

Labour Reporter

The voice of Saskatchewan's working class since 1956



Winter 2024

In photos:
Rally For Our Rights

Jobh looks forward to 2024

State of the Unions

Report: Unions give workers big wage boost

UPCOMING

EVENTS



**APR 28 -
MAY 2**

SPRING SCHOOL

MOOSE JAW - A joint CLC/SFL annual labour educational for both experienced union activists & the next generation of labour leaders. Five different courses available that include workers' issues, conflict resolution, and steward training.

**JUN
9-13**

PRAIRIE SCHOOL

REGINA - The Prairie School for Union Women offers four days of learning & sharing in a supportive environment. This school will develop women's personal & leadership skills while building solidarity among women workers.

**AUG
10-16**

SUMMER CAMP

SHEKINAH - The 34th SFL Summer Camp is offered to young people aged 13-16 from a union household. Campers engage in active learning, recreation, & social events rooted in union values of cooperation, equality, and social justice. Early bird registration closes April 30.

**SEP
18-20**

OH&S CONFERENCE

REGINA - This interactive educational brings union members a worker-focused perspective on the trends, challenges, and history of occupational health and safety in Saskatchewan. Participants will take valuable skills and knowledge back to their local union.



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SFL.SK.CA**

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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Nathaniel J.D. Cole

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Winter 2024

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SFL President Lori Johb.

Big year ahead at both bargaining table & ballot box

Friends, it's hard to believe it's already 2024!

As I sit at my desk putting pen to paper, winter has arrived in earnest, with more snow and a deepening cold settling in across the province. After a brown and mild end to 2023, it really feels like a new year.

A new year indeed, one which many of us have anticipated with mixed feelings. With all that's to come, it's only fitting to approach this edition of the *Labour Reporter* as an outlook for the year.

. . . .

I wrote last issue about the "hot labour summer" of 2023, and the momentum is still going. Workers see a renewed power in their union, evidenced in continued and strong endorsements of job actions, should

Quebec's 'Common Front' shows how that province once again leads the way in worker solidarity and class struggle - inspiring labour leaders and workers here in Saskatchewan.

a fair deal not be reached at the bargaining table.

Quebec's 'Common Front' shows how that province once again leads the way in worker solidarity and class consciousness, inspiring labour leaders and rank-and-file workers alike here in Saskatchewan.

We have an opportunity to really work together, especially with dozens of unsettled collective agreements

in the public sector. The enthusiastic support for teachers from our affiliated unions has started 2024 off on the right foot, and building solidarity and coordination is one step towards our own 'common front.'

In 2023, the Sask. Party threatened our constitutional right to strike. Let me be clear: every use of the Notwithstanding Clause is an attack on our rights. We can only assume the next target will be forcing striking workers off the picket line.

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2024 will surely be an unforgettable year in politics. All of Canada and the whole world will become increasingly fixated on American politics as the year progresses. We all know that a lot is at stake south of the border, as decency and democracy itself are on the table in November.

While the fate of the United States is unavoidable, politics here in Saskatchewan should be top of mind for all, especially those of us active in the labour movement. A provincial election is scheduled for October 28, and most municipalities go to the polls November 13.

Provincially, we know much is at stake. After nearly seventeen years, the incumbent Sask. Party government under Scott Moe has become

tired, out of touch, and simply uninterested in governing.

We workers have shouldered the brunt of it – underfunded hospitals and skyrocketing wait times, crumbling schools with fewer staff, and 'stealth' privatization that exchanges good union jobs with outsourcing and poverty wages.

It feels like we've doubled our relentless lobbying, rallying, and advocacy just to slow the erosion of common sense and workers' rights.

Our best bet for the future is a change in government. We must leverage changing tides & act decisively to influence the outcome.

2024 must focus on the hanging political conditions we're up against- in this election, we have a chance to not just hold the status quo, but fight for better. I've said it before, and I'll say it again – our best bet for the future is a change in government.

Unlike the last few provincial elections, I can honestly say that I can't predict who will win this one. We must leverage these changing tides and act decisively to influence the outcome.

Municipal elections will be quick on the heels of the provincial election. We'll be electing mayors, councillors, and school board trustees – all with considerable influence, and who collectively employ tens of thousands of union workers across Saskatchewan. Through 2024, the SFL will be working closely with our affiliates, labour councils, and the Canadian Labour Congress to ensure worker-friendly leaders are elected to make a difference in our towns and cities.

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While new year's resolutions aren't for everyone, the SFL resolves to lift up and support all of our affiliates, especially those who are facing challenges at the bargaining table. As your President, I commit to connecting even more with the workers and unions staring down cuts, transition, privatization, and other devastating changes in their workplaces and their communities.

