimination, prejudice and bullying.

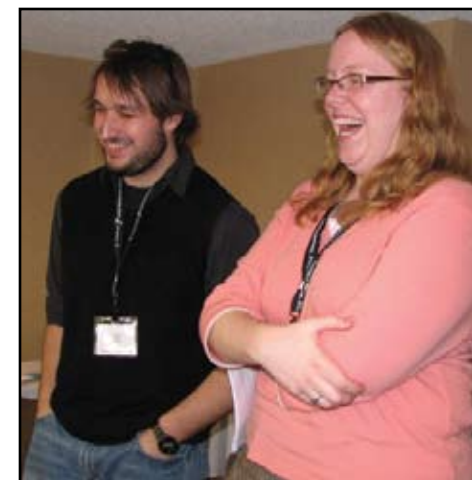
SECOND ROW, LEFT: Facilitators Jan Folk (left) and Tracey Mitchell (right) enjoyed watching participants in the Bridging the Gap workshop learn about the importance of improving communication between generations. The jeopardy game dealing with stereotypes young people have faced for generations was a favourite among participants.

SECOND ROW, RIGHT: Turtle Island workshop featured the wisdom and stories of Elder Walter Linklater (centre). He was joined by his son Lyndon, from the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. Turtle Island deals with myths and misconceptions about Saskatchewan's history and issues like treaty rights, and urban reserves. "Lyndon was a great addition to the course because he spoke with humor and made the issues understandable," according to Darwin Delorme, SFL Aboriginal vice-president (left, with co-facilitator Marjorie Huard).

THIRD ROW, LEFT: Al Chiasson and Leona Neville speak about the significance of the turtle in aboriginal cultures.

THIRD ROW, RIGHT: Judith Martin provided the latest research on 'sandwiched' employees in terms of stress, health status and the economy, in the Women's Committee's "Balance is More than Not Falling Over!" workshop. Participants developed actions to be undertaken in their workplaces in the short and long-term, to support co-workers with childcare and elder care issues.

BOTTOM: Jan Cibart, SFL Solidarity and Pride V-P (left), Ryan Huber (centre), and Becky Lockhart (right), brought myths 'out of the closet' around issues facing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. 🦋



UN's International Labour



ABOVE: Larry Kowalchuk, Bob Bymoan, Larry Hubich and Cara Banks celebrate a victory at the ILO.
RIGHT: The SFL and NUPGE/SGEU filed complaints with the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association. (Oktober Revolution photos)

“We want the workers in Saskatchewan to understand that this is not simply a labour body’s decision. The ILO decision was arrived at by international representatives of government, business and labour. It is a serious condemnation..”

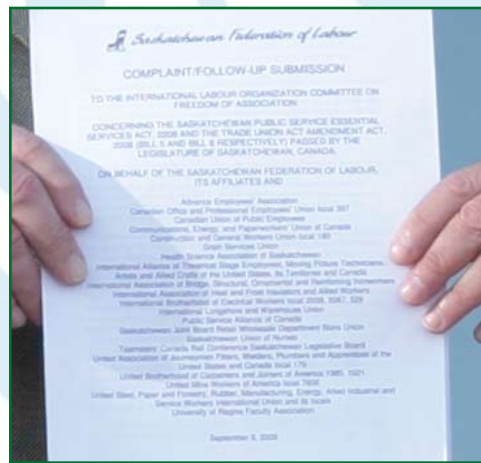
— LARRY HUBICH, SFL PRESIDENT

- **Hold full and specific consultations with unions at an early stage of considering any labour legislation....**
- **Take the necessary measures in consultations with unions to amend the Public Service Essential Services Act and Regulations...**
- **Consult with unions to ensure that a process is put into place to ensure that all social partners have confidence restored in the Labour Relations Board (LRB) ...**

THOSE ARE JUST SOME of the requests of the International Labour Organization (ILO), in its March 24th ruling against the Saskatchewan government’s labour laws.

The decision was in response to two complaints filed by the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) and its component, Saskatchewan Government and General Employees’ Union (SGEU); and the SFL collectively with 16 local unions and five national unions, working through the Canadian Labour Congress Vice-President Barbara Byers.

The ILO Committee on Freedom of Association’s long-awaited decision found the Saskatchewan government violated international law (freedom of association) by



What is the ILO?

