

**Education Workers' Steering Committee
Staff Advisors Report
Annual Conference
October 13& 14, 2011**

At your conference last year the delegates developed the outline of an action plan for the executive for the coming year. The issues included: representative workforce; job security; cuts in EAs; equality in wages and benefits; and collective agreement differences. The actions included: sustain support for students; common job titles and classifications; provincial bargaining for wages and benefits; better language for contracting out; continuing the EA campaign; educating our members and the public on issues affecting education workers; promoting solidarity among our locals; and becoming involved in political action to support candidates who are sympathetic to our causes.

As part of the action plan, the EWSC have two active on-going campaigns: a cost share aimed at stopping the cuts to Education Assistants; and a campaign funded through the National Union Strategic Directions money aimed at promoting provincial bargaining for education workers. In addition, they have hosted and attended a number of meetings which I have summarized below:

Provincial Bargaining Round Table Discussion

On March 21, 2011, the EWSC brought Presidents and executive members to Watrous to have a round table discussion to discuss how to achieve provincial bargaining. During the round table discussion we realized that we have already made many gains toward provincial bargaining through amalgamations of school divisions, coordinated bargaining and your own local negotiations.

At the conclusion of the discussion the participants set four goals:

1. hold special meetings to inform your local members of benefits of provincial bargaining
2. organize meetings with School Boards to discuss provincial bargaining and ask for their support
3. write letters to the editor to provide information and share your views on provincial bargaining

4. organize meetings with the MLA's and candidates to discuss provincial bargaining and lobby them for their support

The EWSC compiled a number of documents to help locals with the lobbying process. With the assistance of Cheryl Stadnichuk, Research Representative, we have attempted to cost out provincial bargaining. In addition, Beth Smillie, Communications Representative has finalized a TV ad.

Meetings to promote provincial bargaining:

On March 1, 2011, the EWSC met with Minister Harpauer and was surprised when she stopped us at the start of our presentation by informing us that she supported provincial bargaining. She then advised us of some of the steps we needed to take in order to get there. Unfortunately, Minister Harpauer subsequently indicated that she would not support provincial bargaining if the SSBA didn't.

On May 4, 2011 the EWSC met with the Saskatchewan Party Caucus' Standing Policy Committee on Human Services. We provided handouts of the "ONE collective agreement FOR ALL" and the "Economic and Social Contribution of the Public Sector to Rural Saskatchewan" briefs. The EWSC explained the benefits of provincial bargaining and gave personal stories of how school division amalgamations helped with the rural wages and benefits and that only provincial bargaining will address the wage and benefit inequities that exist among education workers. We informed the committee that the estimated cost of wages to provide provincial equity would be between \$11.8 to \$14.1 million dollars. We were not able to provide a costing on full benefit coverage for all education workers as the SSBA has not released that information to CUPE.

The EWSC met with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association on May 10, 2011. Sandi Urban-Hall, SSBA President, indicated that the SSBA is not supportive of provincial bargaining with school support workers because CUPE is not the only union who represent education workers. Their position is that school divisions are autonomous bodies and as such, bargaining needs to remain at the local and not provincial level. We expressed our concern with the current structure of bargaining with school divisions as there is no line by line funding in the new funding model that covers bargaining for education workers.

On May 17, 2011 the EWSC met with the NDP caucus committee. The committee members showed strong support in the meeting and subsequently confirmed their support for provincial bargaining in a letter.

At the meeting, Cam Broten, Education Critic, suggested we write a letter to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services (which consists of five Saskatchewan Party and two NDP members) requesting to make a presentation. The Human Services committee deals with budget and legislation and that all meetings are at the call of the Chair (Greg Ottenbreit, Saskatchewan Party MLA). That request was subsequently made but later rescinded as we felt that this meeting was premature.

Press Release on EA cutbacks

On August 24th the Davidson Summit Committee/EWSC held a press conference at the Regina CUPE Regional Office to discuss the cutbacks to EA's. It was well attended by the media and resulted in great coverage. We have continued with our billboard campaign.

Education Funding

The rollout of the new provincial funding model has been delayed for another year and is expected to be announced with the 2012 budget.

Provincial / Co-ordinated Bargaining

The executive has also promoted coordinated bargaining in this province. In the absence of a provincial bargaining structure, coordinated bargaining will bring education locals closer together by providing more uniform collective agreements. If all our collective agreements are similar with common expiration dates, the move to provincial bargaining is that much easier. With this goal in mind we are still encouraging our locals to present the letter of understanding on Provincial Bargaining to each of the School Boards in the hope that they will agree to sign on. That could significantly strengthen our argument for Provincial Bargaining.

Organizing and Labour Relations Board

Some certification applications continued to be tied up at the Labour Relations Board and the Court; some have been withdrawn. Due to a recent decision of the Board against all inclusive bargaining units we are now considering organizing school by school.

In Closing

Many thanks are owed to all the National Representatives servicing education locals in this province. We are also very fortunate to have the support of Beth Smillie, Communications Representative, and Cheryl Stadnichuk, Research Representative.

We said farewell to our Regional Director, Melanie Medlicott and we hope that she has a long and well deserved retirement. We welcome our new Regional Director, Aina Kagis who will continue to do the work started by her predecessors.

Finally, thank you to the EWSC executive. They have spent many hours in discussion and debate to plan and execute their mandate. They have never lost sight of their duty to represent CUPE members.

In solidarity,

Lois Lamon
Staff Advisor
EWSC

Elaine Ehman
Staff Advisor
EWSC