As for what I hope from the broader labour movement? We ought to get more pissed off. Less 'playing nice', more noise, and a renewed focus on the collective struggle of all workers.

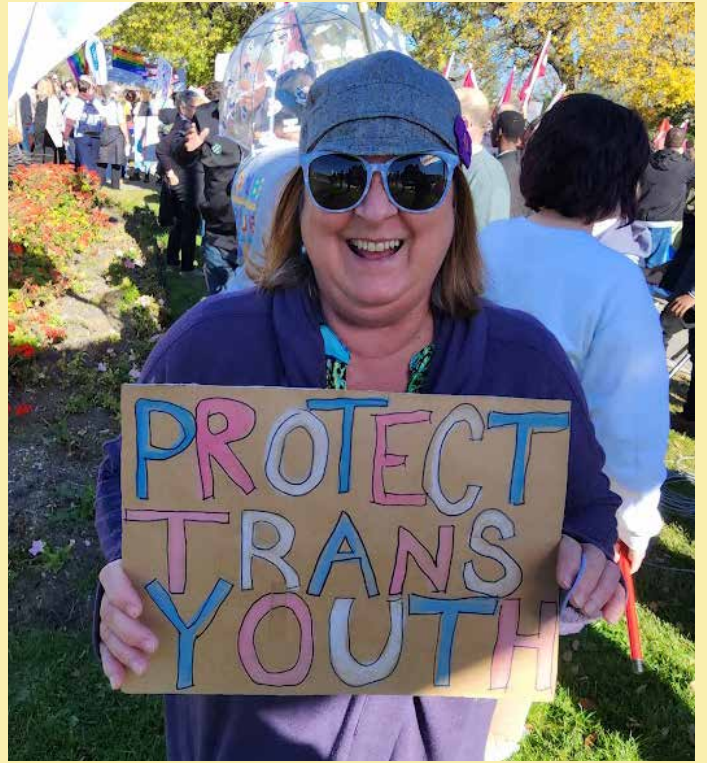
We are better together. ||



IN PHOTOS

SFL's Rally For Our Rights, October 10





Labour not standing for notwithstanding nonsense

Tuesday, October 10, the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour led a massive demonstration in Regina to oppose the draconian trampling of Charter rights in Saskatchewan.

Dubbed the 'Rally for Our Rights,' the demonstration loudly opposed the invocation of the notwithstanding clause, in a hasty move by the Sask. Party government to prevent any legal challenge to the anti-child, so-called 'parental rights' policy in education.

Over one thousand supporters showed up to this lunchtime rally, hearing from the likes of Carla Beck, labour leaders, educators, and the very children targeted by the Sask. Party.

"Using the notwithstanding clause to suspend a Charter right is dangerous and desperate. It is a threat to all worker rights and all Charter rights," said SFL Secretary-Treasurer Kent Peterson.

He noted that the clause has increasingly been used by anti-worker governments in Canada to suspend fundamental rights to bargain, to strike, and to join a union.

MLA Nicole Sarauer, the opposition critic for both labour and justice, was clear about what's at stake: "The best and only way to both scrap the notwithstanding clause and prevent workers being targeted next? Defeat the Sask. Party government." ||

How did it all happen?

March: Longtime Sask Party MLA for Lumsden-Morse announces his resignation, triggering a summer byelection in that seat, along with two Sask Party seats in Regina.

June: Education Minister Duncan suspends Planned Parenthood from presenting at schools, following a related controversial 'sex ed incident,' coincidentally in Lumsden.

July: Upstart conservative party, Sask United (SUP), nominates first ever candidate for Lumsden-Morse byelection, specifically in response to the incident.

August: Byelections held. NDP wins Regina seats. More notably, SUP secures an impressive second-place finish in Lumsden-Morse.

In quick response the SUP surge in Lumsden, the Education Minister announces a ban on third-party presenters educators in schools, and a 'parental rights' policy that vilifies already-vulnerable kids.

Sept. 28: Court grants injunction against policy, casting doubt on its legality. Later that day, the Premier announces he will recall the Legislature early for an emergency session to expedite passage of 'Parent Bill of Rights.'

The Bill intends to make the policy a law, and uses the notwithstanding clause to both suspend Charter rights and prevent further legal challenges.

Oct. 10: Emergency session begins. Government changes rules of debate, to ensure the Bill passes in several days, rather than the traditional months of debate and scrutiny.

Oct. 20: Following 40 hours of filibustering by the Opposition over three-and-a-half days, the Bill passes third and final reading, and immediately comes into effect. With that, the notwithstanding clause is invoked.