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is an agency of the United Nations (UN). Founded in 1919, it became the first specialized agency of the UN in 1946.

The ILO is the only tripartite arm of the UN, so its governing body is made up of 28 representatives of government, 14 of business and 14 of labour.

The ILO is the global body responsible

for drawing up and overseeing international labour standards. 181 countries belong to the ILO.

ILO principles

The ILO was formed by the United Nations in the aftermath of WWI, on the premise that universal, lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon decent

Organization condemns Wall government

proclaiming bills 5 and 6 and by failing to consult with the labour movement before introducing them in the legislature.

The ILO made a series of recommendations and requests of the Canadian government, which is then responsible for ensuring the Saskatchewan government complies with the rulings.

The ILO also told the province to amend the Trade Union Act to lower the requirement for the minimum number of employees expressing support for a trade union in order to begin certification. Bill 6 raised that level from 25 to 45 per cent of workers in a bargaining unit.

Regarding the Trespass to Property Act, the ILO upheld that government must not violate citizens’ freedom of association, including the right to picket.

“We want the workers in Saskatchewan to understand that this is not simply a labour body’s decision. The ILO decision was arrived at by international representatives of government, business and labour. It is a serious condemnation,” says SFL president Larry Hubich.

Public sector workers see implications for collective bargaining. “One of the biggest victories for workers in this decision is that the ILO said you cannot take away workers’ right to strike without compensating them,” says SGEU president Bob Bymoan.

“And here we have a government who has prohibited tens of thousands of public sector workers from striking, yet provides no compensation or access to independent third party arbitration for workers who have had their bargaining power taken away.”

Larry Kowalchuk, the lawyer for Retail, Wholesale, Department Store Union, who wrote the complaints, with assistance from SFL staff member Cara Banks, says: “The decision recognizes that the right to strike is a fundamental civil liberty. It must not be taken away arbitrarily without consultation or compensation. The ILO and international labour standards were founded on the premise that servitude is not acceptable because labour is not a commodity like any other good for sale.”

“We are also encouraged by the ILO’s request that the government restore confidence in the Labour Relations Board,” says Hubich.

“Workers need a body they can trust to be impartial. After all, it issues decisions about core labour rights. We’re talking about the right to engage in free collective bargaining, and the right to be union at all.”

The SFL and two unions are currently in court arguing that the LRB is not independent from government and that the replacements for illegally-fired board members were improperly appointed and are being publicly directed by the Premier to make decisions contrary to the purpose of the Trade Union Act.

What happens next?

The ILO has requested that the government keep it informed on all progress in implementing the recommendations.

The labour movement will also be updating the ILO with ongoing evidence of the effects of the labour laws and the state of the

LRB. The decision has been referred to the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations.

The Committee of Experts is composed of 20 jurists who examine government progress on meeting the commitments of international conventions. They meet in June.

Minister of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour Rob Norris recently stated in the media that the ILO decision is ‘non-binding’.

“Of course it is binding – it’s a ruling of international law and is not appealable,” says Kowalchuk.

“The ILO will monitor the government’s compliance with the ruling, and will do so until it complies.”

The ILO decision will also be submitted as evidence in the SFL et. al.’s Charter challenge against bills 5 and 6.

“The courts will take into account this ruling when making a decision about whether or not bills 5 and 6 violate freedom of association and expression under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,” says Kowalchuk.

The Canadian courts are also in a position to order remedies and to enforce them, as the Supreme Court did recently with the B.C. government.

“This decision is an opportunity for the Saskatchewan government, with the assistance of union experts, to create laws which fully comply with the law and the establishment of an impartial LRB,” said Hubich.

“It’s time Wall’s government took the steps to fix the mess.”

SGEU promotes public

THE SASKATCHEWAN GOVERNMENT AND GENERAL EMPLOYEES' UNION (SGEU) has embarked on a multi-media campaign to raise awareness about the important role the public service plays in keeping our families and communities safe. This could not come at a better time, with the Saskatchewan government engaged in privatization, contracting out, program cuts, and reductions to the civil service.

Privatized liquor sales

The government recently opened the door to privatization of liquor sales by licensing two specialty wine stores, one in Saskatoon and one in Regina. SGEU members at the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority (SLGA) are speaking out about safety issues.