Union card boosts SK wages 18%

Unions continue to deliver big advantages for workers in Saskatchewan both in terms of higher wages and better benefits, according to a new report.

'The Union Advantage,' penned by Angele Poirier & Andrew Stevens, compares research on union and non-union wages and benefits in Saskatchewan, as well as Canada-wide.

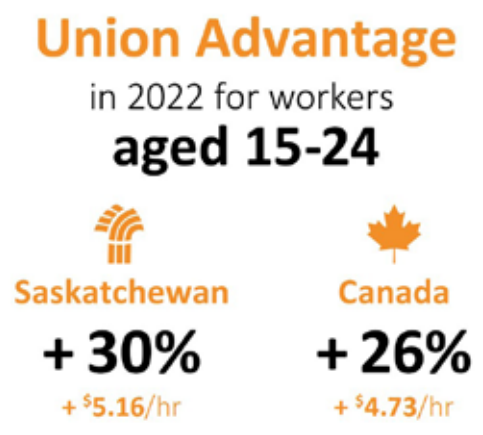
The data comes as no surprise to trade unionists – Canadian union workers make 11% more than non-unionized workers; in Saskatchewan, that margin jumps to 18%. Women in a union have a particularly strong advantage – earning wages 20% and 29% higher than non-union women in Canada and Saskatchewan, respectively.

"We've always known that signing a union card affords a worker a better salary and perks than their counterparts," said SFL President Johb. "In the face of stagnating pay cheques, cost-of-living pressures, and growing inequality, the union

advantage is a critical one."

The study also shows that over one-third (34%) of workers are unionized, slightly higher than the rate nationwide (30%), and that unions in Saskatchewan bring their members nearly \$200 per week extra in earnings.

As the favour for unions resurges, Johb notes that now is the time for the labour movement to redouble organizing efforts to ensure more workers can reap the rewards of unionization. ||



Select graphics from 'The Union Advantage' report (U of R: Poirier & Stevens)

State of the unions

Anti-scab law in Parliament

In November, federal Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan introduced Bill C-58 to ban scab workers. Scabs undermine collective bargaining, tipping the balance of power to the employer.

Applicable to federally-regulated workplaces, this anti-scab legislation is a long time coming, and the federal NDP have suggested ways to strengthen the Act.

Even though Quebec and B.C. have banned scabs, the Sask. Party government has indicated similar legislation is not an option.

SEA Consultations

The SFL responded to the provincial government's call for feedback to the employment standards provisions of the *Saskatchewan Employment Act*.

The submission responded to questions of hours of work, wages, tip regulations, leaves, terminations, and definitions of employee and employer.

In addition, the SFL noted that employment standards would be positively impacted by a higher minimum wage, safer workplaces, and good quality public healthcare.

GSU Strike Vote

The first job action of 2024 was narrowly avoided on January 5. GSU locals 1 & 2 served strike notice to Viterra with 72-hour notice.

GSU suspended possible strike action until after a ratification vote on the final offer later in January, and opted on work-to-rule until the ballots are counted.

UFCW Lockout continues

On September 7, 85 hotel workers (UFCW 1400) were

locked out by the Heritage inn, with locations in Saskatoon and Moose Jaw. The lockout continues at the time of press.

The employer has demanded the workers concede their entire benefits package, and offer less than a dollar increase over a proposed seven-year contract.

CUPE 882 gets a deal

After months on the picket line, CUPE Local 882 voted in favour of a tentative agreement and returned to work. These inside workers at the City of Prince Albert endured chaos and bullying from the Mayor and City officials.

Polling showed that most P.A. residents supported the workers through the strike, and Mayor Dionne was widely unliked - it didn't help when he literally rammed through the picket line with his pick-up truck!

Teachers' union walks out

STF started the new year by withdrawing labour, staging two one-day strikes at the time of press.

The STF walked off the job after Minister Cockrill & Co. refuse to negotiate working conditions, including class size and complexity.

The SFL has worked to coordinate support for teachers on the picket line, and encouraged all affiliated unions to do the same.

Equity mailing list

In an effort to keep equity-seeking union members up to speed on actions, events, and dates of recognition, the SFL equity committees are creating a distribution list for occasional email updates.

To register to receive these emails, head to the SFL website and fill in the short registration form. ||



Clockwise from top left: SUN throne speech rally in Wascona Park, UFCW's Lucy Figueirido with media, P.A. picket line, behind-the-scenes at a presser w/ Cape & Johb, OHS Conference-goers bussing to UFCW picket line.



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](https://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