"Alcohol is not just another consumer product to be sold like Campbell's Soup or a bag of potato chips. It is a drug that is responsible for a great deal of social harm. We need only to think of fetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol-related violence and injuries and deaths from impaired driving," says Tina Vuckovic, union activist at SLGA head office.

SGEU has teamed up with Mother's Against Drunk Driving Canada to warn the public about the risks of private liquor sales.

"Experience in other countries and in Canada indicates that privatizing alcohol sales will increase alcohol-related deaths, injuries and social problems through increased alcohol availability and consumption," says MADD's policy statement. Private liquor retailers are more likely than public liquor store workers to sell alcohol to those who should not have it, either because they are underage or already intoxicated. Small businesses have a strong financial incentive not to refuse sales to customers because they need to make a profit to survive. It is much easier for a large, public institution to bear the financial burden of not selling liquor to

someone who should not have it.

Where there is a liquor store "on every corner", the incidence of alcohol related crime skyrockets, as happened in Alberta after privatization in 1993.

Public liquor sales, on the other hand,



support socially responsible alcohol use. SLGA employees are required to check the i.d. of patrons who appear under the age of 25. All store staff are also trained to effectively deal with intoxicated customers. "We are strongly opposed to the private wine stores being set up here in Saskatchewan. We ask the public not to shop at those private wine stores. If there is some specialty product you want -- just ask us. We can most likely order it for you," says Vuckovic.

QUICK FACTS

There are 79 SLGA stores in 64 communities across Saskatchewan staffed by nearly 1100 SGEU members, the majority of whom are women. Almost half are located in rural areas. SLGA jobs provide decent wages and benefits, that are spent locally. After privatization of liquor sales in Alberta, wag-

es of liquor store workers were reduced by half. Public liquor sales contributed 197 million dollars in 2008-2009 to the province's general revenue fund. This revenue helps fund schools, hospitals and roads.

Licensing & Inspections carved out

The government of Saskatchewan recently announced its intention to turn over responsibility to inspect, license and monitor mechanical equipment such as elevators, amusement rides, boilers and other pressure vessels to private interests.

The work of the Licensing and Inspections branch (part of the Ministry of Corrections, Public Safety and Policing) would be moved under the direction of a delegated authority. This new authority would be governed by a board of directors that would include industry representation.

"Industry self-regulation too often means lower standards, inadequate reporting, limited monitoring and reduced compliance. In other provinces where they have moved to a delegated authority, there are accidents -- they are counting bodies. Here in Saskatchewan where the public service is responsible for inspections, our count is zero. Why 'fix' something that isn't broken?" says Hank Lashta, chair of the legal, inspection and regulatory component of SGEU's public service sector.

Lashta is concerned about public oversight of inspections if the change goes ahead. "What accountability mechanisms will there be to guarantee that safety standards are met? Will the provincial auditor and ombudsman have powers to oversee operations and address problems?"

IT Services

The government is contracting out an increasing amount of its information technology services normally done by public sector workers, to private contractors.

"Again it's an issue of public accountability -- IT workers oversee the public's personal information, such as health files and

services, public safety



legal records. Private IT companies may be sold or work transferred to the U.S. or an offshore country, and the public's privacy put at risk," says Patrice Kelly, chair of the administration and communications component of SGEU's public services sector.

"When our electronic records are held in Saskatchewan, by the Saskatchewan government, there is built-in accountability."

Patrice also warns of the rising cost to Saskatchewan taxpayers of contracting out. "Using private companies is two to three times more expensive than keeping IT in the public service, because private businesses take profit off the top".

Domestic Abuse Outreach Program cut

The Domestic Abuse Outreach Program, housed under the Ministry of Social Services, has helped women and children in crisis for decades. The government recently cut the program altogether.

"Victims of family violence relied on those workers for counseling and advocacy during times of crisis. There can be no justification for cutting services to women and children who are often among the most isolated and vulnerable individuals in our society," says Sandy Evanovich, chair of the human services component of SGEU's public services sector.

Gov't cuts civil service

The provincial government's March budget set out a plan to reduce the public service by over 15 per cent over the next four years. The government's intention is to cut jobs by four per cent per year, by not filling vacancies due to retirements.

Bob Bymo, president of SGEU, calls the plan "ill-conceived, unworkable and unsustainable," and "a threat to public safety." "An effective public service is the result of thoughtful planning, not one subject to random and unanticipated job losses."

The 2010 budget eliminated 178 positions in a wide range of government ministries. Of those positions, 38 are currently staffed and 140 are vacant.

Other job losses include: 18 positions in Advanced Education, Employment and Labour; 13 in Social Services; 9.5 in SLGA; six in First Nations and Métis Relations; fourteen in Education; four in Justice; and, seven in Tourism, Parks, Culture and Sport.

"Publicly-owned and publicly-delivered services, which are appropriately staffed, mean greater accountability and safety for Saskatchewan families," says Bymo. "This government is taking the province in the opposite direction."

For more information on SGEU's public services campaigns visit www.sgeu.org





Day of Mourning ceremonies

REMEMBER WORKERS injured or killed on the job; commit to keeping each other safe:

- Estevan & District Labour Committee – Contact Delaine Turner at 634-5268 or 421-8333 for details

- Humboldt & District Labour Council – Contact Bryan Barnes at 682-4466 for details.

- Moose Jaw & District Labour Council – Wednesday, April 28th at 6:00 pm, Moose Jaw Union Centre (1402 Caribou St. W.) Contact MJLC office at 692-5971.

- North Battleford & District Labour Council – Wednesday, April 28th at 1:45 pm, Don Ross Centre. Contact Colin Lemauviel at coconb@sasktel.net.

- Prince Albert & District Labour Council – Contact Faye Hill at 922-0600 for details.

- Regina & District Labour Council – Contact the RDLC office at 757-7076 or rdlc@sasktel.net for details.

- Saskatoon & District Labour Council – Wednesday, April 28th at 7:00 p.m., Francis Morrison Library (311-23rd Street East). Contact Kelly Harrington at 384-0303.

- Weyburn & District Labour Council – Wednesday, April 28th at 6:30 p.m., behind the T.C. Douglas Calvary Centre (400-10th Ave. SE). Contact Wanda Bartlett at 842-7938.

- Yorkton & District Labour Council – Wednesday, April 28th at 6:00 p.m., in front of the CEP Local 892 office building (624 Main Street) in Esterhazy. Contact Maryann at 621-8948.

1935-2010 Join the Trek

PLANS ARE UNDERWAY to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the On to Ottawa Trekkers in Regina on June 14, and the Regina Riot on July 1. A planning group is up and running and volunteers are needed. The more the merrier! For further information, call Donna Smith or Don Anderson at 525-0197.

Thank you

BROTHER ROBERT TKACH was killed in a workplace accident in 2008 at Lanigan Potash mine. Health and safety advocates from the Potash Council and the SFL were on hand to lend their support when his case went to court in March. PotashCorp pled guilty to the maximum fine of \$300,000 for its role in his death.

Robert's wife Sylvia sent the following letter to OH&S advocates:

*Hi Rick and Kelly,
I would like to express our family's heartfelt thanks to all of those who attended court on Monday, March 15 and to all of you who continue to do the hard work of improving safety in the industry.*

I do not have names or contacts for everyone that attended so if you could pass our thank you message along to them we would be appreciative.

Your presence was so important at the court appearance. Your continued pressure is, and will continue to make a difference. The employer has the legal and moral responsibility for your safety and I sense a growing pressure for change and the publicity is effective.

Our family will continue to press the government for changes to the Act to increase penalties and to implement doubling of fines for repeat offenders. Changes are needed to the Mines Branch in particular - they must do their job of protecting workers. And WCB needs to be revised because Saskatchewan has the least benefits and is still in the dark ages.

Our family is indeed honoured to meet all of you who support us and the other families who have lost loved ones. Your actions mean so much to me, I feel as if we have your protection against the company and others who do not understand, and I am so grateful for that. Robert was our life, we miss him so much everyday.

*Regards,
Sylvia and family*

Mark your calendar

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
April 28	Int'l Day of Mourning	
May 1	Int'l Worker's Day (May Day)	
May 9-14	SFL/CLC Spring School	Saskatoon
June 5-12	Pride Week	Saskatoon
June 13-17	Prairie School for Union Women	Waskesiu
June 13-19	Pride Week	Regina
June 21	Aboriginal Awareness Day	
Aug. 8-14	SFL Summer Camp	Ft. Qu'Appelle
Sept. 12-14	SFL OH&S Conference	Regina